

COMPENSATION AS A STRATEGY IN TEACHING READING TO EFL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Hartini A. Pasumbu
Yuliana Dg. Macora

Abstract: This study aims to: 1) analyze the application of compensation strategy in teaching reading ; and 2) identify the students' achievement level in reading using compensation strategy to the Eighth Grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir. The research method is descriptive qualitative research. The data are the teacher and students' interaction, and the students' achievement. The samples are the Eighth Grade students SMP N 1 Poso Pesisir consist of 22 students. The qualitative data were obtained by doing observation and taking field notes. The result from the test evaluation, the students got good marks. It means that the students understood the text. They can answer their test correctly. In the time, the use of compensation strategies can help the students in guessing difficult words, so when the researchers gave them the test, they understood of how to answer it. Hence it can be concluded that compensation strategy through guessing intelligently is one of teaching aid that the students and the teacher need it in order to maintain interest and motivation, and increasing their understanding in reading descriptive text.

Keywords: *compensation, teaching reading, literacy practice, EFL junior high school students*

Reading English texts are not easy for some Indonesian students. The reason is that they might lack vocabulary; because of the lack of vocabulary they do not understand the meaning of the text. In addition, they might not be familiar with the topic of the text. For example read the descriptive text about; My Favorite Artist. As a result, they cannot grasp the information in the text.

In the preliminary research, the researchers found that the students did not interest to read English book or read English text, because they have problem in vocabulary. They are not master many vocabularies, so they failed in achieving the objective of reading to obtain information found in the text. Besides that, the teacher uses the old technique in teaching descriptive text that is Grammar Translation Method which makes the students felt bored and difficult to understand the material when teaching learning process conducted. Therefore, students tend to be noisy while studying. Students prefer chatting with their friends than to the teacher is explanation.

In connection with the problem mentioned above, the use of learning strategies especially compensation strategies enable students to comprehend descriptive text effectively in order to avoid boredom and misunderstanding. In learning, the use of compensation strategy is able to create smart learners which are able to comprehend the text based on the context. It was necessary for the researchers to conduct a study research in the

eighth grade students at SMPN 1 Poso Pesisir to be more comprehend of reading text.

Reading

Reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from the text and their own background knowledge to build meaning. The primary purpose of reading is comprehension. Reading is a process of trying to understand a written text by readers through decoding, interpreting the message and eventually understanding the writer's intention. Reading is an activity to confirm the specific topic and each change of topic that bases the readers 'previous ideas in mind about the topic and readers' knowledge of the language on the text. Reading is also students' activities in finding information, messages and knowledge to answer the questions from the written text include finding out the writer background in writing the text. The final step in a reading process is decoding larger units of language (Davies & Pearse, 2009; Nunan, 2003; Murcia & Ohlstein, 2002).

There are three types of reading: academic reading, job related reading and personal reading (Brown, 2004). Genres of reading that belong to academic reading are textbooks, theses, essays, papers, reference materials, editorials, and the like. Types of reading which are job-related reading are such as memos, applications, schedules, letters/emails, reports, and so forth. Genres of reading that are belong to personal reading are such as newspapers, magazines, invitations,

novels, short stories, etc. The genre of a text supports students in applying certain background information and cultural experience which assist them in getting the meaning. The categorization of reading aims for readers to know what the purpose of reading is.

Brown (2004:187-188) notes that reading comprehension consists of two big elements, micro and macro skills. The micro skills are presented below.

1. Discriminating among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.
2. Retaining chunk of language of different lengths in short-term memory,
3. Processing writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose,
4. Recognizing a core of words, and interpreting word order patterns and their significance,
5. Recognizing grammatical word classes (noun, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g. tense, agreement, pluralisation), patterns, rules and elliptical forms,
6. Recognizing that a particular meaning may be expressed indifferent grammatical forms, and,
7. Recognizing cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signalling the relationship between and among clauses.

Meanwhile, the macro skills include:

1. Recognizing the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation,
2. Recognizing the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose,
3. Inferring context that is not explicit by using background knowledge,
4. Distinguishing between literal and implied meanings,
5. Detecting culturally specific references and interpreting them in context of the appropriate cultural schemata,
6. Developing and using a battery of reading strategies, such as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of words from context, activating schemata for the interpretation of texts, inferring links and connections between supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification from described events, ideas, etc.

