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Teachers' Approaches to Reading Instruction in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the students' perception on teachers' teaching strategies in teaching reading skill. A qualitative descriptive method was used in this research. In order to answer the research question, the researcher collected data from questionnaire. the researcher distributed a questionnaire to the students that contained some questions in order to get perception on the teacher's strategies in teaching reading. Data analysis in this research used descriptive analysis and the process used is tabulating data, which includes scoring and tabulating. The results of the research on student perception towards teaching strategies in teaching reading indicated that the most preferred strategies are brainstorming, predicting, and making connections. On the other hand, students did not recommend the use of visualizing, summarizing, and questioning as effective reading strategies. This research also suggest that teachers/lecturers should consider incorporating more brainstorming, predicting, and making connections activities in their reading instruction to better engage to their students.

Keywords: *Students' Perception, Teaching Strategies, Reading*

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that plays a pivotal role in academic success and lifelong learning. As one of the core pillars of literacy, it not only enhances students' comprehension and critical thinking but also serves as a gateway to acquiring knowledge across all disciplines. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011), reading is essential for academic development, as it enables learners to access a wide range of information and ideas necessary for both educational and personal growth. In educational settings, the ability to read effectively directly influences students' performance and their capacity to engage with complex texts.

To facilitate effective reading instruction, teachers or lecturers employ a variety of strategies designed to enhance student engagement and comprehension. These strategies include brainstorming, summarizing, predicting, visualizing, making connection, questioning and other interactive approaches. For example, brainstorming helps activate students' prior knowledge, allowing them to make connections with the material they will read (Harmer, 2007). Summarizing aids in consolidating understanding by encouraging students to extract the main ideas from the text, while predicting prompts students to engage with the material critically by anticipating what will happen next (Brown, 2007). Visualizing encourages students to create mental images of the text, which enhances their understanding and recall of the material (Harmer, 2007). Making connections, such as relating the text to students' own experiences or other texts they have read, fosters deeper engagement and a more personalized understanding of the material (Brown, 2007). Questioning, both before and during reading, helps to focus students' attention, stimulate critical thinking, and encourage active involvement in the reading process (Vacca & Vacca, 2008).

These techniques are widely regarded as effective in promoting deeper reading comprehension by involving students actively in the learning process. However, the effectiveness of these strategies often hinges on how they are perceived and received by students. Students' perceptions of their

teachers' methods can significantly influence engagement and outcomes in reading activities. As noted by Wenden (1991), learners' perceptions and beliefs about teaching methods are critical to their motivation and willingness to participate in the learning process. Positive perceptions can lead to greater motivation and participation, whereas negative perceptions may hinder their progress and interest. This highlights the importance of aligning instructional strategies with students' preferences and expectations.

Perception, as defined by Robbins and Judge (2013), is "a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment". This cognitive process is influenced by prior experiences, attitudes, and expectations, making it highly relevant in educational contexts. In an educational setting, perception extends beyond sensory input to include the cognitive and emotional engagement of learners. According to Slavin (2012), perception in education refers to "an individual's awareness and understanding of the environment based on sensory information and cognitive processes, often shaped by experiences and expectations". This suggests that students' experiences, attitudes toward learning, and expectations significantly influence their evaluation of teaching strategies.

Understanding students' perceptions of teaching strategies is thus crucial for educators aiming to improve their instructional practices. By exploring how students view these approaches, teachers can adapt their methods to better suit learners' preferences and needs. In the context of teaching reading, this insight becomes particularly significant, as the strategies employed must not only address cognitive aspects but also engage students emotionally and socially. According to Vacca and Vacca (2008), successful reading strategies should involve a balance between cognitive skills, such as decoding and comprehension, and affective engagement, such as motivation and critical thinking.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design, which is ideal for exploring and understanding the complex phenomena of students' perceptions of teachers' teaching strategies in reading instruction. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is particularly effective for examining lived experiences, personal perceptions, and social contexts. By using an interpretive approach, this study seeks to gather rich, detailed data that can provide a deep understanding of how students view and experience different teaching strategies, such as visualizing, making connections, and questioning. Creswell (2013) emphasizes the importance of using flexible, open-ended data collection methods to capture a range of perspectives. In this study, a questionnaire is utilized to gather students' perceptions.

