

# Improving Reading Comprehension Using Metacognitive Instruction in the Fourth Semester of English Department STKIP PGRI Ngawi In Academic Year 2016/2017

Haryono<sup>1,2\*</sup> Asmara Nengke<sup>2</sup>

1. Mathematic Education Department, STKIP PGRI Ngawi, East Java, Indonesia
2. English Education Department, STKIP PGRI Ngawi, East Java, Indonesia

2\* email: haryonostkip@yahoo.co.id

## Abstract

The objection of this study is to describe the implementation of metacognitive instruction and to improve students' reading comprehension by using metacognitive instruction at the fourth semester students of English Education Department of STKIP PGGRI NGAWI in the academic year of 2016/2017 and to know the enhancement of students' reading after being taught by using metacognitive instruction. The design of this study is classroom action research that was conducted in two cycles with four activities in each cycle, they are planning, acting, observing, reflecting. Preliminary study was also done before this study was conducted. The result of this study showed that using metacognitive instruction could improve students' reading comprehension. It can be seen from the enhancement of students' test result that improved in every cycle. The result of the study also showed that metacognitive instruction could improve the students' reading comprehension at the fourth semester students of English Education Department of STKIP PGGRI NGAWI in the academic year of 2016/2017.

**Keywords:** Metacognitive Instruction, Metacognitive Strategy and Reading Comprehension

## 1. Introduction

Reading is one of the obligatory courses taken by English Education Department students in all universities. It is a skill they have to acquire due to its important role both in academic and in real-life communication context. In real-life communication context, the most important role of this skill is to help them communicate appropriately with the other people for various purposes and contexts In academic context, this skill is really necessary for them since English is used as the instructional language in their class. Learning references they use are also mostly in English.

They should be able to read not only in the linguistic information available in the utterance but also the non-linguistic one to support their comprehension. By doing so they can be easier to recognize the words and understand the meaning.

The current research in foreign language reading has focused on readers' strategies. Grabe (2002) reinforced the importance of efficient reading strategies. Reading strategies are of interest for what they reveal about the way readers manage their interactions with written text, and how these strategies are related to reading comprehension. Several empirical investigations have been conducted into reading strategies and their relationships to second language reading comprehension. More recent research has begun to focus on metacognition, i.e., cognition of cognition. These studies investigate the relationships among metacognitive awareness, strategy use, and reading comprehension. There seems to be enough evidence to be confident that strategy instruction can, indeed, be effective at helping students learn more successfully (Muñiz-Swicegood, 1994; Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, & Robbins, 1996; Oxford & Leaver, 1996; Cohen, Weaver, & Li, 1998).

Learners have an important role in new teaching methodologies, raising their awareness of learning strategies and helping them utilize these strategies is a crucial aim of teachers. One type of these learning strategies is metacognitive strategies including planning, self-monitoring and selfevaluation. The present study aimed at examining the effect of metacognitive (planning & self-monitoring) strategy instruction on EFL learners' reading comprehension performance (on authentic and inauthentic texts).

Metacognitive strategy is the main strategy used in this instruction to guide the students to read the written text on. This strategy includes planning, predicting, monitoring, problem-solving, and evaluating (Vandergrift and

Goh, 2012: 97). This strategy encourages students to think about their learning process, to plan for their reading, to monitor their comprehension and to do self-evaluation after the activity ends. After being involved in this instruction, they could become self-knowing, self-directed, and self-managed in their reading process.

This article reports a metacognitive strategy instruction study of reading in English as a foreign language. It is designed to address the following research question: Does instruction on metacognitive strategies improve EFL learners' reading comprehension performance?

## 2. Classroom Action Research

Action research here uses the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). Action research occurs through a dynamic and complementary process consisting of four essential moments of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart in Hopkins, 1993: 32). These moments are the fundamental steps in a spiraling process. According to the model, the implementation of the action research includes four steps. Each step will be explained as follows:

- a. Stage of planning  
It is a process to develop a plan of critically informed action in order to improve what is already happening.
- b. Stage of action  
It is an act to implement the plan.
- c. Stage of observation  
It is a process of observing the effects of critically informed action in the context in which it occurs.
- d. Stage of reflection  
It is reflecting process on these effects as the basis for further planning; subsequent critically informed action and so on, through a succession of stages.

