



Instructors and Students' Use of Literal, Reorganization, and Inferential Reading Strategies

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Abstract

Different types of reading strategies pose challenges to instructors and learners in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. This study aimed at identifying and comparing reading strategies used by instructors and students in dealing with literal comprehension, reorganization, and inferential comprehension questions. The participants were five EFL instructors and 27 students from the English Language Proficiency Programme (ELPP) at the University of Malaya, Malaysia selected through purposive sampling. This qualitative study involved in-class observations and interviews with instructors, and questionnaires administered to students. The analysis of the data revealed that both instructors and students practice various reading strategies when dealing with comprehension questions, and some strategies used by the instructors are never or seldom used by the students. Strategies such as “reading questions before reading the passage”, “skimming and scanning”, “connecting prior knowledge”, and “finding context clues” were found to be used by both instructors and students. The findings indicated that instructors’ implementation of a variety of reading strategies affects students’ comprehension level over the reading materials. Therefore, the study can provide clear guidelines for the EFL instructors to seek for their students’ advancement of reading proficiency. This could ultimately result in students’ better academic achievement and learning motivation.

Keywords: EFL, Inferential, Instructor, Malaysia, Reading, Strategy

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Introduction

Reading comprehension is considered to be among the most essential skills for foreign language learners. It refers to how meaning is formed from written texts and is a multifaceted ability that needs the matching of interconnected information sources (Heilman, Blair & Rupley, 2002). Through consistent reading, one can expand other cognitive capacities and develop imagination. In globalized world, reading English is essential in preparing learners to study, work, and live in diverse contexts (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Dechant (1991) claims that effective reading is the most essential approach of efficient learning as the unity in the entire teaching and learning process demands effective reading.

Reading strategies, the detailed methods and practices that are used in reading process, trigger learners' contextual understanding and instill thoughts to attain purposes to develop educators' instruction methods and teachings. Ng and Ng (2013) emphasized the need for the research on the utilization of reading strategies by instructors in reading classes since it is proven to have significant positive impact on the students' reading comprehension.

Teaching reading strategy instructions improve comprehension and also benefit other relevant areas like regulating during reading (Mehrpour & Rahimi, 2010). Zare (2013) states that reading strategies are essential for successful comprehension and that the teachers should implement them in class. Reading is also important since it allows access to information through both print and digital format mediums, viewed as the most crucial skill for success in education. Therefore, learning to read in English in general requires incorporation of social and affective strategies to engage in language learning tasks.

According to Kissau and Hiller (2013) the type of instruction that a student receives affects reading comprehension as simply providing opportunities or requiring students to read will not make proficient readers. Teaching reading comprehension skills, where the activation of students' prior knowledge via the use of interactive reading strategies is emphasized, needs to be applied by the instructors. Unsurprisingly, reading remains problematic for many EFL students who have limited input sources (Amini, Ayari, & Amini, 2016).

Reading strategies are used purposefully by learners and teachers and are associated with their reading achievement and proficiency (Oxford, 1999). Thus, the instructors' ability to distinguish between classifications of strategies could help them in attaining the awareness of their preferences and expectations and lead to teachers' creativity in applying various reading strategies (Amini, Zahabi, & Alavi, 2016).

Although English is considered as a second language in Malaysia and is widely used in official settings such as private universities, many international students who come from non-English speaking countries, such as China, Indonesia, Thailand, and Middle Eastern countries, (EFL context), face difficulties in learning English a foreign language. According to Qrquez and Ab Rashid (2017), one of the major difficulties international students face when learning English in Malaysia is reading comprehension, which some are related to the ability to distinguish the forms of

writing or the structure of the text, attention, word complexity, and linguistic awareness (Salina & Hamza, 2018). Therefore, inadequate use of reading strategies could influence students' learning.