Compensation Strategy

Compensation strategies are one part of the Learning Strategies which is included in

Direct Learning Strategies. According to Oxford (1990:47), compensation strategies are the strategies or tools that enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge. Learners use compensation strategies for comprehending the target language when they have insufficient knowledge of the target language. These strategies make up for the deficiency in grammar and vocabulary. When learners do not know new words and expressions, they guess the meaning. A learner brings his own life experience to interpret data by guessing. Compensation strategies are also used in production when the grammatical knowledge is incomplete. When a learner does not know the subjunctive form of verb, a different form may be used to convey the message. For example, a learner uses guessing strategies based on partial knowledge of the target language. When a learner recognizes the words *shovel*, *grass*, *mower*, and *lawn* in a text, it could be understood that the text is about gardening.

Moreover, Oxford (1990) explains that compensation strategy is divided into two sets: guessing intelligently in listening and reading, and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. There are two strategies that contribute to guessing intelligently refer to two different kinds of clues: linguistic and non-linguistic.

1. Using linguistic clues. Seeking and using language-based clues in order to guess the meaning of what is read in the text or target language, in the absence of complete knowledge of vocabulary, grammar or other target language elements. Language-based clues may come from aspects of the target language that the learner already knows, from the learners' own language or from another language. For instance, if the learner does not know one word of a sentence, the other words would give clues to the meaning of the unknown word and of the whole sentence.
2. Using other clues. Seeking and using clues that are not language-based in order to guess the meaning of what is read in the text, in the absence of complete knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, or other target language elements, non-language clues may come from a wide variety of sources: knowledge context, situation, text structure, personal relationships, topic, or 'general world knowledge'. For example, if the learner does not know what is meant by the words *discounting* a text, noticing that the word is used in the context of classifying ads, and that it is followed by a list of items

and prices, providing clues suggesting that the term probably refer to selling and buying.

In line with reading comprehension, guessing intelligently becomes the main focus of this research. Guessing strategies are also called inference. It involves the use of variety of clues which are linguistic and non-linguistic clues. They are used to guess the meaning of difficult words when the learner does not understand. Guessing is actually just a special case of the way people typically process new information. Compensation strategies for reading comprehension are used to compensate for a lack of appropriate vocabulary. For instance, if learners do not know the meaning of some new words in a text, they use the surrounding sentence and the context of the text to get the point or meaning.

Research Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative, that aims to identify students' achievement level in reading comprehension of Eight grade students in SMP Negeri 1 Poso Pesisir. The sources of data are the students and teacher activities during the teaching and learning process, and the students' level achievement documentations.

In collecting data, the researchers observe the class by taking field note to find data of students and teacher activities in classroom while the teacher implemented the compensation in strategy teaching reading. Next, the researchers take the documentation of lesson plan and picture of students in classroom. Then, the researchers and the teacher evaluate the students to find out the students' reading level achievement by giving test. The data are analyzed descriptively, and then described and interpreted in sequential order.

Findings and Discussion

The Teacher and Students' Interaction in the Learning Process

In the observation day, the teacher started the material by explained about descriptive text. She then showed some pictures about the concert of some singers and asked some question to the students that related to the picture. Some students rose up their hands and answered the question. Then the teacher gave another text entitled "Barly, an Ordinary Student", and asked the students to found the difficult word in the text. The teacher and the students discussed together about the difficult words they write in the white board such as 'rather', 'casual clothes', 'spare time' and

'spend'. She asked the students to do not open the dictionary to translate the meaning of the words. The asked the students to find the meaning of the word by helping the picture, and paid attention to the sentence around. She gave the example to guess the meaning of word. The teacher then asked the students to guess the other words them self and discuss them with the classmates.

Next the teacher asked the students to read the text again carefully, and asked the student to discuss the meaning of the text in detail. After they finished read it, the teacher asked one student to explain the main point the first paragraph. The teacher then explained again the students about the first and the second paragraph. When the teacher finished gave the explanation, the teacher asked the students about what they did not understand. The students looked like understood the text already. The Teacher and students then explained about the questions of the text.

