



Center of Language and Cultural Studies

IJOTL-TL

Indonesian Journal of Language Teaching and Linguistics

<https://ijotl-tl.solocls.org/index.php/ijotl>

ISSN : 2502-2326

EISSN: 2502-8278

Month, Vol, No : September, Vol.09 No.03

DOI : 10.30957/ijotl-tl.v9i3.801.

Received : February, 2025

Accepted : February, 2025

Published : March 2025

IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION BY IMPLEMENTING TOP-DOWN PROCESSING STRATEGY

Fuad Abdul Baqi¹, Reni Apriani²

¹Universitas Bina Bangsa, ²Universitas Latansa Mashiro

Email: Fuadbaqi80@gmail.com; reni.apriani@unilam.ac.id;

Abstract

This study entitled “Improving Students’ Reading Comprehension by Implementing Top-Down Processing Strategy”. Reading is an important skill that has to be taught in senior high school. From reading a text, the reader can get many knowledge and information. While, Top-Down Processing Strategy is one of strategies that can encourage students’ background knowledge to assist them in comprehending their reading. This study aimed at recognizing whether Top-Down Processing strategy increases students’ reading comprehension, and also to finding out students’ obstacles in learning reading comprehension by using Top-Down Processing strategy. To gain the data, the researchers conducted field research at SMAN 3 by implementing three techniques, namely: Experimental teaching, test and questionnaire. In choosing the sample the researcher used purposive sampling.

Keywords: *Improvement, Reading Comprehension, Top-Down Processing Strategy*

Copyright and License

Authors retain copyright and grant the journal right of first publication with the work simultaneously licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).



Citation (APA):

Baqi, Abdul, F. Apriani, Reni. (2024). Improving Students’ Reading Comprehension By Implementing Top-Down Processing Strategy, *IJOTL-TL: Indonesian Journal of Language Teaching and Linguistics*. 9(3), 13-19. DOI: 10.30957/ijotl-tl.v9i3.801.

1. Introduction

Language has an important role in human life. Finocchio states, as Quoted by Brown (Blanton et al., 2021), that language in a system of arbitrary, vocal symbol that permit all people in a given culture to communicate or to interact. It means that language is used for social purpose or interaction, such as for teaching and learning process, getting to know each other and so on.

In the world of language learning, there are four skills that should be concerned, such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing. It is widely recognized that reading is one of the most important skills for ESL/EFL learner to be mastered, because reading is a skill for learners to develop their knowledge of the language, cultures, and the world. Learners can also get more information that they need through reading different materials, such as magazines, newspapers, novels, books, journals, and so on. In other words, it enables learner to gain knowledge and information on printed pages. In this case, Anderson stated “the mastery of reading skill could help ESL / EFL Learners achieve success not only in English learning but also in other content-based classes where English reading proficiency was required”

With strengthened reading skills, EFL readers will make greater progress and attain greater development in all academic areas. Among these reading skills, appropriate reading strategies will facilitate learners reading comprehension, especially for EFL readers.

However, nowadays many EFL students find it difficult and complicated to understand and comprehend English text. They are still poor in reading English text. Seemingly, reading is a simple activity which all English students can do effortlessly. Nevertheless, it is not an easy skill to master because reading requires comprehension to understand and construct the meaning from the text.

Before conducting this research, the researcher interviewed an English teacher of SMA 3 Rangkasbitung. He stated that there are many students dealt with some problems in reading. For example, lacking of vocabulary which make them difficult to understand the text and they did not understand about the strategy. In fact, the aim reading is to understand and comprehend what is being read. Therefore, it becomes teachers’ responsibility to apply appropriate method or strategy in order to gain the aim or reading for the students.

In this case, the teacher absolutely needs a good strategy to stimulate and activate the students in reading activity. Top-Down Processing strategy is considered to be able to help students to be more active in processing the text, to control their comprehension, and stimulate them to think critically all at once.

Regarding to the issue above, the researcher will highlight how far the improvement of students’ reading comprehension skill after being treated by implementing Top-Down Processing strategy and to find out the advantages when Top-Down Processing strategy is implemented in teaching reading comprehension.

2. Review of Literature

Reading Comprehension

Reading usually means dealing with language message in written or printed form, it involves processing language message, hence knowledge of language. Liu (2023) defines reading as the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form, via the medium of print.

According to Merisuo & Storm (2014) reading comprehension is a complex process in which the reader constructs the meaning by interacting with the text using his or her previous knowledge and experience and the information that can be found in the text. Strengthened by Nunan in Thi & Ngoc (2018) who states that a reader's background knowledge can influence reading comprehension. Background knowledge includes all of the experience that a reader brings to a text: life experiences, educational experiences and knowledge of how texts can be organized (Lupo et al., 2018). It can be inferred that reading comprehension is an ability to understand what a reader reads by involving what she or he knew in the past as previous knowledge or experience and comparing it with the information contained in the text. The distinction of background knowledge and experience may emerge varied comprehension.