Hassan and Selamat (2002) found that most of language teachers in Malaysia need to search for external materials from other sources such as internet since they face difficulties in generating ideal reading materials and strategies for their students. Malaysian teachers rarely explain reading strategies overtly, thus divesting pupils of the necessary strategies they are required to use in meaning making process while reading a text (Asraf, 1996). David and Govindasamy (2006) found that Malaysian language teachers do not utilize suitable reading strategies. Nambiar (2007) concluded that even if reading strategies are taught, the teaching does not usually emphasize the entire categories of reading comprehension skills. Malaysian teachers generally face problems regarding the selection and use of reading strategies to develop students' reading comprehension in English effectively (AD-Heisat, Mohammed, Krishnasamy & Issa, 2009). Consequently, despite some students get the certificate of the prerequisite English courses and enroll in the programmes, they are not proficient in reading comprehension. Some could hardly comprehend the assigned texts, while others misunderstand, take too long to understand, use the wrong techniques to identify keywords, or even summarize the text. Therefore, if this problem is not addressed, it might consequently affect their performance and academic achievement negatively, not only in the English preparation courses but also other courses that are taught in English. Moreover, with the little research on reading strategies in Malaysia, the current research is aiming to put emphasis on the instructors' and students' use of reading strategies considering the growing demand for English at different levels.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following research objectives and questions were formulated:

Research Objectives

- 1) To explore reading strategies used and not used by instructors in teaching comprehension questions.
- 2) To investigate to the reading strategies used and not used by the students in answering reading comprehension questions.
- 3) To compare the differences of the use of reading strategies between instructors and students in teaching/answering reading comprehension questions.

Research Questions

- 1) What reading strategies are used and not used by teachers in teaching *literal comprehension questions, reorganization questions, and inferential questions?*
- 2) To what extent are the reading strategies used/not used by students in *literal comprehension questions, reorganization questions, and inferential questions?*
- 3) What are the differences in reading strategies that teachers and students use to teach/answer reading comprehension questions?

The three main types of reading comprehension questions were adapted from Barrett's taxonomy of reading comprehension, as the three strategies to answer

reading comprehension questions are used in teaching reading comprehension, while the other types are mainly used in teaching literature.

Literature Review

Reading comprehension usually involves seven abilities: identifying the order, identifying words used in the context, detecting the main ideas, interpreting information, making inferences, identifying reasons (cause and effect), and associating. In other words, reading refers to how meaning is constructed utilizing reader's background information, the information from the text and contextual clues (Wixson, Peters, Weber, & Roeber, 1987).

Comprehension is a process in which readers interact with text by blending background knowledge, experience, the details and main information provided in a text, and the readers' interpretations extracted from the text (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Henceforth, reading is not only how letters, words, sentences, or paragraphs are recognized. In contrary, what readers are required to have is their current information (i.e. schemata) to forecast the upcoming information in the text as well as the way novel, unacquainted bits of information is communicated to the prior knowledge (Bojovik, 2010).

Barrett's Taxonomy

Barrett's Taxonomy is formed to regulate students' reading comprehension level. The taxonomy classifies reading skills into five levels and is illustrated categorically from the lowest level of reading skills to the highest: literal, reorganization, inference, evaluation, and appreciation (Muayanah, 2014). The Barrett Taxonomy was initially aimed to help teachers in producing comprehension and test questions for reading purpose. In this research, the first three levels are included because of the relevance to the setting and context of the study.

Literal Comprehension Questions

Literal comprehension questions are referred to understand the direct meaning, such as understanding facts, vocabulary, locations, times, dates, and many more. Questions from this category could be answered explicitly based on the provided content.

Reorganization Comprehension Questions

Based on the understanding from literal comprehension questions, learners need to find and combine that information for additional understanding.

Inferential Comprehension Questions

They involve the understanding of the content beyond literal understanding. Initially, learners face difficulties while answering inferential questions as it involves questions whose answers are in the content but not explained explicitly (Day & Park, 2005).