The research participants for this study are drawn from the English Department, Faculty of Letters and Culture, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo. Specifically, the participants belong to the class of 2024, with a total population of 122 students. While the population consists of 122 students, the study utilizes a sampling method based on Arikunto's (2017) theory of sampling. According to Arikunto (2017, p. 173), a sample is a subset of the population that shares common characteristics. Arikunto further explains that if the subject population is fewer than 100, the entire population should be included as the sample. However, when the population exceeds 100, it is appropriate to select a sample size ranging from 10-15% or 15-25% of the total population. Based on this guidance, the researcher selected 20% of the total population, which equates to approximately 20 participants for this study. This sampling strategy allows for a manageable and representative sample while ensuring that the findings are both meaningful and reflective of the larger student population.

The research instrument is crucial for collecting data, as the accuracy of the results depends on how carefully the instrument is used. In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire to gather data from students about their perceptions of the teacher's strategies in teaching reading. The questionnaire was translated into Indonesian to make it easier for students to understand and answer the questions.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 items: six positive statements and five negative statements. According to Gendall (1998), a questionnaire is a tool used in social science research to collect information about people's environment, thoughts, knowledge, and past behavior. In qualitative research, there are two types of questionnaires: open-ended and close-ended. As Reja et al. (2003) cited from Foddy (1993, p. 127), open-ended questionnaires allow participants to freely express their opinions, while close-ended questionnaires limit the available response options. The data analysis used descriptive analysis, which involved tabulating the data. This includes scoring and organizing the responses. Tabulating the data is important because the study used a Likert scale to measure students' attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of the reading strategies taught by the lecturers. The scoring process assigns a specific score to each item on the questionnaire, with a scale of 5 to 1 for positive perceptions and 1 to 5 for negative perceptions. The researcher then interprets the meaning of each score based on the responses.

RESULT

The data findings revealed several key themes related to students' perceptions of the teaching strategies employed in reading instruction. These themes include brainstorming, visualizing, predicting, summarizing, questioning, and making connections. Each of these strategies was identified as significant in shaping how students engage with reading material and their overall learning experience. The following sections will discuss these themes in more detail, highlighting the students' attitudes, opinions, and experiences with each strategy.

Students' Perception of Brainstorming Strategy

The table displays the results of the study on the effectiveness of the brainstorming strategy in enhancing students' understanding of reading material. The data indicates that 50% of the students found the strategy helpful, reporting that it made understanding the reading material significantly easier. However, the other 50% were either neutral or disagreed with this statement, suggesting that the strategy may not have been as effective for them.

Table 1 Students' Perception about Brainstorming Strategy

No	Classification	F	Percentage
1	Strongly Agree	0	0%
2	Agree	0	0%
3	Neutral	10	50%
4	Disagree	10	50%
5	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total		20	100%

Students' Perception of Prediction Strategy

The table shows that 25% of the students agree that the predicting strategy is helpful, 55% are neutral, and 20% disagree with the statement. It may be concluded that the predicting strategy is moderately helpful for students in understanding the reading material. The majority of students were neutral about predicting, indicating that they may not fully understand what is involved in making predictions effectively. Predicting is an important teaching strategy as it helps students engage with the material actively and think critically about future outcomes.

Table 2 Students' Perception about Predicting Strategy

No	Classification	F	Percentage
1	Strongly Agree	0	0%
2	Agree	5	25%
3	Neutral	11	55%

4	Disagree	4	20%
5	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total		20	100%

Students' Perception of visualizing Strategy

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that the visualizing strategy appears to be less effective in helping students understand reading materials. The strategy received a 40% neutral response and 60% disagreement, suggesting that most students may not fully grasp how to effectively visualize information. Visualization is a crucial skill for organizing and retaining information, which can significantly improve understanding and memory.

The following table presents the findings of the study.

