Inference Strategies to Improve Reading Comprehension of Recount Text

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi strategi inferensi yang diperlukan membaca artikel jurnal. Empat puluh empat siswa bahasa Inggris membaca set teks pada teks pendidikan dan menjawab pertanyaan pemahaman. Dua tujuan utama dalam penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi keterampilan inferensi yang diperlukan untuk memahami artikel penelitian dalam hal ide-ide utama, gaya penulisan / nada dan elemen berbasis teks lainnya seperti item leksikal, sintaksis serta struktur wacana dan untuk mencari strategi inferensi untuk memahami teks. Dua puluh lima dari peserta ini juga menjadi relawan untuk wawancara mendalam. Hasil dari penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa siswa biasanya mengandalkan pengolahan dari bawah ke atas. Mereka melewatkan bagian yang sulit, terutama ilustrasi grafis informasi teknis. Mereka mencari bantuan dari teman untuk meningkatkan pemahaman mereka. Secara keseluruhan, mereka berhasil menafsirkan pernyataan tesis, inti bagian, makna kata-kata yang diuji dan klausa. Namun, mereka kurang mampu menyimpulkan argumen yang mendasari, nada artikel, dan sikap orang lain terhadap temuan penelitian.

Abstract

This study aimed to explore inference strategies necessary read journal article. Forty four English students read set of text on education text and answer comprehension question. The two main objectives in this study were to identify inference skills necessary to comprehend a research article in terms of the main ideas, the writing styl e/tone and other text-based elements such as lexical items, syntaxes well as discourse structures and to investigate inference strategies for coping with text. Twenty five of these participants also volunteered for an in depth interview. The findings revealed that students usually relied on their bottom up processing. They skipped difficult parts, especially technical information graphic illustration. They sought help from friends to enhance their understanding. Overall, they were successful at interpreting the thesis statement, the gist of section, the meaning of the tested words and clause. However, they were less able to infer the underlying argument, the tone of article, and the attitudes of other toward the research finding.

Key words: *Inference strategies, reading reading comprehension, recount text*

INTRODUCTION

Most textbook and journal artices for udergraduate are challenging in many way. Factors to text difficulty may arise from various elements within the text, the knowledge base of indivdual reader or the context of interactionbetween the writer and the reader. Within the text lie the unknown vocabulary, the complicated sentence structure as well as theorganizational pattern. The individual reader approaches the same piece of text with different backround knowledge, reading proficiency, and purpose.

As reading is a crucial means and gaining new knowledge, students need to acquire effective strategies to cope with reading demands (Hellekjaer, 2009). Students often strugle with texts: reading at a painfully slow speed, picking up tiny bits of information while being barely able to grasp even major ideas that are directly stated. This leaves a lot to be desired when they have to process the text inferentially. In order for them to read efficientl, they need much training in handling unfamiliar words, automatically processing the seemingly ambiguous syntax, relying on the existing knowledge base for the top down operation to drive meaning, to infer, and to succesfully reach the intended conclusions.

This study aims to answer two research questions. Firstly, what inference skill must the reader employ in order to understand the journal article about the education? Secondly, what strategies are crucial to read the journal succesfully? The two main objectives in this studey are, therefore, to identify inference skills necessary to comprehend a research article in terms of the main ideas, the writing style/tone and other text-based elements such as lexical items, syntaxas well as discouse structures and to investigate inference strategies for coping with text. This study will provide empirical evidence to confirm the above mentioned hypotheis.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The teaching reading has traditionally been text based (pearson and Stephen, 1992). Local strategies necessary to draw text-basedinference help the reader to determine the meaning of unfamiliar lecical items and to clarify syntatic ambigouity, usually within a sentence boundary. Helpful strategies of relying on contextual clues,doing word analysis or consulting dictionary are fundamental for vocabulary meaning.hatia (1993) maintains that a research article in any field of study, science or social science, displays itscharacteristic, recognizable nature of linguistic presentation that signifies its particular function, purpose and desired goal of communication. The reader can therefore apply strategies to exploit the