Background knowledge of the readers involved in reading process plays crucial role in reading comprehension (Fogarty et al., 2020). It is indeed used to define the information of the text to reach the comprehension and can affect the readers in comprehending what they read. Through question-answer, asking prediction and explanation of the structure of the text, the background knowledge can be activated and the comprehension can be improved all at once.

Since the readers have different purpose of reading, the researcher determined skimming and scanning as the best methods of reading to obtain the information appropriate with their aims of reading from the text well. Skimming is applied to acquire an overall understanding of the content of text by running one's eyes across a whole text quickly while scanning is used to locate specific information by looking for piece of information without reading a whole text (Thi & Ngoc, 2018). While during reading activity, it is asserted that silent reading can bring advantages for advance level students rather than oral reading (van den Boer et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the researcher used three phase approaches: pre-, during-, and post-reading. In pre-reading instruction, the students' background information is needed to facilitate subsequent reading, provide specific information and stimulate students' interest, sets up student expectations and model strategies that students can later use on their own. During-reading instruction assists students in dealing with difficult concepts, making sense of complex sentences and considering relationship among ideas or characters in the text, and reading purposefully and strategically (Gayratbek & Yuldashev, 2023). Post reading instruction guides the students to develop ideas and information from the text (Teng, 2020).

Top-Down Processing Strategy in Reading

Proponents of Top-Down approaches to reading refer to a large body of research on how prior knowledge affects reading comprehension and, in particular, to prove that both content schemata and cultural background information facilitates comprehension (Tsai & Huang, 2023). Top-Down Processing Strategy can help the students in comprehending the text more easily and interestingly. There are activities can be done by using this method. According to Ajideh (2006) schema theory is often termed Top-Down approach to reading, as mentioned before Top-Down Model emphasizes students' prior knowledge and world knowledge to understand the text.

Readers' prior knowledge affects the students' reading comprehension; it has a very significant rule (Peñañiel Arcos, 2018). Therefore, the teachers have to activate students' prior knowledge before teaching. Students' prior knowledge can be activated by using pre-reading activities;

As quoted by Ajideh (2006) Ringler and Weber call pre-reading activities enabling activities, because they provide a reader with necessary background to organize activity and to comprehend the material. These experiences involve understanding the purposes for reading and building a knowledge base necessary for dealing with the content and the structure of the material. They say that pre-reading activities elicit prior knowledge, build background, and focus attention.

The place of background knowledge in the reading process has been discussed within Schema theory. Schema theory deals with "preexisting knowledge structures stored in the mind and how readers combine their previous knowledge with the text (Ren, 2023). It can be concluded that background knowledge or prior knowledge plays an important rule in Top-Down Processing strategy.

Background knowledge is the basic knowledge that the reader has about the material that will be read (Smith et al., 2021). In reading comprehension, the students can combine their prior knowledge with the material they are reading. There are many ways to activate students' background knowledge. One of them was illustrated by Koerich Rondon & Braga Tomitch (2020) the role background plays in comprehension by asking the reader comprehension questions on six passages, including passages on surfing and cricket. It means that students' background knowledge can be activated by asking the question about the material will be discussed.

In addition, Hattan & Dinsmore (2019) say that activation of prior knowledge using multimedia aids, such as usual advance organizer, is one method of supporting the process of integrating newly acquire knowledge with an existing mental model. And using multimedia aids also useful for activating students' background knowledge before reading. In conclusion, the writer applies Top-Down Processing strategy in teaching reading comprehension by activating students' background knowledge before reading by using picture and asked some questions before starting reading (Ngoc, 2016).

3. Methods

This research was conducted in SMAN 3 Rangkasbitung in which 33 students of XI IPS¹ participated as subject of the research. The researchers considered them as subject of the research based on the teacher's consideration and suggestion that this class was very poor in reading comprehension and the most of the students did not have any motivation and enthusiasm to learn English.

Classroom Action Research (CAR) method was implemented in this research by conducting through 4 stages: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Before doing those

four stages, the researcher did observation, spread questionnaire, did interview and administered reading comprehension test to identify students' problems in reading comprehension.

In planning, researcher discussed and decided teaching and learning design which would be applied in cycle one. Then the researcher composed lesson plan, decided competence standard and prepared diary journal and observation sheet.

In acting, the researcher conducted the design that had been decided and prepared in cycle one. It provided some activities; started with presentation the topics, giving task, and ended with evaluation.

In observing, the researcher filled the findings on observation sheet and also observed students' formative test.

In the last stage, the researcher conducted reflecting to analyze what had been done and what had not, what had been successful and what had not. Based on this data, it could be input to repair for next cycle to achieve the target of the research.

The researcher used quantitative and qualitative data to collect data. In form of post-test, quantitative data was done to investigate whether there was significant improvement on students' reading comprehension after implementing Top-Down Processing strategy. Meanwhile, to collect the qualitative data the researcher conducted observation, recording and interview.

Besides, in data analysis technique the researcher used quantitative data by checking students' answers on the written test and computing their correct answers and qualitative data by using interactive models which consist of data reduction, data display and data verification.

4. Findings and Discussion

The result of research indicated that there was an improvement on the students' ability in reading comprehension by implementing Top-Down Processing Strategy. It was proved by the data, which showed the progression mean of the students.