Based on Hopkins (1993: 48) the model of Kemmis and McTaggart can be illustrated as follows:

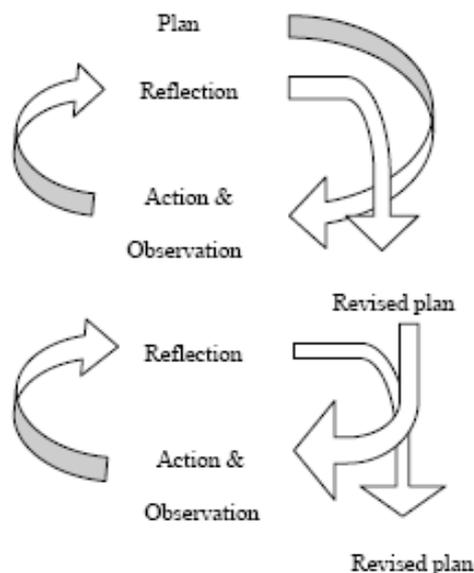


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Model

## 3. Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognition has become a confusing word in education, it seems that the meaning is often assumed. The definition of metacognitive instruction used in this research is pedagogical procedures that enable students to increase their awareness toward reading process by developing richer metacognitive knowledge about themselves as readers, the demands of reading task, and strategies for reading (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012: 37). Metacognition itself is defined as the ability to think about people own thinking, by extension, to think about how we process information for a range of purposes and manage the way we do it (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012: 84). For clarification purposes this research, also adopted the definition stated by Kuhn (2000: 178) that metacognition is enhancing (a) metacognitive awareness of what one believes and how one knows and (b)

metastrategic control in application of the strategies that process new information. This awareness is developmental and lies on a continuum. Students with high metacognitive awareness will become self-knowing, self-directed, and self-managed in their learning that can lead them to be a better reader over and over.

Conscious development of reading skills is important because the teachers are trying to equip students for the future (Nuttall, 2000). It is impossible to familiarize students with every text they will ever want to read; but what we can do is give them techniques for approaching texts of various kinds, to be used for various purposes, that is the essence of teaching reading (Nuttall, 2000: 38). Strategy instruction is effective in promoting learner autonomy, or helping learners take control of their own learning (Stewner-Manzanares, Chamot, O'Malley, Küpper & Russo, 1985; Wenden & Rubin, 1987; Oxford, Talbott & Halleck, 1990). In addition, strategy training can help teachers become more aware of their students' needs and improve the relationship of their instruction to students' styles and strategies (Oxford, et al., 1990; Nyikos, 1996).

Proficient readers use one or more metacognitive strategies to comprehend text. Pressley et al. (1998) found that students' comprehension was not enhanced by merely reading more text. If the students used even one of the strategies, for example summarizing, comprehension was improved. If students were given a host of strategies that they could apply at their discretion, comprehension was greatly improved.

### *31 Classroom Instruction Using Metacognitive Strategies*

The purpose of implementing metacognitive instruction in this research was to improve students' reading comprehension. In this instruction, students were prompted to use metacognitive strategies to regulate their mental processes during reading activity and to achieve successful comprehension. Researchers have come up with a number of characteristics of optimal strategy instruction (Iverson, 2005). Strategy instruction should be explicit, integrated, task-based, and individualized. It should also deal with affective factors and promote learner autonomy. Besides using metacognitive strategy, this instruction also made use of the advantage of pair work and class discussion

Vandergrift and Goh (2012: 86) also explained that students store three kinds of knowledge about their cognition: person, task, and strategy knowledge. First, person knowledge relates to students understanding about themselves as readers and the beliefs they have about what leads them to success or failure in comprehending reading materials. Second, it is task knowledge, It is the knowledge about the purpose and demands of the reading task including knowing how to approach and to complete it. The last is strategy knowledge. It is students' knowledge about strategies that can be used to accomplish a specific goal. It includes the awareness of when and how to use specific strategies to achieve comprehension goals. All this knowledge was improved through some stages of metacognitive instruction.