Language teachers should be able to distinguish between clear classifications to teach language learning strategies (Amini, Ayari & Amini, 2016) and should know the process of utilizing suitable strategies for teaching reading comprehension in order to instill a portion of information (Javed, Eng, Mohamed & Ismail, 2016).

In Malaysia, teaching is considered as the most important tool for guiding students in English language mainly in reading comprehension. Semtin and Maniam (2015) stated that enthusiasm as well as passion of an instructor when teaching directly influences students' reading engagement and affects their interest in reading. Instructors often have the best knowledge regarding reading comprehension assessment for EFL students' in the classroom. They use several strategies for teaching reading comprehension, such as *monitoring-clarifying* (Semin & Maniam, 2015), *reciprocal teaching*, *QARs* (understanding and analysis of questions) (Sarjan & Mardiana, 2017), *cognitive strategy* (Eng, Mohamed & Ismail, 2016), and *Metacognitive strategy* (Diseth, 2011).

Javed, Eng, Mohamed and Ismail's (2016) study aimed at identifying the use of literal, reorganization, and inferential comprehension questions by ESL teachers in ten secondary schools in Malaysia. The study revealed that only a few reading strategies were used for teaching inferential comprehension questions.

Muayanah (2014) described the ways of teaching methods in order to help students in reading a written text and quick extraction of the required information. She found that different strategies used by English teachers are helpful in promoting learner's reading ability, adding that well-developed questions are essential in order to help students to interact with their text. This facilitates the students to extract meaning critically.

Al-Jarrah and Ismail (2018) directed the investigations towards the difficulties that are faced by EFL learners in reading English comprehension.

Moreover, Aqeel and Farrah (2019) focused on examining the use of comprehension questions according to Barrett's taxonomy. Findings suggested that, higher order thinking skills, English skills, and inferential evaluations skills in Barrett's taxonomy are not present in eighth standard textbook and reading material. Hence, lower levels of education do not require inferential comprehension reading. This study emphasized on the need to use inferential reading skills by Malaysian teachers.

In view of the above discussion, it was found that there is little research conducted on the use of reading strategies by instructors in Malaysia. The study aims to put emphasis on the effective use of reading strategies by instructors and students in reading comprehension.

Methodology

The framework of the study is based on the first three levels of Barrett's Taxonomy for the types of comprehension questions: 1) Literal Comprehension, 2) Reorganization, and 3) Inferential Comprehension questions.

In this study, a qualitative design was used. The instructors' use of reading strategies in teaching reading comprehension was explored. The problems of teaching reading strategies were identified more precisely, and insights were added. Hence, in exploring the instructors and students' use of reading strategies, the instructors were interviewed to gather information about their perspectives on the strategies of teaching reading comprehension. In-class observations were conducted on the instructors to investigate if the "appropriate" strategies were used. In addition, survey questionnaires were distributed to the students to gain some additional descriptive information about the students. The reason for not employing a mixed-methods research design was the low number of students (27) to do any quantitative analysis.

Instruments

This research includes several research instruments for data collection. All instruments were first validated. In this study, the face validity was considered as three content experts validated the observation checklist, interview questions and the questionnaire for any common errors like double-barreled, confusing, and (mis)leading questions. The collected data was then triangulated.

A semi-structured interview structure was set to obtain in-depth information using open-ended questions (Green & Thorogood, 2004). Interviews are useful in exploring experiences, views, opinions, or beliefs on specific matters. A phenomenon can be explored and compared to others, to develop an understanding of the underlying structures of beliefs. In the current study, the researcher conducted the interview(s) with the five available instructors (all who were teaching at the department) for about 30 minutes each.

The type of observation used in this study was non-participant observation. Such qualitative observation is done to observe a person and draw the findings from their reaction to certain parameters (Kawulich, 2005). Observational research could contribute to uncover how people act, as well as discover about their roles and behaviors (Walshe, Ewing & Griffith, 2011). In the present study, the researchers conducted the in-class observation(s) in Reading Comprehension class for about 1.5 hours each. The observations were conducted twice within a week.

