READING COMPREHENSION PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

One of the ability to speak English is reading in addition to listening, speaking, and writing. By reading ability in college students will greatly assist in the understanding of the scientific text books that guide the learning process at the college. Scientific understanding of the text book is very important in the success of the student’s graduation he attended courses that will ultimately accelerate the student graduation. Then all the need for analysis of reading comprehension problems faced by students in the college.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, Students, Higher Education

Abstrak

Salah satu kemampuan berbahasa inggris yaitu reading disamping listening, speaking, dan writing. Dengan kemampuan reading pada mahasiswa perguruan tinggi akan sangat membantu dalam melakukan pemahaman terhadap buku text ilmiah yang menjadi pedoman dalam proses belajar pada perguruan tinggi. Pemahaman terhadap text book ilmiah sangat penting dalam keberhasilan mahasiswa untuk kelulusan mata kuliah yang diikutinya yang pada akhirnya akan mempercepat kelulusan mahasiswa tersebut. Dengan demikian perlu adanya analisis terhadap masalah reading comprehension yang dihadapi mahasiswa pada perguruan tinggi.

Kata Kunci: Reading Comprehension, Mahasiswa, Perguruan Tinggi

A. Background

Reading is one of the most important skills in learning language besides listening, speaking, and writing, and is the fundamental goal to any language (i.e., comprehending/understanding). To Indonesian students, this is a bridge to understand scientific book they have to read (Kustaryo, 2000:2). Further, the two most important things to consider when teaching reading are how to improve the students’ understanding of the varieties of texts in the short term and how to train students to be good readers in a long term. Considering the abundant information and the limitation of available time, teaching reading should also involve
another objective of how to train students not only to be good readers but also to be fast readers. This is in line with Carell et.al (1988:272) that viewing a number of resources, the researcher finds out that reading skill is considered as the most important of the four skills for academic purposes particularly in English as a second language or foreign language. President of USA, JF Kennedy is famous for his ability in reading comprehension and even has been able to read – at least - for about 1200 words per minute (http://www.slate.com/id/74766/sidebar/74768/) and this is referred to the book President Kennedy: Profile of Power, by Richard Reeves. (published by: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

In reality, there are many problems faced by the students in dealing with speed reading and reading comprehension as they are good at reading comprehension and speed reading. It was proved by many researchers who are concerned with conducting the research relating to speed reading and comprehension. Shofia (2001:2) finds in her research that the weaknesses of students in reading speed and reading comprehension has two elements or factors, namely, the students do not fully understand how to read text quickly and how to comprehend it well.

On the other hand, when the students are reading the texts, the majority of them focus on getting information without keeping time. It could be considered that they do not care for the time allocated, just focus on the comprehension and it has been their habit for years. It is in line with Diem (1998), who states that the habit of speed reading (vocalizing, regressing, etc) has not yet grown and developed quite well.

With the ever increasing rapid pace of society, oftentimes, students do not need to participate in traditional education settings like learning in classroom settings. Often, students prefer to obtain information and educate themselves when it is convenient for them. For these audiences, self-directed learning opportunities are needed. A means for meeting this need is through learning modules. Modules offer a complete educational package containing appropriate information that allows the learner to gain new knowledge and skills in a designated subject. A learning module, therefore, is a package of selected information which focuses on a specific subject that has been appropriately designed to provide the learner an educational opportunity in a self-directed learning format, as stated by Richardson and Bostick (available in http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/AboutCESFactsheets/develop.html)

Up until now, there has not been a lot of study in this field. It, therefore, has led to the researcher’s interest in performing the research regarding the reading comprehension and speed reading. The researcher is quite certain that research on speed reading is very important in order to develop students’ language mastery, especially reading. Finally, speed reading and reading comprehension are very important because they can help the students to reveal scientific book and in undated information without spending much time. Further, they are able applied at any time since the readers want to get the main idea quickly.

B. Analysis
The data from interview is meant to answer the questions (1) what are students’ opinion toward teaching reading? and (2) what are the problems that encountered by the students in terms of reading speed and reading comprehension..
There are seven problems encountered by the students in reading comprehension and speed reading based on the data obtained from interview. There are reading strategy, vocabulary mastery, bad habit, regressing to read, reducing the speed reading when the sentence read is main idea, accelerating the speed reading when the sentences read is not main idea, and searching for key word and main idea.

