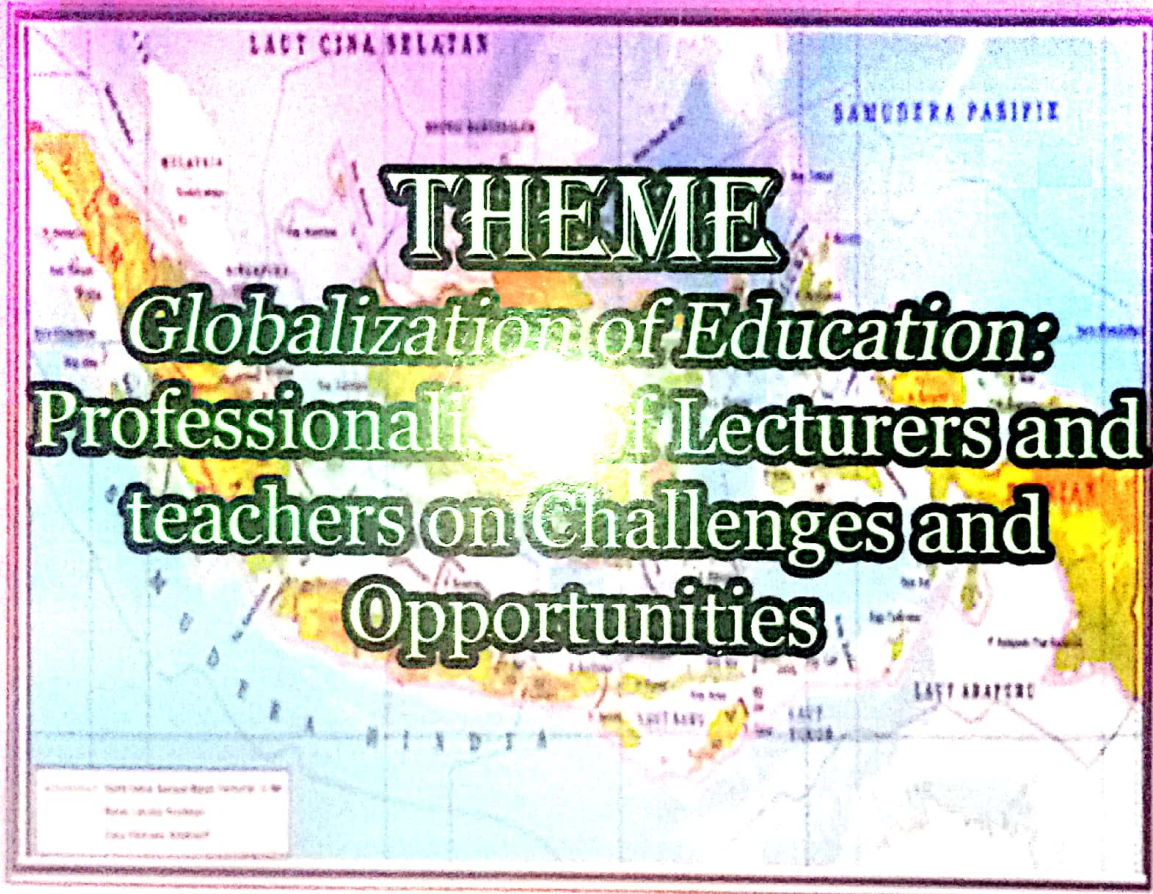


PROCEEDING

34

International Seminar



Postgraduate programs, Lampung University



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45th Anniversary of Lampung University

Bandar Lampung, Monday, 21 June 2010

PROCEEDING INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR IN EDUCATION 2010

“GLOBALIZATION OF EDUCATION: PROFESSIONALISM OF LECTURERS AND TEACHERS ON CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES”

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RESEARCH CENTER UNIVERSITY OF LAMPUNG
MONDAY; JUNE 21, 2010
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Bandarlampung, 21 June 2010

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RSNBI-JUNIOR-HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION COMPETENCE

Ujang Suparman
University of Lampung

Abstract

This study investigated differences of reading comprehension competences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers. Three major research questions were posed to be answered: are: 1. Are there differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in making sense of an English text? 2. Are there differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension problems they encounter in a text when trying to make sense of the ideas contained in the text? 3. Are there differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension strategies they employ to overcome the comprehension problems when they are making sense of the ideas in a text? Based on the results of the data analysis, the "more proficient RSNBI readers" and the "less proficient RSNBI readers" were found to be significantly different in making sense of the ideas conveyed in the texts, the problems they encountered while they were trying to comprehend the texts and in the strategies they employed to overcome their difficulties. The "more proficient RSNBI readers" used integrated comprehension strategies. In contrast, the "less proficient RSNBI readers" used non-integrative comprehension strategies. Based on the findings of this study, implications are developed for further research and teaching in relation to reading comprehension in English as a foreign language in Indonesian contexts.

Key words : *Think aloud protocol, comprehension problems, comprehension strategies, making sense of ideas, foreign language competence, and prior knowledge*

INTRODUCTION

This research was conducted to investigate Nationally Leading to Internationally Standard Junior High School (Indonesian: SMP-RSNBI) Students' reading comprehension competences in Lampung Province, especially in Bandar Lampung. This was motivated by the results of the previous research (Suparman, 2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2009; Soedradjat, 1997; Alisyahbana 2005) showing that many students found some problems in making sense of the ideas in the texts. Ideally, all students are able to understand the ideas of the texts they read not only stated but also unstated information conveyed in the texts. Unfortunately, they could not find the main idea of the texts. However, few research findings have been ever reported especially on RSNBI students' comprehension competence. This might be due to that fact that RSNBI is newly established program in Indonesia to enhance the quality of education so that it can be equal to that overseas. Besides, RSNBI students' strategies in solving the problems they encountered when they are making sense of the ideas are still mystery. It is important to investigate such factors by comparing the strategies used by proficient and less proficient readers to help less proficient students enhance their reading competences.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The major problems to be investigated in this study are: 1. Are there differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in making sense of an English text? 2. Are there differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension problems they encounter in a text when trying to make sense of the ideas contained in the text? 3. Are there differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension strategies they employ to overcome the comprehension problems when they are making sense of the ideas in a text?

There are a further two secondary-questions, relating to the readers' variables and process variables (text modification, and L1 culture knowledge), that is: 4. What is the influence of the reader variables (level of proficiency, length of their study, attitudes toward English speakers, English teaching, and English reading comprehension, and motivation) on how the readers make sense of the texts? 5. What is the influence of the process variables (text modification, and L1 culture knowledge) on how the readers make sense of the texts?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the research problems addressed above, the objectives of the study are to investigate: 1. whether there are differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in making sense of an English text? 2. Whether there are differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension problems they encounter in a text when trying to make sense of the ideas contained in the text? 3. Whether there are differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension strategies they employ to overcome the comprehension problems when they are making sense of the ideas in a text?

Besides, there are also secondary objectives of the study, that is, to investigate: 4. the influence of the reader variables (level of proficiency, length of their study, attitudes toward English speakers, English teaching, and English reading comprehension, and motivation) on how the readers make sense of the texts. And the last objective is to analyze the influence of the process variables (text modification, and L1 culture knowledge) on how the readers make sense of the texts.