As for the quantitative data which contributes descriptively to the understanding of the topic in the present study, a survey was conducted on the entire population. The sampling method was "census", i.e., participants were all the students taking the course. The survey consisted of 32 closed-ended and three open-ended questions. Students were given 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Survey was used to search for collecting information on attitudes and behavior (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

All the instruments were adapted from Javed, Eng, Mohamed and Ismail (2016) and were validated in terms of content and format (content and face validity) by two experts in the field.

Site

The study was conducted in ELPP Centre, University of Malaya, a public university in Malaysia, to investigate the use of reading strategies among EFL instructors and students in teaching/learning reading comprehension. The English Language Proficiency Programme (ELPP) is a Basic English Program, offered in University of Malaya, Malaysia.

Participants and Sampling

Using a purposive sampling method, the participants were selected. The population for the study consists of 5 ELPP instructors and 27 ELPP students from different English proficiency levels (foundation, intermediate, and advanced) of University Malaya, Malaysia.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Permission was obtained from University of Malaya and observation and interview sessions were scheduled based on the preference and availability of the participants. The consent forms were given to the participants. Next, survey questionnaire was distributed to the students after each class. It was then followed by the semi-structured interview of the instructors using a voice recorder.

After the data were collected from the in-class observation, the checklists and field notes were analyzed and described in detail. The data from the interview recordings were transcribed and the themes were extracted. Moreover, the quantitative data were keyed in by using SPSS software. In the present study the quantitative data is only presented to provide additional information about the students. The reason a mixed-methods research design was not employed for this study was the low number of students for a quantitative study. Therefore, the study is primarily qualitative.

Results

This study focuses on all the instructors of English Language Proficiency Programme under University of Malaya Centre for Continuing Education in University Malaya as the main respondents for the in-class observation and interview sessions. Tables 1-3 display the instructors' background information including gender, class level they are teaching and years of teaching experiences in ELPP.

Table 1. Gender of Instructors

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Cumulative Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Female | 4 | 80.0 | 80.0 |
| Male | 1 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 5 | 100.0 | |

Table 2. Levels Instructors Are in Charge of Teaching

| Class | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Cumulative Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Beginner/Foundation | 1 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| Intermediate | 2 | 40.0 | 60.0 |
| Advance | 2 | 40.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 5 | 100.0 | |

Table 3. Instructors' Years of Teaching Experience in ELPP

| Class | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Cumulative Percentage (%) |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1-3 years | 1 | 20.0 | 20.0 |
| 4-6 years | 4 | 80.0 | 100.0 |
| Total | 5 | 100.0 | |

Instructors' Responses

The initial stage of data analysis focuses on the analysis for the in-class observation for each of the instructors. The same "Reading" class session was chosen for every instructor to be observed by the researchers twice for the data collection.

Summary of Analysis of Observations

Overall, the instructors employed a variety of strategies when teaching literal comprehension questions. The strategies that were observed in the observations were reading the questions in advance, previewing the text, locating keywords based on the questions, locating topic sentence, finding keywords in the text, scanning the text for particular information, finding supporting details based on the keywords, differentiating between important, less important and unimportant supporting details, and skimming the text for main ideas.

The strategies used for teaching reorganization questions were reading the questions in advance, previewing the text, finding main information from the questions, finding the key concepts, locating difficult and new words to comprehend meanings using contextual clues, skimming and scanning for identifying the reasons (cause and effect), merging the previous and existent information, analysis of information, rearrangement of information, identifying supporting details using keywords, differentiating important, less important, and unimportant information, reading the text again to discover details, merging the implied information with the explicit information, merging the information from several sources to support the main points, and summarization.

The strategies revealed in the observations for teaching inferential questions were testing the students' prior knowledge, reading the questions in advance, locating

clues words from questions, using current knowledge to know about the main concepts, grasping the writer's purpose, making and reformulating assumptions and providing and justification for the acceptance and rejection of assumptions, relating text to personal experiences, encouraging students to provide reasoning about predictions, recalling information, and asking the students to draw conclusions from text. However, the strategies that were not applied are reading the text again to infer meaning and draw conclusion and making multiple interpretations about the inference.