Table 3 Students' Perception about Visualizing Strategy

No	Classification	F	Percentage
1	Strongly Agree	0	0%
2	Agree	0	0%
3	Neutral	8	40%
4	Disagree	12	60%
5	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total		20	100%

Students' Perception of summarizing Strategy

Based on the finding, the summarizing strategy received mixed responses, with only 5% of students agreeing, 45% remaining neutral, and 50% disagreeing. This suggests that many students may require additional guidance or support in learning how to summarize information effectively. Summarizing is an important strategy as it helps students condense and rephrase complex material, making it easier to understand and retain.

Below is a table that outlines the findings of the study

Table 4 Students' Perception about Summarizing Strategy

No	Classification	F	Percentage
1	Strongly Agree	0	0%
2	Agree	1	5%
3	Neutral	9	45%
4	Disagree	10	50%
5	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total		20	100%

Students' Perception of Making connection Strategy

The finding revealed that the teaching strategy with the highest level of agreement among students was making connections, with 25% agreeing and 75% remaining neutral. This suggests that a significant portion of students understand how to link different pieces of information. Making connections is a crucial learning skill, as it helps students relate new information to prior knowledge and understand the relationships between various concepts.

The table below illustrates the findings from the study

Table 5 Students' Perception about Making Connection Strategy

No	Classification	F	Percentage
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1	Strongly Agree	0	0%
2	Agree	5	25%
3	Neutral	15	75%
4	Disagree	0	0%
5	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total		20	100%

Students' Perception of Questioning Strategy

This result is incredibly shocking as we could see that 65 percent choose to disagree. It means that the student perceived this strategy is poor. This strategy might be executed poorly by the lecturers and make the student not seem interested in learning with this strategy. It seems that there is a tendency where this strategy is very weak. Moreover, this teaching strategy received the lowest agreement level. The questioning strategy indicates that the majority of students may not fully understand the importance of asking questions to deepen their understanding of a topic. Questioning is a critical thinking skill that enables students to engage with the material actively and develop a deeper understanding of the topic.

The following table summarizes the study's results:

Table 6 Students' Perception about Questioning Strategy

No	Classification	F	Percentage
1	Strongly Agree	0	0%
2	Agree	1	5%
3	Neutral	6	30%
4	Disagree	13	65%
5	Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total		20	100%

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into students' perceptions of various teaching strategies in reading instruction. The results show that strategies such as making connections and brainstorming received mixed reactions, with some students finding them beneficial while others felt less engaged. These results align with previous research, which suggests that the effectiveness of teaching strategies can vary depending on how well students understand and apply them (Creswell, 2013). In this section, we will discuss the implications of these findings, explore possible reasons behind the students' responses, and suggest recommendations for improving teaching practices.

The first strategy examined in this study is brainstorming. The results revealed that 50% of students disagreed with the effectiveness of this strategy, while the other 50% remained neutral. This suggests that, overall, the brainstorming strategy may not have had a strong impact on student engagement or learning outcomes. However, the neutral responses implied that the strategy could still be effective for some students, depending on their individual learning preferences or how it was implemented in the classroom. This mixed feedback indicated that the effectiveness of brainstorming might vary across different student groups, possibly due to varying levels of prior knowledge, learning styles, or the lecturer's approach. To improve the effectiveness of brainstorming, lecturer could consider providing clearer instructions, setting specific goals for the activity, and offering examples to guide student participation. It may also help to incorporate brainstorming in conjunction with other strategies that cater to different learning styles, ensuring all students are actively involved.

The second strategy examined is predicting. Based on the analysis, a quarter of the students agreed that the predicting strategy is helpful, while the majority (55%) remained neutral, and 20%

disagreed with its effectiveness. These results suggest that the predicting strategy has potential but may not be fully understood or appreciated by all students. The neutral responses imply that some students might not clearly recognize the benefits of this strategy, while the disagreement could point to issues in its implementation or how it was integrated into the reading lessons.