METHODOLOGY

The participants of the study consist of RSNBI students in SMPN1 Bandar Lampung, academic year 2009/2010 comprising 66 students (three classes). The sample were purposefully selected from each class, that is, five most successful and another five less successful readers which were screened by means of reading and reporting tests. The purposeful selection was chosen because the study was intended to compare the differences of reading competences between more proficient and less proficient RSNBI readers in the school. The data collecting instruments were mostly based on protocol analysis (Ericsson & Simon, 1980, 1987, 1993; Suparman, 2000). Such instrument was used given that it could be used to trace the data lie in mind of the readers which could not be done by means of other data collecting instruments such as observation, interview and questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

This section reports the results of the analysis of think aloud protocol data that were gathered from thirty participants, comprising more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in semesters one, three and five of the 2000/2010 academic year using mainly four types of English texts.

The analysis of the think aloud protocol data aims to answer three main research questions and two secondary research questions as mentioned above. In the think aloud protocol process, each participant was required to read four texts introspectively. Some data obtained from retrospective reporting is used where it illustrates clearly a claim made on the basis of the introspective data, but the analysis in this section, was mainly based on introspective reporting. In the introspective reporting, each participant was required to read each sentence of each text, then report the ideas of each sentence, after that she/he described the comprehension problems that they had experienced in each sentence, and finally report the comprehension strategies that they had employed in each sentence.

Four texts were used in the introspective think aloud protocols. Text One – English unmodified introspective - (EUI) contained 17 sentences, Text Two – Indonesian unmodified introspective (IUI) 17 sentences, Text Three - English modified introspective (EMI) 21 sentences, Text Four - Indonesian modified introspective (IMI) 18 sentences.

RESULTS

The results of the think aloud protocol data analysis, in general, revealed that firstly, there was a difference between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in comprehending the ideas in each sentence they read. More proficient RSNBI readers reported the ideas in each sentence correctly more frequently than the less proficient RSNBI readers did (more proficient RSNBI readers' mean (\bar{x}) of the reported ideas of the entire texts was 3.2, less proficient RSNBI readers' mean was 2.2). Figure 1 displays the differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in comprehending the ideas contained in the texts in percentages. It can be seen that most of the main ideas were comprehended to some degree, by the more-proficient RSNBI readers. However, the level of comprehension was variable and Figure 1 reflects the fact that most readers did not attain full scores (on a scale of four) on all items. The percentages in Figure 1 and all other figures represent the proportion of the total possible scores for all readers for all texts attained by the specific group.

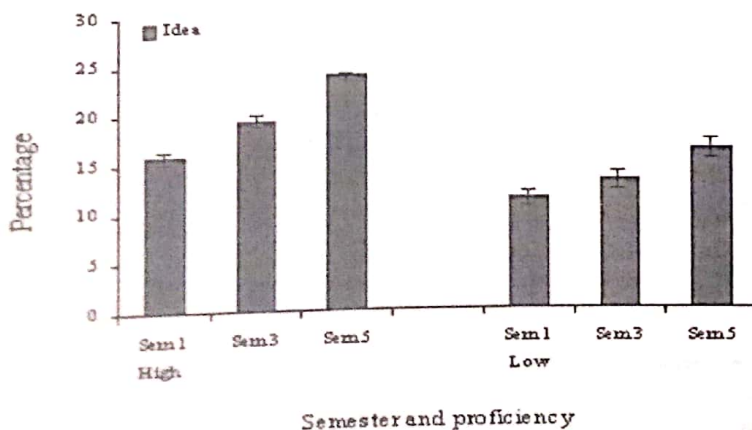


Figure 1 Differences between More- and Less-Proficient Readers in Comprehending the Ideas of the Entire Texts²³

Each reported idea was coded ranging from 1 (completely not understood) through 4 (completely understood). Therefore, the highest score in reported ideas is 4 (completely understood). To compare the differences in comprehension of the ideas in the entire texts between more and less proficient RSNBI readers, the means (\bar{x}) of the scores of the ideas for each group of readers in each semester were calculated by using the SPSS program. By that calculation, the means of each group in each semester were identified, then the means of the ideas were transformed into percentage as shown in Figure 1, by using the formula in the Microsoft Excel program. In the figure, the differences in comprehension of the ideas in the texts between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers are shown in the order of Semester One, Three and Five of the high proficiency group

²³ In this and other figures, the filled in column represents the mean or the mean percentage and the bar through the top identifies the extent of one standard deviation.

then followed by Semesters One, Three and Five of the less-proficient group. In this arrangement, the figure shows two differences at once, the differences between the semester levels and the differences between proficiency levels.

Secondly, the findings of the think aloud protocols revealed that there was a difference between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension problems that they encountered while making sense of an English text. The differences in the comprehension problems the participants encountered vary from one text to another. Less-proficient RSNBI readers, in general, encountered comprehension problems more frequently than more-proficient RSNBI readers did.

The comprehension problems that were analyzed in the statistical calculation were only the major problems encountered in each sentence as reported by the participants. Therefore, there was only one problem for each sentence. All major comprehension problems that the participants encountered were then summed up, which was the same number as the number of the entire sentences in the four texts, that is, 876. And then the number of frequency of each kind of comprehension problem was divided by the total number of comprehension problems to determine the mean of each category of the problem. Then, the percentage for each category was calculated based on the proportion of the number of each category to the total number of all potential problems (i.e., the total number of sentences).

Among the four categories of comprehension problems, *Background knowledge* comprehension problems were the most frequently problematic for the RSNBI students, especially for less-proficient RSNBI readers (less-proficient RSNBI readers' mean was 12 %, more-proficient RSNBI readers' mean was 11%) followed by *Lexico-semantic* comprehension problems (less-proficient RSNBI readers' mean was 11 %, more-proficient RSNBI readers' mean was 9%). Further, there was a substantial difference between the groups in the extent to which they reported "no problem" (31% for more-proficient RSNBI readers and 17% for less-proficient RSNBI readers). However, for sentences at the start of texts (usually short and simple) the two groups experienced almost no difference in making sense of the ideas they contained.

Figure 2 shows the general influence of the length of study on the comprehension problems encountered by the RSNBI readers in each semester. However, this table does not show the differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers because the focus here was on the effects of the length of the study for both groups.

In general, Figure 2 shows the differences in comprehension problems encountered by the participants in each semester. As expected, later semesters encountered comprehension problems less frequently than earlier semesters did in both more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers. The figure also shows that the participants reported that they did not encounter comprehension problems in certain sentences. Encountering *no problems* was also influenced by the level of semester in which the participants were enrolled. Later semesters reported *no problems* more frequently than earlier semesters did. These findings suggest that the effect of the study and experience on reading comprehension was quite big.

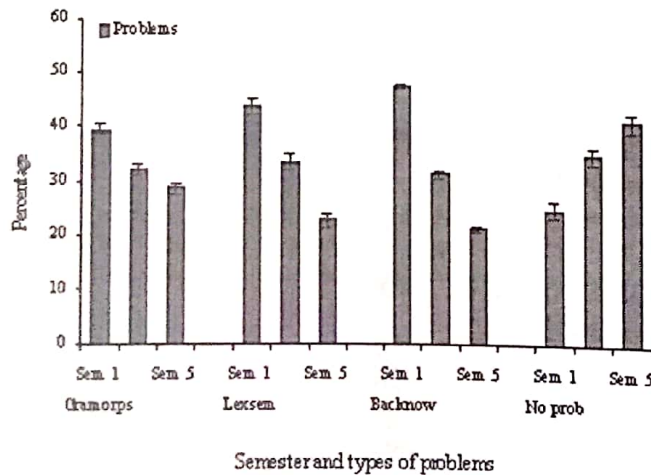


Figure 2 Differences of Comprehension Problems among Semester Levels

Third, there was a difference between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in terms of the *comprehension strategies* they employed to overcome the comprehension problems. More-proficient RSNBI readers employed more comprehension strategies than less-proficient RSNBI readers did. More-proficient RSNBI readers most frequently used three out of six comprehension strategies - *Prediction, guessing, and inference* (total \bar{x} is 2.47), *Skimming, skipping and topic priority* (total \bar{x} is 7.08).