Summary of Interview Analysis

The interview sessions were conducted for each instructor in about 30 minutes for each, on a similar day after the in-class observation sessions.

Overall, the analysis of data shows that instructors employ a variety of strategies when teaching literal comprehension questions. The strategies that were mentioned in the interviews were reading the questions in advance, finding keywords from the questions and passage, scanning and skimming to find particular information or main concepts, finding supporting details from the keywords, and improving vocabulary range and pronunciation. On the other hand, the not used strategies were previewing the text, finding the topic sentence, and differentiating between important, less important and unimportant supporting details.

The strategies used in teaching reorganization questions were reading the questions in advance, summarization to locate supporting details and the main ideas, guessing difficult/new words using contextual clues, linking the previous and existing knowledge, reorganization of information, identifying supporting details from the keywords, and blending the implicit information. On the other hand, the unused strategies were previewing the text, identification of concepts from the questions, skimming and scanning to find out the cause and effect, differentiating important, less important and unimportant supporting details, reading again to find supporting details, merging several sources, and relating the explicit information to support the main points.

The strategies used when teaching reorganization questions were assessing students' previous and existing knowledge about the topic, identification of the contextual clues, using previous knowledge to extract the main concepts, reading questions in advance, recalling information, making assumptions, and relating the text to personal experiences. Teachers would ask the students to make inferences and draw conclusions from the text, give relatable example, and use question-answer technique. On the other hand, the not used strategies were finding the clue words from the questions, rereading text to draw conclusion, giving reasons for the accepting or rejecting the assumptions, reformulation of the assumptions, giving the reason about predictions, and making multiple interpretations.

Students' Responses

Table 4. Students' Gender

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Cumulative Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Female | 12 | 44.4 | 44.4 |
| Male | 15 | 55.6 | 100.0 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 | |

Table 5. Students' Age

| Age | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Cumulative Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Below 18 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 18-21 | 12 | 44.4 | 44.4 |
| 22-25 | 7 | 25.9 | 70.4 |
| Above 25 | 8 | 29.6 | 100.0 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 | |

Table 6. Students' English Proficiency Level

| Level | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Cumulative Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Beginner/Foundation | 3 | 11.1 | 11.1 |
| Intermediate | 17 | 63.0 | 74.1 |
| Advance | 7 | 25.9 | 100.0 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 | |

In this section, the data collected from a total of 27 students regarding their use of reading strategies in answering reading comprehension questions will be discussed based on three major components which are 1) literal, 2) reorganization, and 3) inferential comprehension questions. A questionnaire consisting of close-ended and open-ended questions were used for the data collection.

Analysis of the Students' Responses to the Scale

Using a five-point Likert scale, 1) representing “never”, 2) “rarely”, 3) “sometimes”, 4) “regularly”, and 5) “often”, the quantitative data from the students was collected. When answering literal comprehension questions, the students would still look for the topic sentence when reading text and try to find key words and supporting details. The highest percentage belongs to students who “often” read the questions in advance

(51.9%). It is then followed by 48.1% of students who “sometimes” locate the keywords in the text, and go through the text completely to find out the main ideas/concepts.

When answering reorganization questions, the students would “sometimes” relate the knowledge that they have in the past with the knowledge that they newly learned and find additional information from the keywords stated in the text (both 55.6%). Next, 51.9% of students “often” read the questions in advance, “sometimes” combine information from several sources and merge explicit information to back the main points.

When answering inferential questions, the students would “sometimes” guess about meaning of unfamiliar words (48.1%), while 44.4% of students “often” read the questions first before reading the passage and “sometimes” read the text twice (or more) to draw conclusion.