The mean of the students' score in the second cycle (79,68) was higher than the mean of the students' score in the first cycle (62,10) and the mean of the pre-test (53,68). The percentage of the students who got point up to 70 also grew up. In the pre-test, the students who got up 70 were only 5 of 38 students (15,15%). In the post-test I of cycle I the students who got up 70 there were 12 of 38 students (36,36%). In the post-test II, students who got up 70 there were 30 of 33 students (90,91%).

5. Conclusion

This research deals with the implementation of Top-Down Processing strategy on the student's ability in reading comprehension. After analysing the data, it was found out that the students' ability in reading comprehension got improvement by implementing Top-Down Processing strategy. It was showed from the mean of the score and percentage scores.

Teaching reading comprehension by using Top-Down Processing strategy was effective rather than traditional method. It can be seen from the scores. The mean of the students' score in the second cycle (79,68) was higher than the mean of the students' score in the first cycle (62,10) and the mean of the pre-test (53,68) it also provide by observation sheet, interview sheet, and diary notes result which indicated improvement in teaching learning process from cycle I and cycle II.

Based on the data analysis, there was an improvement on the students' ability. So the students have responsibility and feel enjoy the learning process. It means that Top-Down

Processing strategy can be implemented as one of the alternative to teach how to comprehend reading text.

6. REFERENCES

- Ajideh, P. (2006). Schema–theory Based Considerations on Pre-reading Activities in ESP Textbooks. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 16(November).
- Blanton, A., Kasun, G. S., Gambrell, J. A., & Espinosa, Z. (2021). A Black mother’s counterstory to the Brown–White binary in dual language education: toward disrupting dual language as White property. *Language Policy*, 20(3). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-021-09582-4>
- Fogarty, R. J., Kerns, G. M., & Pete, B. M. (2020). Literacy Reframed: How a Focus on Decoding, Vocabulary, and Background Knowledge Improves Reading Comprehension. In *Solution Tree*.
- Gayratbek, A., & Yuldashev, U. (2023). the Importance of Reading Skills in English Learning and the Role of Teachers in Reading Comprehension. *Academic Research in Educational Sciences*, 4(5).
- Hattan, C., & Dinsmore, D. L. (2019). Examining Elementary Students’ Purposeful and Ancillary Prior Knowledge Activation When Reading Grade Level Texts. *Reading Horizons*, 58(2).
- Koerich Rondon, T., & Braga Tomitch, L. M. (2020). EFFECT OF DIFFERENT PRE-READING ACTIVITIES ON PRE-INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED EFL STUDENTS’ READING COMPREHENSION. *Revista (Con)Textos Linguísticos*, 14(29). <https://doi.org/10.47456/cl.v14i29.32230>
- Liu, T., Li, Y., Feng, M., Chen, Y., & Zhang, T. (2023). Understanding College Students’ Engagement in Mobile Reading for Sustainability in Education: A Case Study from China. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032848>
- Lupo, S. M., Strong, J. Z., Lewis, W., Walpole, S., & McKenna, M. C. (2018). Building Background Knowledge Through Reading: Rethinking Text Sets. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 61(4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.701>
- Merisuo-Storm, T., & Soininen, M. (2014). The Interdependence between Young Students’ Reading Attitudes, Reading Skills, and Self-Esteem. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*. <https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2014.v4n2p122>
- Ngoc, N. T. M. (2016). Implementation of skimming and scanning techniques in teaching reading comprehension. *Journal of Studies in Education ISSN*.
- Nurhayati, D. A. W., & Fitriana, M. W. (2018). EFFECTIVENESS OF SUMMARIZING IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION FOR EFL STUDENTS. *IJOTL-TL: Indonesian Journal of Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 3(1), 33-50. <https://doi.org/10.30957/ijotl.v3i1.403>
- Peñafiel Arcos, E. B. (2018). Reading: An overview prior to reading comprehension. *SATHIRI*, 4. <https://doi.org/10.32645/13906925.256>
- Ren, S. (2023). The Application of Schema Theory to the Teaching of Reading Comprehension. *Journal of Education and Educational Research*, 2(3). <https://doi.org/10.54097/jeer.v2i3.7578>

- Smith, R., Snow, P., Serry, T., & Hammond, L. (2021). The Role of Background Knowledge in Reading Comprehension: A Critical Review. *Reading Psychology*, 42(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2021.1888348>
- Teng, F. (2020). The benefits of metacognitive reading strategy awareness instruction for young learners of English as a second language. *Literacy*, 54(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12181>
- Thi, N., & Ngoc, M. (2018). the Essential Roles of Skimming and Scanning Techniques in Teaching Reading Comprehension. *International Journal of English Linguistics*.
- Tsai, R. M. R., & Huang, S. C. (2023). EFL reading strategies used by high school students with different English proficiency. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.59400/fls.v5i3.1855>
- van den Boer, M., Bazen, L., & de Bree, E. (2022). The Same yet Different: Oral and Silent Reading in Children and Adolescents with Dyslexia. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 51(4). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-022-09856-w>