By contrast, less-proficient RSNBI readers employed *Translation, coinage, paraphrasing and alternative interpretation* comprehension strategies most frequently (total \bar{x} is 7.8). And, less-proficient RSNBI readers employed *Dictionary consultation, help-seeking and self-asking* comprehension strategies very frequently (total \bar{x} is 7.56), as well as they used *Repeating and note taking* comprehension strategies (total \bar{x} is 3.43). Less-proficient RSNBI readers used these three strategies more frequently than more-proficient RSNBI readers did.

In addition, there was also an influence of text type on the findings. Less-proficient RSNBI readers more easily understood modified texts than unmodified texts. However, for more-proficient RSNBI readers, there was no influence of text modification on either comprehension problems or comprehension strategies.

The findings also indicated that first language (L1) culture knowledge, which was familiar to the participants, greatly influenced the findings. Texts with cultural content familiar to the participants were more easily understood by both more and less proficient RSNBI readers. By contrast, texts with cultural content that was unfamiliar to the participants were more difficult for them to understand. Based on the participants' comments in the think aloud protocols, among the eight types of the texts assigned to the participants to be read and reported introspectively or retrospectively, *Santri Leaders: A Case study – Two Santri Organisations – Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah* was the easiest text for both more and less proficient RSNBI readers to understand because both groups of readers reported that they were familiar with the cultural knowledge in the text although they found a lot of difficult words in the text. For example, the following quotations show that both more and less proficient RSNBI readers reported that the text was very easy to comprehend due to their familiarity with the topic under discussion.

Quotation 1

Ini familiar materinya. Jadi mudah memahaminya. Karena ini kan sering dibahas. Alhamdulillah Yuni juga tertarik dengan cerita beginian. ...Dalam teks ini tidak ada kesulitan karena topiknya familiar, karena background knowledge-nya ada sehingga lebih mudah untuk memahaminya. L7.1 (6: 1-10)

Meaning: "This is familiar in its material. So easy to understand it. Because this is frequently discussed. Thank God Yuni is also interested in the story like this. ...In this text there was no difficulty because the topic was familiar, because the background knowledge exists so that it is easier to comprehend it."

Quotation 2 (Comment on *Santri leaders: A case study*)

Nah, ini mudah, mudah sekali menurut saya mudah. Dalam teks ini sama sekali tidak ada yang susah. Saya tidak pernah terganjal dalam pemahaman teks ini, lancar-lancar aja gitu. ... Jadi kalau disarikan, mengapa teks ini mudah, karena pertama sudah familiar banget sesuai dengan theme-nya atau topiknya. Dua sudah familiar dengan culture-nya. Kalau ada kata-kata yang sulit saya bisa menerka, guessing, ya karena sudah... H5.3 (5d: 25 - 53)

Meaning: "Well, this easy, very easy in my mind easy. In this text, at all there was nothing which is difficult. I was never handicapped in comprehending this text, It ran smoothly.... If summarised why this text is easy, because firstly, I am very familiar with the theme or topic. Secondly, I am familiar with the culture. If there were difficult words, I was able to guess, well because I have..."

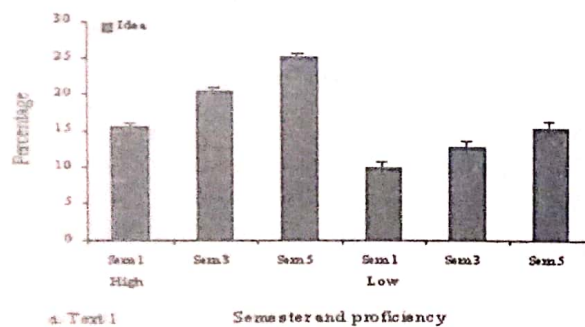
Both quotations 1 and 2 show the effects of readers' familiarity with the topic, theme and/or culture under discussion. These findings suggest that the use of prior knowledge that the readers bring to the text contributes greatly to the readers' comprehension of the ideas in the text.

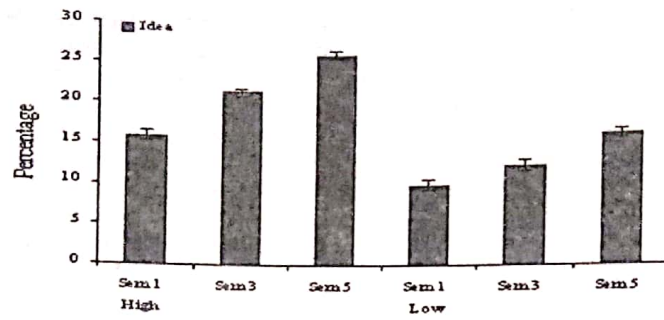
Analysis of each variable

1. Ideas contained in a text

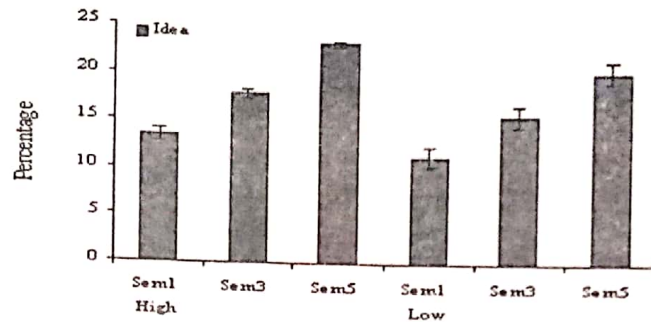
The findings indicate that there are differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in understanding the ideas contained in all four texts. Figures 3a through 3d display the differences of the reports about the ideas contained in Texts One through Four between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers. Figure 3a shows that RSNBI readers enrolled in Semester Five were better comprehenders than RSNBI readers in Semesters One and Three were. In addition, the figure shows the direct relationship between proficiency level, semester and the comprehension of the ideas contained in the text. As expected, the RSNBI readers in later semesters tended to have higher reading proficiency and, therefore, were able to comprehend the ideas better than the RSNBI readers in earlier semesters. Such differences were also applied to the less proficient RSNBI readers, but the difference between earlier and later semesters among less-proficient RSNBI group was not so high. I assume that this could be attributed to the comprehension strategies they used. Less-proficient RSNBI readers tended to use limited and similar strategies for all types of texts.

Figure 3. Differences between More- and Less-proficient RSNBI readers in comprehending the ideas contained in Text One through Four

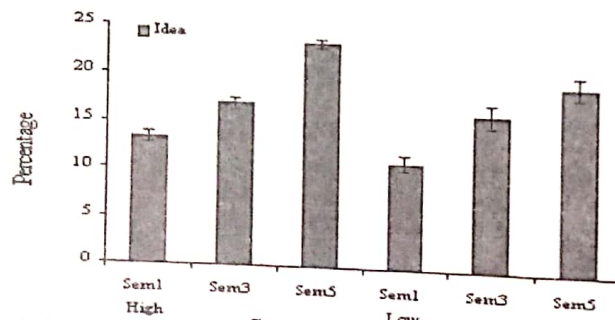




b. Text 2 Semester and proficiency



c. Text 3 Semester and proficiency



d. Text 4 Semester and proficiency

2. Comprehension problems

As to the second research question, the results of the analysis of the think aloud protocol data indicated that there were differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension problems encountered in all types of texts that the participants read and reported. It was found that more and less proficient RSNBI readers are different in all comprehension problems they encountered. Less proficient RSNBI readers encountered comprehension problems more frequently than high proficiency readers did. However, as expected, high proficiency readers encountered *No problems* more frequently than low proficiency RSNBI readers did.