Analysis of the Students’ Responses to Open-Ended Question

For open-ended questionnaire, three open-ended questions, formulated from three different types of reading comprehension questions, were asked. These open-ended questions were analyzed according to the answer written by the students. The three questions were:

Question 1: How do you answer questions which are clearly stated in the text?

Question 2: How do you answer questions related to keywords and chronological events?

Question 3: How do you answer questions where the answers are not stated in the text?

When answering literal comprehension questions students would read questions in advance, locating keywords from the questions and the passage, differentiate between important, less important and unimportant supporting details, go through the text completely to discover the main ideas, and scan the text for particular information. On the other hand, the unused strategies by students were searching the topic sentence and reading the signpost questions (questions indicated beside the text).

When answering reorganization questions, students would read the questions in advance, locate key ideas from the text, go through the text to understand or explain the cause and effect, relate the prior and existing knowledge, merge information from several sources, reorganize information to find answers, read the text again to find supporting details, scan to discover the cause and effect, locate the main concepts in the questions, and find difficult or new words based on the contextual clues.

On the other hand, the strategies that were not utilized were summarization of the text to locate the supporting details (additional information), comprehending

implicit information, and merging that information with the implicit information to support the main points.

When answering reorganization questions, the students read the questions first, identify the clue words from the questions, read the text at least twice to draw conclusion, guess meaning of unfamiliar words, relate text to one's own experiences, recall information, draw conclusions from the text, utilize prior knowledge to infer details from key concepts, and identify contextual clues from the text. On the other hand, the unused strategies were applying the current and prior knowledge about the topic, making guesses about the conclusion, and providing explanation for the acceptance or rejection of a reason.

Discussion

When teaching/answering literal comprehension questions both instructors and students employed reading strategies of reading the questions before reading passage, recognizing the keywords from questions and the passage, scanning the text for particular information, finding auxiliary details using the keywords, and skimming the text to discover the main ideas. A reading strategy that was used only by students but not instructors was differentiating between important and less important supporting details. Previewing the text and identifying the topic sentence were not used by instructors and students. When teaching/answering reorganization questions, both instructors and students employed reading strategies, such as read questions before reading passage, finding main concepts in the text, finding complex or new words to infer their meanings using contextual clues, relating the background information to the existent information, and rearranging the information to find the answers. The reading strategies that were used only by instructors but not students were analyzing the information to locate the answers, locating supporting details from the keywords, and synthesizing the information implied in the text. The strategies that used only by students but not instructors were skimming the text to identify the cause and effect, scanning the text to find the cause and effect, combining the information from several sources, creating the correct answer of the questions, reading the text again to identify supporting details, and finding the main information using the questions. The strategies used neither by instructors nor the students were summarizing to find supporting details, combining information that are explicitly stated in the text to support the main points, previewing the text, and distinguishing between important and less or not important details.

When dealing with inferential questions, instructors and students often read the questions first, made assumptions, related the text to personal experience, and recalled information from their memory. Instructors asked students to make inferences about the information in the text and use prior knowledge to infer details from the key concepts. Instructors also preferred students to locate contextual clues in the text. Instructors believed testing the students' previous knowledge about the current topic could enhance students reading comprehension. Only students preferred to find the clues from the questions and read twice to comprehend. In answering/teaching inferential questions none of students or instructors were aware of giving justification

for the acceptance or rejection of the assumptions, reformulating the assumptions, sharing the reasoning about predictions, making inferences about the text, and making multiple interpretations.

The most common strategy shared by students and instructors was reading questions before reading passage. Read questions prior reading the text was found necessary so that the students can see the purpose of reading to activate their prior knowledge, as in line with Houtveen and van de Grift (2007). Thus, it could assist them to pay attention to the most important part of information in the text and relate to the text.

Besides, skimming and scanning were frequently used by both instructors and students. This is supported by Torgesen (2002). They emphasized the importance of skimming and scanning in determining the relevance of the information that students have located in the text and identifying main ideas of the text as skimming assists reader in extracting the gist of a text.