conventional rules of the research article genre. He cited Swales' analysis of a typical article introduction as consisting of a four-move structure, namely, establishing the research field, summarizing previous research, preparing for present research, and introducing the present research. Applying the work of Swales (2004, 1990), Kanoksilapatham (2009), studying prevalent organizational patterns as manifested in scientific research article abstracts, observed that the use of such moves could be recognized with some variations.
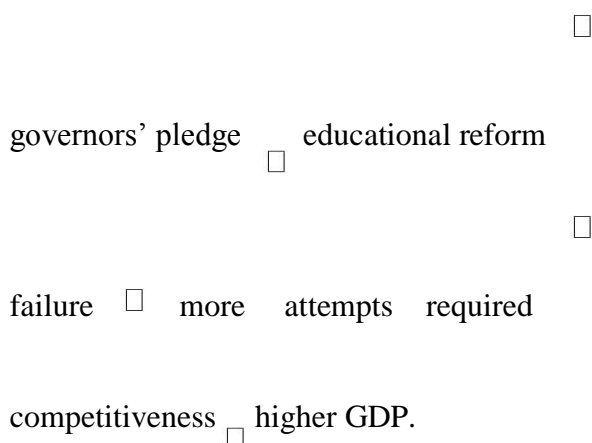
Nuttall (2000) differentiates four types of meaning when a text is processed. Each word carries its own conceptual meaning, i.e., representing a certain concept or idea. When words are put together to form a sentence, the sentence manifests its propositional meaning. It conveys the plain sense or signification of a statement, which can be verified. The other two meanings, termed contextual and pragmatic, are added onto the propositional meaning. When a proposition is considered in a context, it carries its contextual meaning that provides the force or functional value of a statement. When a statement is meant to convey the writer's attitudes, the intended effect on the reader is known as the pragmatic meaning, suggesting the writer-reader interaction.

The researcher used descriptive method to analyze the data. According to Arikunto (1998: 245), descriptive method is not proposed to test hypothesis formulation; it only describes and explains about the fact or certain occurrences systematically, factually, and accurately. A total of 60 graduate students at a university in Majalengka University participated in this study. A set of materials used inthis study included a full-length research article, a short newspaper article and a magazine article. The main article was a nine-page long article entitled "The History of Majalengka".The text of the researcharticle consisted of 38 paragraphs, divided into seven sections with six section headings, all written in a noun phrase. Only the first section, which served as an introduction, was without a heading. The article also contained four figures in the forms of a world map, a table and two graphs. The abstract was not included. In its place was a one-line caption, "It's not just going to school but learning that matters."

FINDINGS AND DISCUSION

Research question 1: inference skill necessary to understand the journal article about education.

Main Ideas The researcher looked at three components of the main ideas: the central theme, the thrust of argument and a summary of a section in the journal article. The central theme as manifested in the caption ("It's not just going to school but learning that matters.") was explicitly stated and repeated nearly ten times throughout the whole article. Subjects, therefore, did not have any difficulty getting the theme. Less obvious to most of them was the underlying argument, represented in a cause-effect fashion as:

⬜

governors' pledge ⬜ educational reform

⬜

failure ⬜ more attempts required

competitiveness ⬜ higher GDP.

The results showed that most subjects had no problem with the explicitly stated theme. However, inferring the underlying argument proved problematic. Only a few subjects were able to link the ideas and to formulate the complete chain of argument. The data collected did not probe into whether the subjects understood the section headings.

The subjects were asked to summarize this section in one sentence using a maximum of 30 words. The purpose of the task was to probe the subjects' ability to read for the main idea and to interpret and express it in their own words of understanding. The results showed that nearly two-thirds (62.62%) could perform at a satisfactory level.

Discourse Most subjects (56.94 percent) displayed an ability to identify each major sections of the research article. Nearly a quarter of subjects (21.84 percent) wildly guessed at the answer without any definite idea of how to dissect the whole article into separate and distinct sections. Most subjects found the methodology section part the easiest to identify. Similarly, the results part presented no difficulty. On the other hand, the statement of the problem and the research hypothesis proved harder to ascertain. Virtually all subjects failed to realize that the introduction section generally includes the justification of the problem being investigated, the literature review, as well as thehypothesis. The most difficult section

of the article was the discussion. The subjects showed high uncertainty where the discussion section began or ended.

The interview data confirmed that the subjects were doubtful when dissecting the various sections in the research article. Some successful ones pointed out that they sequentially divided the article relying on the sectionn headings, exhibiting an awareness of strategy use to increase comprehension of a recount text.

Research question 2: what strategies are crucial to read the journal succesfully. The findings confirmed needs for training in use of strategies when reading a recount text forstudents. Because skill development is a pre-requisite of effective strategy use (Hellekjaer, 2009; Paris, Lipson &Wixson, 1983), extensive reading is a must. Extensive reading should be encouraged or even required to build up reading accuracy and fluency (Grabe, 2010). Extensive reading in various disciplines is necessary to build broad-based schemata that will eventually help speed up reading.

In order to cope successfully with recount texts, students have to apply strategies as outlined in the book by Wiener & Bazerman (1991). Specifically, they could benefit from adopting the SQ3R (survey, question, read, recite and review) technique when reading for academic purposes. By following the before-, while- and after-reading procedural steps, they could approach their reading selection with a firm reading purpose, make a sustained effort and boost their learning with a concrete product of own understanding.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that successful ones pointed out that they sequentially divided the article relying on the sectionn headings, exhibiting an awareness of strategy use to increase comprehension of a recount text.

The appropriate strategy for student is adopting the SQ3R (survey, question, read, recite and review) technique when reading for academic purposes. By following the before-, while- and after-reading procedural steps, they could approach their reading selection with a firm reading purpose, make a sustained effort and boost their learning with a concrete product of own understanding.

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