The following sections will elaborate the differences of each between the comprehension problems encountered in each text in detail.

Grammatical, morphological and syntactic

Descriptive statistics of the results of the analysis of data on comprehension problems the participants encountered in all texts showed that less proficient RSNBI readers encountered *Grammatical, morphological, and syntactic* comprehension problems more frequently than more proficient RSNBI readers did. The mean of more proficient RSNBI readers is 1.22 (4%), whereas the mean of less proficient RSNBI readers is 2.04 (6%). The differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in *Grammatical, morphological, and syntactic* comprehension problems encountered in each type of text will be discussed in the following section. The following quotations show the kinds of problems the low and high proficiency readers encountered.

Quotation 3

Chen (1990), prompted by the results of an earlier study by Chen and Leung (1989), also investigated the role of learning method in FL vocabulary acquisition and bilingual memory representation. (Sentence 8)

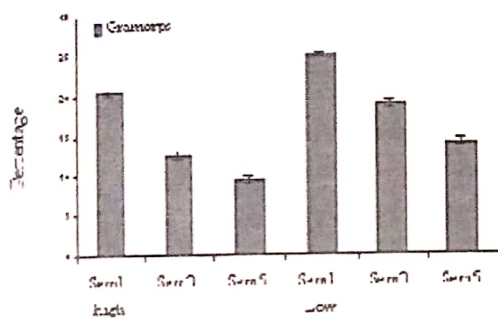
...*Kalimat ini saya rasa sulit karena di sini banyak kata-kata pasif jadi kalau enggak dibaca berulang-ulang akan salah menginterpretasikannya. Contohnya kaya prompted, investigated, pada saat membaca pertama saya kira ini aktif tetapi setelah dibaca lagi ternyata dia pasif.* (118: 140 - 146)

Meaning: "... This sentence, I feel, is difficult because there are many passive words, therefore, if I do not read it repeatedly I might be wrong in interpreting it. For example the word *prompted*, *investigated*, when I first read it, I thought they were active verbs, but after I read them, they appeared to be passive verbs."

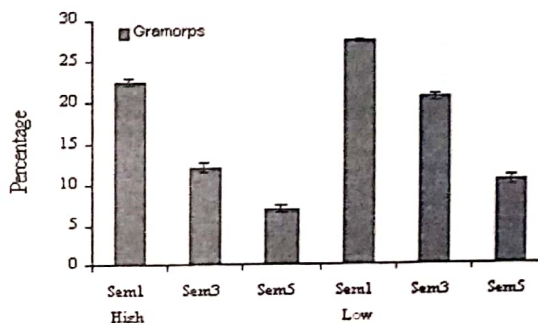
Quotation 3 shows that the reader encountered a difficulty in differentiating *-ed* past tense from *-ed* past participial. The reader stated that "the sentence was difficult to understand because there were many passive verbs such as *prompted*, *investigated*." The reader overgeneralised the *-ed* form of a verb as a marker of passive form, as indicated by his report, because the word *investigated* is not similar to *prompted* in that the word is not a passive form, but a past tense form of a verb. Therefore, the reader in this sentence encountered a grammatical problem. In other Quotations (in appendices), less-proficient RSNBI readers reported that they encountered difficulties in comprehending the ideas because of grammatical problems ranging from the level of words like *conversely*, *internally*, *interacting* and *linked* in which they found difficulties in identifying the parts of speech and determining when words like *interacting* and *linked* function as a verb and when as an adjective, through the level of phrases, where they experienced difficulty in identifying the head words. This findings suggest that less-proficient RSNBI readers need to be helped in formal linguistic analysis to improve their comprehension ability. Although Krashen (1985) states that grammatical knowledge only functions as a monitor in language acquisition, it was found to play an important role in comprehending the ideas contained in a text especially for Indonesian RSNBI readers. In other words, conscious knowledge of grammar appears to be very important in improving the RSNBI readers' comprehension abilities.

Figures 4a and 4b display the differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in the *Grammatical, morphological and syntactic* comprehension problems encountered in Texts One through Four.

Figures 4a and 4b. Differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in *Grammatical, morphological, and syntactic comprehension problems* encountered in Texts One and Text Two



a. Text 1 Semester and proficiency

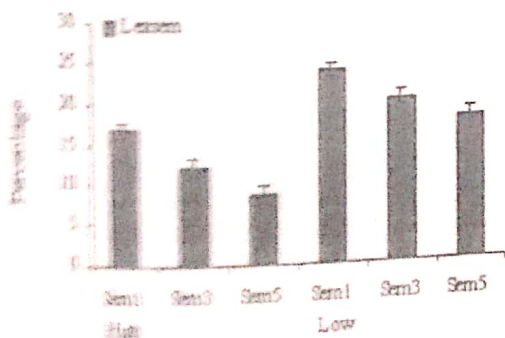


b. Text 2 Semester and proficiency

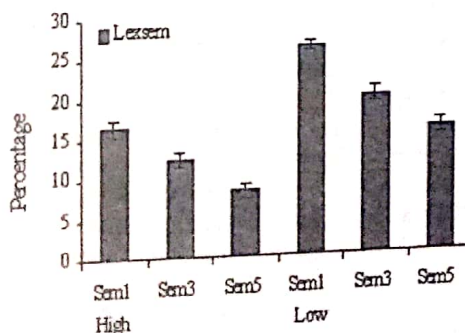
Lexico-semantic

In the second category of comprehension problems, *Lexico-semantic*, although more-proficient RSNBI readers encountered the problems quite frequently, less-proficient RSNBI readers encountered them more frequently than more-proficient RSNBI readers in all types of text. The differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in *Lexico-semantic* comprehension problems are clearly displayed in Figures 5a through 5b. The figures show that there is a direct relationship between the *Lexico-semantic* comprehension problems encountered and the length of the participants' study. The figures also show that all the participants in both groups reported *Lexico-semantic* comprehension problems extensively in all texts. This suggests that *Lexico-semantic* comprehension problems constitute major problems in making sense of the ideas in the texts not only for low proficiency readers but also for high proficiency readers.

Figures 5a and 5b. Differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in *Grammatical, morphological, and syntactic comprehension problems* encountered in Texts Three and Text Four



c. Text 3 Semester and proficiency



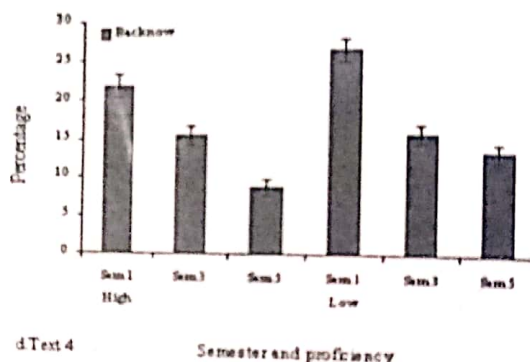
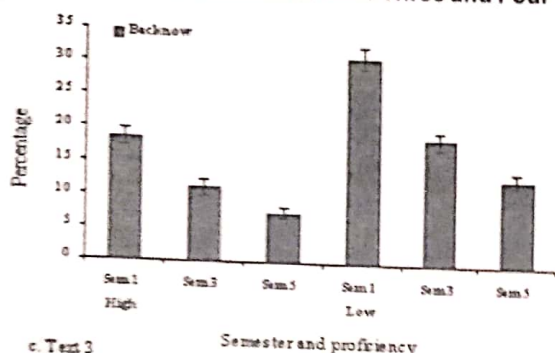
d. Text 4 Semester and proficiency

Background knowledge

More and less proficient RSNBI readers frequently encountered different experiences in relation to "background knowledge" or "prior knowledge" (Bernhardt, 1991, p. 95). More proficient RSNBI readers were long and contained some sentences, which, according to them, were easy to understand, although the sentences in the sentences. In other words, more proficient RSNBI readers were able to make use of connections between previous experiences and the new tasks. Less proficient RSNBI readers, however, frequently reported that they encountered difficulties because they did not have prior knowledge about the topic.

The differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in *Background knowledge* encountered in each text can be seen in Figures 1 through 4. In general, the figures show that earlier semester participants encountered *Background knowledge* comprehension problems more frequently than those in later semesters. However, less-proficient RSNBI readers in Semester One in Texts One and Two did not report prior knowledge as the biggest problems in making sense of the ideas in the two texts (see Figures 1 and 4). This is evidence that those participants considered other comprehension problems (*Grammatical, morphological and syntactic and Lexico-semantic*) more problematic for them in making sense of the ideas in the text.

Figures 6a and 6b. Differences between more and less proficient RSNBI readers in *Background knowledge* comprehension problems found in Texts Three and Four



The following quotations reflect the differences between more- and less- proficient RSNBI readers in reporting *background knowledge* issues related to the same sentence.

Quotation 4

The region of Indonesia was a bureaucratic Wonderland (a place that excites admiration): a cluster of interacting but basically separate linguistic and cultural universes, linked by the miracle of modern bureaucratic and technical organisation. (Text Two: Sentence 16)

... Jadi pada dasarnya walaupun kalimat ini panjang dan mengandung banyak istilah yang relatif sulit, tapi bisa diatasi dengan mudah karena saya memiliki background knowledge tentang keadaan wilayah Indonesia dari ilmu sejarah dan geografi Indonesia yang pernah saya pelajari. ...

Meaning: "So, principally, although this sentence is long and contains many difficult terms, these problems can be handled easily because I have background knowledge about the state of the Indonesian region from history and Indonesian geography that I have always studied."

MPR5 (4/16: 141 - 160)

Quotation 5

The region of Indonesia was a bureaucratic Wonderland (a place that excites admiration): a cluster of interacting but basically separate linguistic and cultural universes, linked by the miracle of modern bureaucratic and technical organization. (Text Two: Sentence 16)

Walaupun kalimat ini cukup sulit, walaupun sebenarnya tentang Indonesia tapi banyak hal-hal yang berkaitan dengan politik. Saya tidak suka politik dan karena saya tidak atau sedikit background knowledge tentang itu. Tapi sebenarnya di sini banyak kata yang sering sekali saya dengar dalam Bahasa Indonesia, misalnya colonial, bureaucracy, miracle, organization, universal. Tapi saya terus terang enggak ngerti maksudnya apa gitu.

Meaning: "This sentence is quite difficult, although it is about Indonesia but many things are related to politics. I hate politics and because I don't... or have only a little bit of background knowledge about the matter. But in fact, there are a lot of words here which I frequently heard, in Indonesian language, such as colonial, bureaucracy, miracle, and organization. Although the reader acknowledged that the sentence was universal, but frankly speaking, I do not understand the intended meaning."

LPR9 (2/16: 146 - 157)

Quotation 4 illustrates that a more proficient RSNBI reader considered the sentence to be easy to understand because she had sufficient background knowledge about the topic. Although the reader acknowledged that the sentence was very long and contained many difficult words, she reported that all the problems could be overcome easily. In other words, she

did not encounter a significant problem at all. By contrast, Quotation 5 shows an example of how a less proficient RSNBI reader encountered comprehension problems in the same sentence. The reader reported that the sentence was very difficult because it contained some matters relating to politics which he hated and about which he did not have any background knowledge. The reader also acknowledged that there were some words which he frequently heard in an Indonesian context, nevertheless he did not understand the intended meaning. These findings support a theory stating that familiarity with the topic under discussion may help readers understand the idea easily. Secondly, the findings also support the theory about the contribution of attitudes toward the success of comprehension. In the frame of reading comprehension, positive attitudes toward reading activities may contribute to the learner understanding something more easily because he/she may have relatively high motivation to read more. The findings in the current study indicated that a negative attitude toward a topic, such as the feeling of hatred or indifference to *politics*, as illustrated in Quotation 2, made the participant encounter difficulties in understanding the ideas in the text because he/she lacked background knowledge about it.

No problem

The fourth category of comprehension problems is *No problem*, that is, when the RSNBI participants reported that they did not encounter any difficulty in making sense of the idea contained in a text. In general, as expected, more-proficient RSNBI readers reported more frequently than less-proficient RSNBI readers that they encountered *no problem* in certain sentences whose themes they were familiar with or about which the readers had sufficient *prior knowledge* relating to the topic. However, the *No problem* category varies for low proficiency readers from one text to another. For example, less-proficient RSNBI readers rarely reported a *No problem* category in Text Two although the text contained some first language culture information. This suggests that every sentence in Text Two contains comprehension problems for less-proficient RSNBI readers.

The readers of both more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers sometimes reported that they did not find any difficulty in understanding the idea of the text. Surprisingly, however, what they reported were not similar, in that, less-proficient RSNBI readers frequently claimed that they did not find any difficulty in comprehending the ideas in the text, but when compared what they claimed with what a sentence stated their interpretation was not relevant. This seems to reflect more the fact that they had not perceived that they had not comprehended the ideas.

Having discussed the results of comprehension problems encountered, by both more and less proficient RSNBI readers, strategies that the participants employed to overcome the comprehension impediments will be discussed in the following section.

Comprehension Strategies

The results of the analysis of the think aloud protocol data for all types of texts in relation to the third main research question indicated that there were differences between high and low proficiency readers in the comprehension strategies used. The individual strategies are classified into six categories:

1. *Prediction, guessing and inference*
2. *Skimming, skipping, and prioritising topics*
3. *Repeating and note taking*
4. *Translation, coinage paraphrasing and alternative interpretation*
5. *Language analysis, and*
6. *Dictionary consultation, help-seeking and self-asking.*

Based on the data analysis, two comprehension strategies were employed most by more-proficient RSNBI readers throughout the texts: *Language analysis* ($\bar{x} = 2.36$) and then much less frequency *Skimming, skipping, and topic priority* ($\bar{x} = .98$). Whereas less-proficient RSNBI readers mostly used two other comprehension strategies with similar frequencies: *Translating, coinage and paraphrasing* ($\bar{x} = 2.59$) and *Dictionary consultation, help-seeking and self-asking* ($\bar{x} = 2.51$)²⁴.

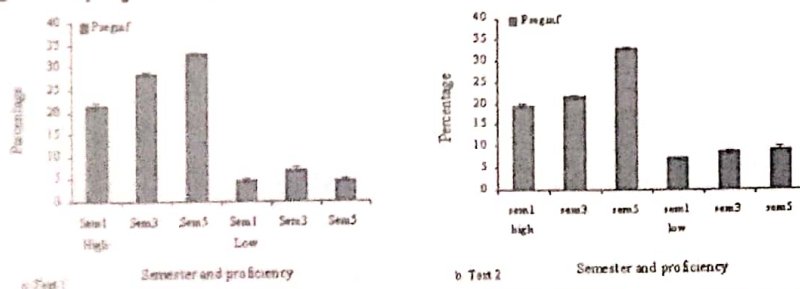
Each of the six categories of the comprehension strategies will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

1. *Prediction, guessing, and inference*

The results of the analysis of think aloud protocols revealed that more-proficient RSNBI readers employed this category of comprehension strategies in all texts more frequently than less-proficient RSNBI readers did. more-proficient RSNBI readers mostly combined some other strategies with *Prediction, guessing, and inference* to comprehend the ideas contained in the text as will be illustrated by some quotations in the following section.