Referring to the table above, it is clear that most of respondents find problems in line with reading speed and comprehension that 100% respondents are unanimous that there are problem faced by students in reading: (1) reading strategy, (2) less vocabulary, (3) bad habit, (4) regressing to read, (5) Reducing the speed reading when the sentence read is main idea, (6) Accelerating the speed reading when the sentences read is not main idea, and (7) Searching for key word and main idea.

Therefore, applying reading strategy should be performed by all readers if they want to have optimal achievement in terms of reading speed and comprehension. Homby (1974:870) defines strategy as the art of planning operations in war, especially of the movements of armies and navies into favorable position for fighting”. Cohen (Sofia,1987:18) states that reading strategies are mental process that readers consciously choose to use in accomplishing reading tasks.

Dealing with reading speed and comprehension problems faced by the students, most of them found difficulty in reading speed and comprehension. It was proved by their rating of reading speed and comprehension. In this case, the writer conducted an interview to find out the problem encountered in reading speed and comprehension. In addition, the problem is also able to find from speed reading and comprehension performed by the students. First, in terms of reading speed, they don’t know strategy how to read in speed pace. R4 said, “I don’t know speed reading strategy and I find difficulty to find key words...” It means that he has been using the same reading speed strategy for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED</th>
<th>R1</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>R3</th>
<th>R4</th>
<th>R5</th>
<th>R6</th>
<th>R7</th>
<th>R8</th>
<th>R9</th>
<th>R10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Less Vocabulary</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bad habit</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Regressing to read</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reducing the speed reading when the sentence read is main idea</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Accelerating the speed reading when the sentences read is not main idea</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Searching for key word and main idea</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There are seven problems encountered by the students in reading comprehension and speed reading based on the data obtained from interview. There are reading strategy, vocabulary mastery, bad habit, regressing to read, reducing the speed reading when the sentence read is main idea, accelerating the speed reading when the sentences read is not main idea, and searching for key word and main idea.
years. In this case, reading without limited time. He could repeat for several times. Consequently, the time allocated for reading comprehension is not enough. It is relevant to the research conducted by Shofia, F (2001:43) states:

It was difficult to read the text fast in one hand and comprehend the text all at once in another hand, they regressed to read the text for several times before answer to the question, although they had been given the limited time to read the text before answering questions.

Regressing to read the text for several time is one of the bad habits for reading speed. Zorn (1980) cited in Shofia, (2001: 27) believes that at least eight reading habits slow the readers down. Those are : (1) Small eye span, (2) regressing, (3) sub-vocalizing, (4) poor concentration, (5) reading every word unnecessarily, (6) lack of drive, (7) over concern with comprehension, and (8) reading every text at the same speed.

Second, in terms of vocabulary, their weaknesses of key words vocabularies are one of the slowness of reading. When the readers stumbled over the words, they stop to read, thought in a few minutes and try to comprehend their meaning, consequently their speed reading became slower and their rate would be lower automatically as R2 said, “When I was reading text then I found the words that I didn’t understand, I usually stop for a few minutes to think their meaning, then continue to read.” Further, R1 stated, “If I found difficult words when I was reading, I stopped for a moment to try translating the meaning, then continue to read.” Third, dealing with motivation and concentration, it must be convinced without having high concentration when the readers are reading text, they would regress to repeat the words as they lost some words. Cohen (Sofia,1987:18) states that reading strategies are mental process that readers consciously choose to use in accomplishing reading tasks.

Having found speed reading problems faced by the students, the researcher could draw the conclusion that the common problem of reading speed faced by students are as follows: (1) most students don’t know how to read speed because they are not taught to read speed yet, (2) the weaknesses of key words vocabularies, (3) missing concentration, (4) vocalizing, and (5) sub-vocalizing.

2. Students’ Opinion toward Teaching Reading Applied before

Having conducted an interview, the researcher finds two majors: (1) students’ opinion in terms of teaching strategy applied by the teacher and (2) students’ expectation in teaching reading.

Regarding the teaching applied by the teacher, some students put forward their opinion as indicated in table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>LECTURE TECHNIQUE</th>
<th>RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The method used is interesting</td>
<td>R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6 R7 R8 R9 R10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above tells that 8 respondents (80%) of learners say that lecture technique is uninteresting while others, 10 respondents (100%) state that it is monotonous. However, teaching learning process is dominated by the teacher as indicated by 70% of students convince the researcher that lecture is still dominated by the lecturer (teacher center). Further, it is absolutely clear that the only two respondents who said that the method used in teaching reading is interesting.