Here are the stages of metacognitive instruction (Vandergrift and Goh, 2012, p. 110-111):

#### 1. Planning/predicting stage

Students are guided and encouraged to discuss the topics, contexts, structures, expressions, vocabularies, types of questions and the necessary information that are they usually hard to comprehend. Then, they discuss how they are going to read to get the information they need and what strategy they are going to do.

They write down their prediction and planning in the form of metacognitive instruction stages. Gradually, the role of lecturer will be relinquished, start from leading to brainstorm the prediction with the whole class, let the students discuss it in pairs, then get them predict and plan for their reading on their own.

#### 2. First Read - First Verification Stage

The goal of the first verification phase is to get new information from the text and what they try to discuss the text. They are not allowed to use dictionary. Then, they discuss the strategies used for arriving at their comprehension. They also identify the parts that cause confusion or the necessary information they have not got in the first reading. A further goal of this stage is to set the students up for the second reading. They prepare themselves to monitor their reading processes more carefully during the second reading, to determine the parts of the text that need most careful attention and to use more appropriate strategy to get the necessary information.

#### 3. Second Read - Second Verification Stage

After the second reading, students begin revising and adding new information to their notes, as required. Once students have updated their understanding of the text, the lecturer leads a class discussion to reconstruct the main points and most salient details of the text that become the correct answer of the questions and to share the appropriate strategies they have successfully used to get those information.

#### 4. Third Read - Final Verification Stage

The final verification stage begins with the students open the dictionary and ask one question for each pair about the text to the lecturer. The students are allowed to use their dictionary to check the meaning of the words to get information that they may not have understood earlier. The unfamiliar words or idioms are also discussed in this stage.

#### 5. Reflection and Goal-Setting Stage

During the last stage of this instruction, the lecturer encourages students to evaluate the difficulties they confronted, their strategy use in this activity, and how they were or were not successful in coping with these difficulties. After that, they set plans for what they need to do to avoid themselves from the same problems and to improve their ability to comprehend the text in the next meeting.

Each of the stages helps and leads the students to be a better reader as described in the following explanation:

1. In metacognitive instruction, students are required to activate their background knowledge related to the common topics, vocabularies, expressions, structures, and types of questions on reading comprehension every time they do planning and predicting stage. It can prepare their mind before starting to read to the text and can make them easier to recall the information they need to comprehend what the speaker says in the audio.
2. In the second up to the fourth stage, they are required to monitor their comprehension, to identify their difficulty, and to solve it together with their pair. They are encouraged to determine what kind of information they need to understand for answering the questions and to choose a certain strategy which is effective to get that information. This process can make the students know more about the demand of the task, whether it demands them to read for detailed information, for main idea, or for the gist of the writer's utterance. It can also make them pay attention more on the process they do when they read the text and to be selectively implement a strategy that can help them get a better understanding on the text.
3. Then in the last stage of this instruction, students are required to reflect on what they had done during the reading activity and to set a plan for the next reading. It can make the students know more about themselves as a reader because they are always encouraged to evaluate the development of their reading skill as well as the problem they frequently face. By knowing that, they will know what aspects they need to improve or what material they need to learn more in order to make their reading skill better.

### *3.2 Application and Findings of Metacognitive Strategies*

The result of the students' pre-test score analysis showed that most of them tended to choose the answers containing the words used in the text. They were mostly tricked by multiple-choice items containing vocabularies and types of sentence which had the closest similarity to what they read. It can be seen from the most incorrect answers they gave to the question number 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 10. In question number 1, 4, and 5 that contained negative, double negative and almost negative expression, 60% of them chose the multiple-choice item that had a negative expression too instead of choosing the restatement form of what was stated in the. The same thing also did in 65% of them when they answered question number 6, 8 and 9. These questions contained the question about stated and unstated details. They didn't pay careful attention to the intended meaning of these phrases. From this analysis, it can be concluded that the students' skill to understand the written text was still low.