Figures 7a and 7b show the differences in the use of *Prediction, guessing and inference* comprehension strategies between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in each text.

Figure 7a and 7b. Differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in *Prediction, guessing and inference* comprehension strategies employed in Texts One and Two



²⁴ Given the comments made earlier about the basis on which *Dictionary consultation* was identified as a strategy, the figure here may be an overestimation of actual use.

The following quotations illustrate how more-proficient RSNBI readers employed the comprehension strategies, whereas less-proficient RSNBI readers used other strategies.

Quotation 6

His study was inspired by the results of an earlier study by Chen and Leung (1989). (Text Three: Sentence 12)

His study e... inspired I mean that although I have heard about inspired but I forget, that's why I have to guess. I think perhaps "influenced" by, by the results of an earlier study by Chen and Leung. Yes. His here refers to Chen, of course. Chen's study was inspired by the results of an earlier study by Chen and Leung. Perhaps in the previous research Chen and Leung worked together to have research about this case. H6.5 (3/12: 50 - 53)

(Note the reader did the think aloud in English)

Quotation 7

As a consequence, not only L1 words but also L2 words gain access to conceptual memory directly. (Text One: Sentence 16)

...The problem here is lexical, access. I try to comprehend it by using my guessing and I translate it in my mind into 'enter' or Indonesian 'masuk'. Whereas the word conceptual I did not translate because I think the meaning has been covered by the word memory because what is usually in the memory is concept.

H3.5 (1/16: 157 - 163)

(Note the reader did the think aloud in English)

Quotation 8

The word-association and concept-mediation models both postulate two levels of representation, one lexical (storing the forms of words) and one conceptual (storing the words' meanings). (Text One: Sentence 10)

... *Two levels of representation nah mungkin ... di sini dijelaskan ada dua model yaitu mediation dan association itu... kemudian ada kata postulate*

nah setelah itu ada frase two levels of representation mungkin akan saya pahami dengan menduga atau mengasumsikan two levels of representation, yaitu, satu di antaranya storing of the words. Jadi inti kalimat ini adalah bahwa kedua model itu menduga atau mengusulkan dua tingkat representasi. Itu saja intinya. Jadi di sini saya banyak menggunakan guessing. (H2.3 (1/10: 108 - 121)

Meaning: "... *Two levels of representation* that perhaps... here is explained that there are two models, namely, *mediation* and *association* and then there is a word *postulate*. After that there is phrase *two levels of representation* perhaps I am going to interpret it as think or assume two levels of representation, that is, one of them is storing the words. So the point of this sentence is that the two models assume or propose two levels of representation. That is its essence. So, in this sentence I used a lot of guessing."

Quotation 9

In contrast, the concept mediation model assumes direct connections between the shared representations in the conceptual system and the corresponding representations in each of the two lexical stores. (Text Three: Sentence 15)

... *Kalimat ini agak sedikit sulit karena konsepnya agak jelimet. Dan ada beberapa kata yang mengganggu karena enggak tahu persis artinya seperti shared, atau kata yang tahu sekali saya artinya seperti store "gudang" tapi enggak cocok di sini. Ini menyebabkan lama untuk memahaminya. Caranya, ya pakai guessing ajau dengan menggunakan kata yang kira-kira layak untuk kontek ini.* H2.3 (1/15: 174 - 184)

Meaning: "This sentence is rather difficult because its concept is complicated. And there are several disturbing words because I do not know their meanings precisely such as the word *shared*, or there is also a word where I know its meaning precisely like *store* but it does not suit here. This caused me to take longer to comprehend the idea. The strategy which I used is guessing by using a word appropriate for this context."

Quotation 10

The word-association and concept-mediation models both postulate two levels of representation, one lexical (storing the forms of words) and one conceptual (storing the words' meanings). (Text One: Sentence 10)

... *I had a difficulty in understanding the lexical word 'stores' because it usually means 'tempat menyimpan' [a place to store goods] but in this sentence I don't know what the exact meaning is. Tapi saya coba memakai istilah dalam bahasa Indonesia gudang yang sama artinya dengan 'store' yang kira-kira agak sesuai dengan kata lexical dalam konteks ini, yaitu hazanah 'gudang'. Kata hazanah sering sekali digunakan dalam kaitannya dengan topik seperti begini. Jadi strategi yang saya gunakan di sini kebanyakan guessing berdasarkan pada konteksnya.* H3.5 (1/16: 92 - 103)

Meaning: "...I had a difficulty in understanding the lexical word 'stores' because it usually means 'a place for storing something' but in this sentence I don't know what the exact meaning is. But I tried to use an Indonesian term *gudang*, which has the same meaning as 'store' which is approximately suitable for the word *lexical* in this context, that is *hazanah* 'store'. The word *hazanah* is very frequently used in relation to the topic like this. So, the strategy which I used here was mostly guessing based on the context."

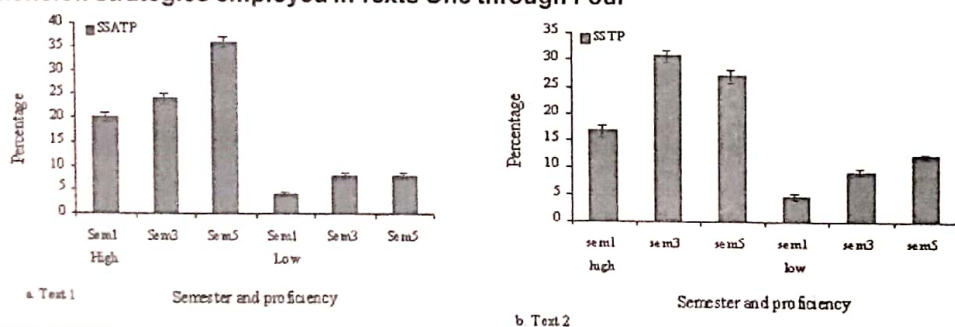
In Quotations 6 through 10 above, more-proficient RSNBI readers reported the use of *Prediction, guessing and inference* comprehension strategies when they encountered a comprehension problem such as a complicated concept, or difficult vocabulary. They used contextual clues combined with the prior knowledge about the meaning of a certain word, such as the word *store*, (Quotation 10) which, in the reader's prior knowledge, was usually translated into Indonesian *gudang*, but after trying it out in the context, the reader found it unsuitable. Then the reader used *guessing* to find a suitable equivalent for the word *store* in relation to the word *lexical*. Finally the reader used *hazanah* which the reader considered suitable for the context because the word was frequently used in Indonesian when talking about words, and the ideas reported were relevant to what was stated in the focal sentences.

More-proficient RSNBI readers, as in Quotations 7 and 10 above, usually combined two or three strategies to make sense of the ideas contained in the text, because they considered that one strategy was not sufficient to handle a conceptual and/or lexical comprehension problem. By contrast, less-proficient RSNBI readers frequently reported the use of other comprehension strategies to overcome even similar problems as encountered by more-proficient RSNBI readers, but commonly the less-proficient RSNBI group did not combine the strategies. They mostly relied on one strategy, for instance translation or consulting a dictionary, and they would usually feel happy if they were able to translate each word in a sentence without checking whether the translation was appropriate for the context or not. Consequently, I frequently found their reports about ideas were not consistent with what was stated in a sentence.