Regarding the data above, it seems that the evidence clearly shows that the learners believed that they can’t meet their strategy to reveal in terms of reading speed or reading comprehension skills. The lecturer, therefore, willy-nilly to improve his teaching reading method in order students to have reading skill, either speed reading or reading comprehension. Brown (1994:396) argue:

before teaching, the teacher should be able to identify an overall purpose or goal that you will attempt to accomplish by the end of the class period. This goal may be quiet generalized, but it serves as a unifying theme for you. Thus, in the sample lesson plan, “understanding telephone conversation” generally identifies the lesson topic.

It may seem a trivial matter to list materials needed, but good planning tactics always indicate the importance of knowing that teacher need to take with teacher or to arrange to have in teacher’s classroom (Brown, 1994:397).

Regarding the students’ opinion, there are various opinion as far as lecture technique is concerned. It is in line with R3:

In my opinion, teaching reading comprehension is applied so far is not interesting, I mean, there is no significant change from the first time teaching until now. I think the method used is difficult to understand. I actually want to have reading comprehension skill.

Further, it is supported by R2 said “in my opinion teaching reading comprehension applied so far is rather monotonous, not interesting, just open dictionary to find out the meaning of each difficult word found.

A good reader does not read one word by one word, stop, think, check his dictionary, and then moves to the next word. If he did, by the time he reached the end of a sentence he would have lost not only the beginning of the sentence but also its meaning. Harris (1981) reading speed is...
almost the same as reading rate

Therefore, it seems necessary to conduct need analysis in line with lecture technique in reading. Richards (in Nurrohmi, 2006:14) writes that need analysis is a procedure to collect information about learners’ need (51). Furthermore, Hutchinson and Water (1987:107-108) stated:

“Material provide a stimulus to learning’, suggesting that material should contain interesting texts, enjoyable activities which engage the learner’s thinking capacities, opportunity for learners to use their existing knowledge and skills, and content which both learners and teacher can cope with.”

Regarding the students’ opinion toward lecture technique before, it could be drawn the conclusion that teaching reading technique used is unacceptable by the students and the teacher should find out the students’ expectation in lecture technique, beside he must know teaching strategy.

### Table 3: Students’ Opinion in Reading Technique Applied by Teacher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>READING TECHNIQUE</th>
<th>RESPONDENTS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R1 R2 R3 R4 R5 R6 R7 R8 R9 R10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lecture guide Ss to read and understand reading passage</td>
<td>√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lecture guide Ss to read and understand speed reading</td>
<td>- - - - - - - - -</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lecture guide Ss to describe and define reading text</td>
<td>√ √ √ √ _ √ √ _ _ _</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lecturer guide Ss to understand technique principles in order to understand, analyze, and solve technical problem</td>
<td>√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lecturer guides Ss to understand a technique principle.</td>
<td>√ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √ √</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the students’ opinion toward teaching reading technique applied, data from interview indicated that all respondents are unanimous where teaching reading comprehension techniques applied. However, they are not fully revealed in detail. In brief, they only introduce brief description of various technique of reading comprehension. Further, he doesn’t
teach how to read speed either as indicated all respondents stated that the lecturer didn’t guide the students to read speed. Here are some students’ opinion in terms of reading strategy applied the lecturer.

I think, the lecture has introduced the various techniques of reading comprehension. He guides us to understand reading passage. However, he doesn’t explain the techniques used in detail. In addition, there is no practical exercise which is relevant to the reading techniques taught (R7).

In my opinion, the lecturers never teach me how to read the text quickly. He just teaches how to comprehend English text but it is not really completely able to understand because he doesn’t explain in detail (R6).

Their comments may suggest or reflect their expectation that reading technique and reading speed should be taught in detail and their application. Teaching reading strategy, therefore, should totally be taught from A-Z. In addition, the lecturer should uses various reading techniques in order not to be judged as monotonous reading teacher. Affective strategies involve interacting with another person to assist comprehension or using affective control to help accomplish the task. Some typical strategies of this category are: Cooperation: working in peers to solve a problem, pool information, check notes, questioning the teacher for clarification.

C. Conclusion

In dealing with the second research question “What problems are encountered by students in reading comprehension and reading speed? There are many problems faced by the students in terms of reading comprehension and reading speed consecutively: reading strategies, weaknesses of vocabulary mastery, bad habit, regressing to read, reducing the speed reading when the sentence read is main idea, accelerating the speed reading when the sentences read is not main idea, and searching for key word and main idea.

References

http://www.slate.com/id/74766/sidebar/74768/
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