They should not be influenced by the vocabularies, and structures which were similar to what the speaker used in the conversation. Instead, they must be able to understand its meaning or its idea and not rely on the literal

meaning of the words used in the text. The questions some questions required them to make an inference for understanding the meaning of unfamiliar word or idiom they found.

Some questions required students to understand the information which was clearly and literally stated by the writer in the text. But, the length of the text became the challenge for them. Because, to get the necessary information, they should be able to keep their concentration well when reading to the audio.

The final result of Preliminary study got after checking and analyzing the answers of the students who given pre-test, and showed that the researcher got the mean score of the students was 50. It was lower than the criterion that has been stipulated by KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal/ Minimum Passing Grade Criteria) which is 70. So the researcher decided to do the research in the form of Classroom action Research.

Then the researcher started to implement metacognitive instruction. However, the result was not good enough. the mean score of students on the first cycle test was 67. Although it was higher than the mean score on pre-test which was 50, but it had not reached the stipulated KKM yet. Based on the analysis of their answers, it could be stated that they were still difficult to understand the implied meaning, to find the stated or unstated details in the text, and to identify topic and main idea.

In addition, some of students did not pay attention to the lecturer's explanation and did not participate actively in pair and class discussion. Besides, after observing their pair work in the class, the researcher found that in the verifying stage, there were some student who only compared their answers without discussing the reason or the key word that made them chose their answers. In the reflection stage, there were also some pairs who only wrote the problems they met without making a plan for the next reading activity.

Therefore, the researcher conducted the second cycle in order to solve these problems and to get a better result. In this cycle, the researcher gave more motivation and attention to the students, especially those who tended to make noise in the backside. The lecturer encouraged and gave them chance to freely ask any parts text they had not really understood. The researcher also gave more explanation of the material and the purpose of using metacognitive strategy before, while, and after the reading activity. Students were also encouraged to make various restatements and did some exercises together to accustom them getting the detailed information.

The result of observation scheme and the students' average score in this cycle was much better than the previous one. The students' activeness and engagement in learning activity improved and so as their mean score which became 78.5. It had reached the KKM. In this cycle, the students' activeness and engagement in learning activity was very good. For example, in the explanation session, they asked what they had not understood. Some of them even voluntarily made their own examples and gave comments to the inappropriate restatement made by their classmates.

Besides, when they did five stages of metacognitive instruction to accomplish their reading task, they supported and helped each other to comprehend the text. They shared what they had understood and told the difficulty they found to their pair. Then, they tried to solve it together and set a plan for the next read and verification stage.

In the fourth stage in which the researcher and all students discussed the answers to task together, they did not only answer the question but also gave the reason or showed the key-word they used as the base of choosing their answer. They also can showed which part of the text which become the answer. Some students even gave comment when the answer given by the other pairs was different from theirs or when the reason they conveyed was considered insufficient. In this stage, they also discussed the meaning of the unfamiliar words or idioms used in the text and the context in which they commonly used.

Then, in the last stage, they wrote the difficulty they faced during the listening process in this meeting and wrote a plan to make it better in the next meeting. Some of them also consulted their problems to the other pairs or to the lecturer or the researcher in order to get some suggestions on what they needed to do or what ability they should improve to make their comprehension better.

After analyzing all the data collected from Preliminary study until the second one, the researcher concluded that the students' ability in understanding the reading text comprehension as well as their ability in answering each of the questions had improved. It could be seen from the improvement of their test result.

Table 1. The Result of Reading Test

	<b>Pre-cycle</b>	<b>First Cycle</b>	<b>Second Cycle</b>
Pair 1	50	65	77.7
Pair 2	55	68	78
Pair 3	55	67	80
Pair 4	50	68	78
Pair 5	50	67	78
<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>78.5</b>

From the previous table it can be seen that the score of reading test of each pair increased. The increasing of the score of each pair influenced the increasing the mean score of each cycle. Therefore the researcher concluded that the use of metacognitive instruction had improved the students' reading comprehension.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Metacognitive strategy used in this instruction was helpful to make the students easier to comprehend the English text. It can be seen from the discussion above that after being involved in metacognitive instruction the students knew what to do before, while, and after they read the text.