Skimming, skipping, and topic prioritisation

As in the use of *Prediction, guessing and inference* comprehension strategies, more-proficient RSNBI readers were found to use *Skimming, skipping and topic prioritisation* more frequently than less-proficient RSNBI readers did. When using this category of strategies, more-proficient RSNBI readers also combined it with other strategies, such as with *Language analysis* strategies or *Prediction, guessing and inference* strategies as illustrated by quotations (in appendixes). The differences in the use of *Skimming, skipping and topic prioritisation* are shown in Figures 8a and 8b.

Figures 8a and 8b. Differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in *Skimming, skipping, and topic priority* comprehension strategies employed in Texts One through Four



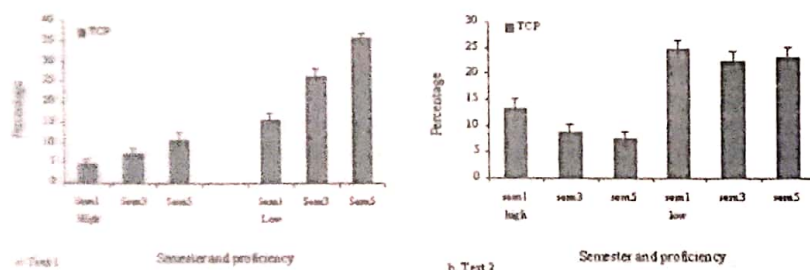
Repeating and note taking

The analyses of the results of think aloud data also revealed that less-proficient RSNBI readers employed *Repeating and note taking* strategies more frequently than more-proficient RSNBI readers did. It was found that less-proficient RSNBI readers frequently combined a *repeating* strategy with *translation* and writing the translation.

Translation, coinage, paraphrasing and alternative interpretation

As to the fourth category of comprehension strategies - *Translation, coinage, paraphrasing and alternative interpretation* - less-proficient RSNBI readers were found to use this set of strategies more frequently than more-proficient RSNBI readers did in all types of text. Less-proficient RSNBI readers tended to base their understanding of the ideas contained in the text on the translation.

Figure 9a and 9b. Differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in *Translation, coinage, paraphrase, and alternative interpretation* comprehension strategies employed in Texts One and Two



Language analysis

Rather than using *Translation, coinage and paraphrase*, more-proficient RSNBI readers were found to use *Language analysis* when trying to make sense of the ideas contained in the text. They did this more frequently than less-proficient RSNBI readers did. In using *Language analysis*, high proficiency readers mostly combined them with other strategies, such as looking for contextual relations among words in a sentence, and looking for syntactic relations, such as identifying the function of words in a sentence, which word functions as the subject, and which one functions as the main verb. In addition, they also tried to identify and distinguish main clauses from subordinate clauses. Another important aspect that more-proficient RSNBI readers considered in analyzing the language was their prior knowledge. They frequently used their knowledge of the world to draw conclusions about the ideas conveyed in a text as a way of supplementing their language analysis.

The following quotations illustrate how high proficiency readers made use of the *Language analysis* strategies.

Quotation 11

The region of Indonesia was a bureaucratic Wonderland (a place that excites admiration): a group of interacting but basically separate linguistic and cultural universes, linked by the miracle of modern bureaucratic and technical organisation. (Text 4: Sentence 17)

...In this sentence I found some difficult phrases although I know the meaning of each word, such as a bureaucratic wonderland, and the miracle of modern bureaucratic and technical organisation. These are the causes of the problem in understanding this sentence perhaps. To comprehend it I use the relationships among the words and phrases in the sentence, identify the function of each word in a sentence, that is, whether a word functions as a subject, a verb, object, adjective and so on. I primarily use, perhaps the context analysis seen from grammatical point of view. And based on context, I also use guessing. Mostly guessing I think. H6.5 (4/17: 79 – 85)

(Note the participant did the think aloud directly in English)

Quotation 12

Luethy proceeds to argue that the public language of contemporary politics is a "jumble of irrational and incomprehensible jargon," leading to "ideological intoxication" and "magical syncretism" - all this expressing the "obsession" of "a Javanese elite which is losing its own personality in identifying itself with an artificial nation (Text Two: Sentence 4)

...Kalimat ini masih sama seperti di atas juga sulit sekali. Mungkin dengan membaca dua kali saya belum bisa memahaminya, karena terlalu panjang dan banyak kata-kata yang baru bagi saya. Teknik untuk mengatasinya saya coba lihat mana subjek dan verbnya saja, sebab itulah saya kira yang terpenting dalam setiap kalimat. Kata-kata yang lainnya saya coba abaikan dulu selama tidak mengganggu ide utamanya. H2.3 (2/4: 48 –64)

Meaning: "...This sentence is still the same as the previous sentence, very difficult. Perhaps even if I read it twice, I will not be able to understand it, because it is too long and there are too many new words in it for me. The strategy to overcome the problems I tried to examine which word functions as the subject, and which is the verb, because it is there the most important point of every sentence, I think. I try to neglect others as long as they did not destroy the idea."

Quotations 11 and 12 show that more-proficient RSNBI readers employed various strategies to overcome the comprehension problems they encountered. The strategies they used included contextual and linguistic analysis, such as looking for the relationship among the words in a sentence, and looking for the subject and the main verb of a long and complex sentence. By contrast, other quotations on this similar matter (in appendices) show how less-proficient RSNBI readers overcame the difficulties in comprehending the idea of a text by using "language analysis." Although the less-proficient RSNBI participant - cut the long sentence into smaller parts as the more-proficient RSNBI did, what she did next was totally different from what the more-proficient RSNBI reader did.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Ideas

The answer to the first research question is that it was found that more-proficient RSNBI readers, as expected, were able to comprehend the ideas contained in all texts better than less-proficient RSNBI readers. This can be seen from the differences in the mean. The mean of the more-proficient RSNBI readers of comprehending the ideas contained in the entire texts is 3.50 whereas the mean of the less-proficient RSNBI readers is 2.43.

2. Comprehension Problems

The answer to the second research question is that it was found that there were differences between more- and less-proficient RSNBI readers in the comprehension problems encountered while making sense of the ideas in a text. Less-proficient RSNBI readers encountered all categories of comprehension problems more frequently than more-proficient RSNBI readers did. This can be seen from the differences in the means of each category of comprehension problems they experienced in each text. For example, the mean of *Grammatical, morphological, and syntactic* problems encountered in Text One for more-proficient RSNBI readers is .52, whereas for more-proficient RSNBI readers it is .72; whereas the mean of the less-proficient RSNBI readers is 1.35; and *Background knowledge* problems encountered in Text Two for more-proficient RSNBI readers is .94 whereas for less-proficient RSNBI readers it is 2.11.

In the entire texts, *Lexico-semantic* comprehension problems were the most problematic for more-proficient RSNBI readers ($\bar{x} = .98$). By contrast, *Grammatical, morphological, and syntactic* comprehension problems were the most frequent for less-proficient RSNBI readers ($\bar{x} = 1.55$) followed by *Lexico-semantic* ($\bar{x} = 1.35$).

These findings suggest that to help less-proficient RSNBI readers improve their comprehension ability reading lecturers should devote time to training them on grammatical and syntactic structures. However, conscious knowledge of syntactic and grammatical structure is not sufficient for less-proficient RSNBI readers to make sense of the text without the ability to make use of their background knowledge of the text. Therefore, these two aspects should be integrated into the one package during reading classes. In other words, less-proficient RSNBI readers should be trained to make use of both "text-driven operations" and "concept-driven operations" (Bernhardt, 1991, pp. 71-117) simultaneously during reading classes.