“Finding contextual clues” is also one of the common strategies in reading comprehension questions. Here, the clues are usually extracted by instructors and students from both questions and the text. This finding is in line with Yuen’s (2009) findings that learning how to use context clues while reading can improve one’s understanding. Using clues instead of, for example depending on dictionary or internet, helps to stimulate critical thinking, since dealing with context clue requires “creativity”. In this regard, Hartmann and Blass (2007) also suggested that using contextual clues encourages students to think deeper and that they may also infer a word’s definition by combining the clues with logic or their prior knowledge.

Another main strategy used by both students and teachers was “connecting personal experiences”. Instructors encouraged the students to share their experiences to engage with the reading text and comprehend it successfully. This is in line with a study by McNamara and Magliano (2009) found reading comprehension tends to be more successful when the readers relate knowledge and experiences with information in the text.

The use of background information to interpret the key concepts was another common strategy before getting the students to start reading. This is done through engagement with a real-life story to connect the students to the new information for better comprehension. Taboada and Guthrie (2006) stated activating students’ prior knowledge before getting them started to read helps in engaging the students with the text and its content and this will lead to a better comprehension.

Furthermore, the “question-answer relationship” strategy helped to encourage the students to make connections, predictions, and assumptions throughout the process of reading the text. Questioning students throughout the reading helps the students to concentrate more on the content of the reading texts, which is also highlighted by Taboada and Gunthrie (2006).

There were several reading strategies that were not used by instructors and the students. When answering literal comprehension questions, instructors and students did not “Preview the text” and “Find the topic sentence”. “Summarize the text to identify supporting details” converges the information evidently mentioned in the text to back the main points; “preview the text” and “read the signpost questions” were not used when dealing with reorganization questions. Lastly, the strategies of acceptance or rejection of the assumptions, reformulating assumptions, guiding learners to provide reason about predictions, asking the students to draw conclusions about the text, and “making multiple interpretations about the inference” were ignored by both groups.

The study concludes that the instructors and students’ implementation of reading strategies in teaching or answering reading comprehension questions varies and depends on the level of class they teach/learn (i.e. foundation, intermediate, or advanced). The ELPP instructors and students employed most of the listed reading strategies for literal comprehension questions. Although ELPP focuses on IELTS preparations lessons, and IELTS materials mostly consist of reorganization and inferential questions rather than literal comprehension questions, reorganization and inferential questions were less emphasized. It can be concluded that a variety of reading strategies should be used to enrich learners’ reading skill among Malaysian EFL students.

Conclusion

Reading is an important educational goal. Strong reading comprehension skills are critical to students’ success in twenty-first century classrooms (Dechant, 1991). In Malaysian English Foreign Language context, teaching and learning processes occur mostly through reading comprehension since the students must read and understand different types of texts to develop understanding of the subject matter.

The result of the present study provides a comprehensive explanation of the reading strategies used by instructors and learners when teaching and answering literal comprehension, reorganization, and inferential questions. They may provide insights to the instructors and students in employing appropriate reading strategies when answering with reading comprehension questions.

The study concluded that both instructors and students employ various different strategies for different types of reading comprehension questions. This study also identified the extent to which the EFL instructors and students used those strategies.

The findings imply that some instructors and students do not use reading strategies when teaching/answering reorganization and inferential questions to improve EFL students’ reading comprehension skill. Asraf (1996) found that Malaysian teachers do not use sufficient reading strategies to improve students’ reading comprehension skills.

EFL instructors' implementation of any kind of reading strategies in reading comprehension class may affect their students' comprehension level. Thus, they may refer to the findings of this study since it will be useful in guiding them to implement the suitable and effective reading strategies for better reading comprehension.

The findings of this study could be beneficial for the students by applying Barrett's taxonomy of reading comprehension. Likewise, syllabus designers may consider using more diverse reading strategies to strengthen EFL students' comprehension and higher order thinking skills.

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