By doing prediction and planning stage with their pair, they actually activated as well as getting more background knowledge related to the text. The repeated practice of this stage made them understand and remember the vocabularies, structures, topics, contexts, and any other things related to this text. Therefore, it made them easier to recall any necessary information that helped them to comprehend the text.

They also felt the advantage of pair and group discussion they did during the implementation of this metacognitive instruction. In this stage, they conveyed their confusion in understanding the content of the text or in determining the correct restatement in the available multiple-choice items and tried to solve it together. They learned from their pair and their classmates about what part to be paid attention to, what part that was typically became the important key-word, and what kind of information they needed to answer the questions. It also made them understand what strategy they could use when they wanted to get the information. Through this discussion, they shared various knowledge related to text and shared some effective strategies to comprehend the text.

Furthermore, the reflection and goal-setting that they did in the last stage of this instruction encouraged them to consciously monitor the development of their reading skill. After doing a reading activity, this stage encouraged them to think about some ways that could make their ability better, instead of just building a self-concept that they were not good readers.

So, the researcher concluded that the use of metacognitive instruction in this classroom action research was successful in improving the students' reading skill. This instruction did not merely focus on the outcome of the reading process done by the students, but focused on the process of learning to read itself. Thus, it guided them to learn how to read and to understand the text, instead of just testing their reading skill.

#### References

- Chamot, A. U., Barnhardt, S., El-Dinary, P., & Robbins, J. (1996). *Methods for Teaching Learning Strategies in the Foreign Language Classroom*. In Rebecca L. Oxford (Ed.), *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives*. (Technical Report #13) (pp. 175- 187). Honolulu: University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
- Cohen, A. D., Weaver, S. J., & Li, T. Y. (1998). *The Impact of Strategies Based Instruction on Speaking a Foreign Language*. (CARLA Working Paper Series No. 4.) Minneapolis: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota.
- Grabe, W. (2002). *Reading in a Second Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hopkins, David. (1993). *A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Researcher (Second Edition)*. Philadelphia: Open University Press

- Iverson, K. J. E. (2005). *The Instruction of Language Learning Strategies for Low-Proficiency ESL Learners*. Unpublished dissertation. Minnesota, Hamline University.
- Kemmis, Stephen and McTaggart, Robbin. (1988). *The Action Research Planner*. Springe.
- Kuhn, D. (2000). Metacognitive Development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9, 178–181.
- Muñiz-Swicegood, M. (1994). The Effects of Metacognitive Reading Strategy Training on the Reading Performance and Student Reading Analysis Strategies of Third Grade Bilingual Students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 18, 83-97.
- Nuttall, C. (2000). *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. UK: Macmillan Heinemann.
- Nyikos, M. (1996). The Conceptual Shift to Learner-Centered Classrooms: Increasing Teacher and Student Strategic Awareness. In R. L. Oxford (Ed.), *Language Learning Strategies Around The World: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (pp. 109-117). Honolulu: Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.
- Oxford, R. L., Talbott, V., & Halleck, G. (1990). Language Learning Strategies, Attitudes, Motivation, and Self-Image of Students in a University Intensive ESL Program. Paper presented at the 24th Annual TESOL Convention, San Francisco, CA.
- Pressley, M., Wharton-McDonald, R., Mistretta-Hampston, J., & Echevarria, M. (1998). The Nature of Literacy Instruction in Ten Grade-4/5 Classrooms in Upstate New York. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 2, 159–194.
- Stewner-Manzanares, G, Chamot, A. U., O'Malley, J. M., Küpper, L., & Russo, R. P. (1985). *Learning strategies in English as a second language instruction: A teacher's guide*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED338107).
- Wenden, A. & Rubin, J. (1987). *Learner strategies in language learning*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Vandergrift, Larry and Goh, Cristine C.M.. (2012). *Teaching & Learning Second Language Listening: Metacognition in Action*, New York: Routledge