3. Comprehension Strategies

The answer to the third research question is that more-proficient RSNBI readers tended not to use a single strategy when trying to make sense of a text, but rather used a combination of two or three comprehension strategies. More-proficient RSNBI readers never used a single strategy for all types of texts. They frequently combined two or three different strategies (*Skimming, scanning and topic priority, Language analysis and Prediction guessing and inference*) to draw a conclusion or inference about the ideas in a sentence or the contextual meaning of a difficult word. By contrast, less-proficient RSNBI readers tended to use a limited strategy and used a similar strategy for all types of text, that is, they mostly used *Translation, coinage and paraphrasing* and frequently used *Dictionary consultation, help-seeking and self-asking* independently or in combination with translation.

Less-proficient RSNBI readers mainly used *Translation, coinage and paraphrasing* strategies across all texts. This can be seen from the mean of *Translation, coinage and paraphrasing* strategies used, Text One is 2.66, Text Two is 2.35, Text Three is 2.79 and Text Four is 2.29. Less-proficient RSNBI readers also combined *Translation, coinage and paraphrasing* strategies with *Dictionary consultation, help-seeking and self-asking* strategies. This can be seen from the mean frequency of the use of *Dictionary consultation, help-seeking and self-asking* strategies in each text. The mean in Text One is 2.11, Text Two is 1.5, Text Three is 3.23, and Text Four is 2.55. Since Less-proficient RSNBI readers mainly used *Translation, coinage and paraphrasing* and *Dictionary consultation, help-seeking and self-asking* strategies, and based their understanding on the lexical meaning of each word, they frequently did not understand the contextual meaning of the focal sentence. Lexical meaning frequently differed from the intended meaning.

More-proficient RSNBI readers used more analytical, global strategies. For example, they put priority on the main ideas, and frequently ignored any parts of a text or sentence that were considered unnecessary in relation to the understanding of the primary ideas. Less-proficient RSNBI readers, on the other hand, mostly used surface-level, non-analytical, and detailed (not global) strategies such as word-for-word translation, note taking, and dictionary consultation strategies. They tended to focus their attention on single difficult word encountered in a text. Therefore, they mostly depended on a dictionary to understand the ideas of a sentence, mostly used literal translation and tended to repeat again and again some part of a text. Therefore, they found it difficult to identify the ideas of the text.

These findings suggest that pedagogically to help less-proficient RSNBI readers become proficient readers, English teachers should give them special training to make use of various approaches to texts and strategies to handle the difficult words in a sentence and to make sense of the ideas of the sentences.

4. Text Modification and L1 Culture Knowledge

The answers to the secondary research questions are that, unlike less-proficient RSNBI readers' ability to make sense of the ideas contained in Text Four (a modified text) which was better than their ability to make sense of the ideas in Text Two (an unmodified text), more-proficient RSNBI readers' ability to make sense of the ideas of Text Two ($\bar{x} = 3.61$) was better than their ability to make sense of the ideas in Text Four ($\bar{x} = 3.48$). These findings suggest two important points. First, in the case of less-proficient RSNBI readers, syntactic and lexical modifications of a text as were applied to Text Three and Four might have helped them comprehend the ideas of the text. Second, for more-proficient RSNBI readers, however, an unmodified text was easy for them to comprehend. And of course, more-proficient RSNBI readers encountered that modified texts were much easier to comprehend than a modified text. Since the more-proficient RSNBI readers were able to report the ideas in both unmodified and modified texts correctly, the differences in comprehending the ideas between unmodified and modified texts are not so big as the differences in less-proficient RSNBI readers' comprehension of the ideas. I assume that this can be attributed to their ability to make use of the contextual clues as a hint to understand a difficult word in both groups of texts.

As to the role of L1 culture knowledge, it was found that less-proficient RSNBI readers were able to make sense of the ideas of texts which referred to L1 culture knowledge better than making sense of the ideas of texts that did not contain L1 culture knowledge. This can be seen from the differences in the mean of each text. Less-proficient RSNBI readers' mean for comprehending the ideas contained in Text Two is 2.33, Text Four is 2.81 (both of which referred to L1 culture knowledge), whereas less-proficient RSNBI readers' mean for comprehending the ideas contained in Text One is 1.90 and Text Three is 2.46 (both of which contain no L1 culture knowledge). Such findings were also valid for more-proficient RSNBI readers in that they were able to comprehend the ideas contained in Text Two better than the ideas in Text One (the mean of more-proficient RSNBI readers in comprehending Text Two is 3.61, whereas the mean in Text One is 3.27). These findings suggest that the participants' background knowledge contributed to the comprehension of the ideas contained in a text. Pedagogically, the findings suggest that to help less-proficient RSNBI readers, English teachers should direct less-proficient RSNBI readers to understand the cultural knowledge contained in a text prior to reading comprehension. Secondly, the mastery of vocabulary

and the familiarity with the topic under discussion seemed to play more important roles in comprehending the ideas of a text than text modification as shown by the more-proficient RSNBI readers' ability to comprehend Text Two which was better than their comprehension of Text One and Text Four.

IMPLICATIONS

Although many papers have been presented on seminars, symposiums, or conferences and research findings published so far in Indonesia, it is hardly found the findings of research on the issues of comprehension problems and comprehension strategies which directly touched the primary issues at the junior high school level especially in RSNBI. The papers and research findings on reading in Indonesia mainly focused on superficial factors (e.g., number of students in each class, teachers' teaching quality, teachers' business outside the school, and insufficient learning facilities). Such research has mainly been based on observations, questionnaires, and tests, which are unable to reveal what is going on in the learners' minds. Therefore, the main issues in making sense of the ideas in English texts by RSNBI learners in Indonesia, especially in Bandar Lampung, remain unanswered.

The comprehension problems and comprehension strategies in this study were all examined primarily from the perspective of the RSNBI students, which provides a new perspective for Indonesian researchers, curriculum designers, and second or foreign language educators. This is a novel issue in RSNBI English teaching. Almost nobody has conducted such research in Indonesia. The analysis of the data from the think-aloud protocols presented in this report highlights the RSNBI students' viewpoint.

The findings of the research pertain to the theory of comprehension from a cognitive perspective. Although there is a wide range of perspectives of reading comprehension which I discussed in other research reports, I argue for the cognitive perspective because this perspective is found to be the most suitable for the nature of the current study which tried to trace what was going on in the readers' minds while they were trying to make sense of English texts. The findings of the study have showed the importance of the integration of both top-down and bottom-up or text-driven and knowledge-driven operations in second language reading.

The cognitive approach to reading comprehension of English as a foreign language was found to be very useful for RSNBI learners when they were making sense of English texts. The evidence shown in this study shows that the cognitive approach to investigating reading comprehension by means of think-aloud protocols delivered data about the comprehension problems that RSNBI learners perceived and the comprehension strategies that they employed. The cognitive approach used in this study told us something interesting about the comprehension problems and the comprehension strategies because they were reported directly by the readers while they were trying to make sense of the texts. These facts are highly difficult (if not possible) to be obtained by other approaches.

Although the literature review shows that there are two approaches to reading comprehension, *Cognitive* and *Social approaches*, the social approach is valid to be separated from the cognitive approach given that cognitive approach deals with the primary process of not only reading comprehension but also learning in general.

I hope that the insights produced in this report will contribute to the development of approaches to the teaching and learning of EFL reading that encourage RSNBI learners to be active readers and encouraged teachers to help their students extend their ability to critically engage with the materials that they are presented with. The study has demonstrated that learners can do this if they are given the right tools.

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