Furthermore, the teacher then asked the students to make 6 groups and wrote the member of each group in the white board. After that she asked the group to choose their leader of group and explain the role of the leader in group.

The teacher gave the text about "Mr. Smith, an Ordinary Lawyer." The text was in cutting form of paragraph, and then she asked the students to sit in the group and discuss the right part of the paragraph to become a good text. After that, the teacher asked them to write the difficult word in white board. After they wrote the difficult words in white board, each group tried to compete guess meaning of the difficult words based on the context of the text and the sentence around. The students were banned to open the dictionary when the teaching and learning process. The number of words that guessed right would be score for the group. Every group was enthusiastic to guess the meaning of the words because to get the point. Then the teacher asked the students to read the text once more and answer the questions. The students could answer the questions in pair. When they finished answer the question, the teacher gave feedback of their answer. Each of true answer got 10 point for the group.

The Students' Level Achievement

In second meeting, the teacher entered the class and said to the students that they would get a test. It was about answer the question individually by following the strategies that used before. The students cannot open the dictionary and have to finish the test in 30 minutes. The researchers collected their answer sheets, and then the teacher and the students read and discuss the answer of questions together. Based

on the average of student score that obtained from the test, it means that the students achievement was in level good because their score was 7,8 or 70,6%. The results of the test are in the Table 1.

Table 1. The Result of the Test

No	Students Initial	Right Answer	Score	Level
1.	Am	12	60	Fair
2.	Fk	19	95	Excellent
3.	Fr	10	50	Less
4.	Hi	12	60	Fair
5.	Jn	15	75	Good
6.	Ju	15	75	Good
7.	Kr	17	85	Good
8.	Mr	16	80	Good
9.	Mf	10	50	Less
10.	Rl	13	65	Fair
11.	Tr		0	-
12.	Rn	17	85	Good
13.	My	16	80	Good
14.	Ri	11	55	Less
15.	Hr	17	85	Good
16.	Ar	18	90	Excellent
17.	Gb	14	70	Good
18.	Mg	11	55	Less
19.	Nr	15	75	Good
20.	Nu	18	90	Excellent
21.	Og	15	75	Good
22.	Na	19	95	Excellent
		172	1555	Good
		7,8	70,6	

The level of students' achievement and their percentage can be seen in the Table 2.

Table 2. Table of Distribution of Students' Achievement Level.

No	Interval	Freq.	%	Level
1.	90 – 100	4	18,18%	Excellent
2.	70 – 89	10	45,45%	Good
3.	60 – 69	3	13,6%	Fair
4.	50 – 59	4	18,18%	Less
5.	0 – 49	-	-	Poor
	Total	22	100%	

Based on the Table 2, it can be seen that 4 students or 18,18% got 90-100 or in excellent level, 10 students or 45,45% got 70-89 or in good level, 3 students or 13,6% got 60-69 or in fair level, and 4 student 18,18% or got 50-59 or in less level. No one student got very poor level.

Conclusion

From the result of the evaluation test, the students got good marks. It means that the students understood the text. They can answer the test properly. In the time, the use of compensation strategies can help the students in guessing difficult words, so when the teacher gave them the test, they understood how to answer it. The researchers concluded that compensation strategy through guessing intelligently is one of teaching aid that the students and the teacher need in order to maintain interest and motivation and increasing their understanding in reading descriptive text.

REFERENCES

- Brown, H. D. 2004. *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. New York: White Plains
- Davies, P., & Pearse, E. 2009. *Success in English teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Murcia, M. C. & Olshtain, E. 2002. *Discourse and context in language teaching: A guide for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. 2003. *Practical English language teaching*. New York: McGrawHill Companies.
- Oxford, R. L. 1990. *Language learning strategies*. Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

About the Author

Hartini A. Pasumbu earned her bachelor degree in English Language Teaching from Universitas Sintuwu Maroso.

Yuliana Dg. Macora earned her master degree from Universitas Hasanuddin. She is a lecturer at English Education Department of Universitas Sintuwu Maroso. Her is in Applied Linguistics in Teaching English. She can be contacted at ydgmacor@gmail.com.