The findings indicated a need to better communicate and demonstrate the value of the predicting strategy to students. Prediction is known to have a positive impact on student performance, as it encourages active engagement with the text, improves critical thinking, and enhances reading comprehension. However, if students are not adequately guided on how to make effective predictions, they may struggle to see its relevance or benefits. This aligns with Brod's (2021), which highlights that predicting can significantly improve memory retention and text comprehension by helping students actively process information and form connections. To improve the effectiveness of the predicting strategy, lecturers could provide explicit instruction on how to make predictions, including modeling the process and offering examples.

The third strategy is visualizing. The analysis revealed that 60% of students disagreed with the effectiveness of the visualizing strategy, categorizing it as very weak, while 40% perceived it as sufficient. These findings indicated that the majority of students did not find this strategy helpful for improving their comprehension of reading materials. This suggests there may be significant gaps in how the strategy was implemented or how its benefits are communicated to students. The negative perception of the visualizing strategy can impact students' overall reading comprehension and academic performance. When students do not actively engaged with visualization, they may fail to grasp key details or fully understand the text. Lecturers should provide explicit teaching on how to visualize effectively. Using visual aids such as graphic organizers, mind maps, or illustrations can also help students practice and develop this skill. Additionally, selecting texts rich in descriptive language can make visualization easier and more engaging for students.

The fourth strategy, summarizing, was included in the study to evaluate its effectiveness in enhancing students' reading skills. The results indicated that only 5% of students found this strategy beneficial, showing minimal support for its impact. Nearly half of the students (45%) expressed a neutral stance, suggesting indifference or uncertainty about its usefulness. Meanwhile, 50% of the participants disagreed, implying that a significant number of students perceived this approach as ineffective in aiding their comprehension of reading materials. These findings highlight the need for a more engaging and effective approach to teaching summarizing. To address this, lecturers could consider incorporating dynamic and interactive methods to teach summarizing. For example, using collaborative exercises, such as group discussions where students collectively summarize a passage, could make the learning process more engaging. Additionally, presenting diverse reading materials, such as short stories, news articles could help maintain student interest.

The fifth strategy, making connections, demonstrates a moderate level of effectiveness based on the findings. The data shows that 25% of students considered this strategy appropriate for engaging with reading materials, placing it in the "sufficient" category. Meanwhile, 75% of students expressed a neutral stance, indicating that while they do not strongly favor the strategy, they may still find it moderately helpful in supporting their comprehension of reading materials. Overall, making connections is generally perceived as beneficial by students, with most responses falling into either the neutral or agree categories. The ability to make connections while reading is a crucial skill that fosters deeper comprehension. Svien (2005) highlighted that when students relate the text to their personal experiences, they begin to ask meaningful questions, make predictions, draw inferences, and develop conclusions. These cognitive processes enhance their understanding and engagement with the material. To improve the implementation of this strategy, lecturers could emphasize activities that explicitly guide students in making meaningful connections. For instance, teachers could encourage students to

share personal anecdotes related to the text or draw parallels between the material and real-world contexts.

The last is Questioning. The questioning strategy demonstrated low effectiveness in the findings, with only 5% of students agreeing that it was helpful. The majority (65%) disagreed, categorizing this strategy as very weak, while 30% remained neutral. These results suggest significant challenges in implementing this student-centered approach, as it requires active participation and critical thinking from students. To improve the use of the questioning strategy, lecturers should provide explicit guidance on how to ask meaningful questions and model this process during lessons. Incorporating group activities where students collaboratively create and discuss questions could reduce the pressure on individual learners while promoting engagement. According to Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), the questioning strategy enhances comprehension by helping students identify main ideas, analyze information, and draw conclusions.

The findings reveal that while strategies such as brainstorming, predicting, and making connections were perceived as moderately effective, others like visualizing, summarizing, and questioning require significant improvement. This disparity highlights the importance of aligning teaching strategies with student needs and preferences. Lecturers play a critical role in guiding students through reading strategies effectively. As Hammer (2001) emphasized, teaching strategies involve methods, structures, and techniques to enhance learning. To address the shortcomings identified in this study, lecturers should adapt their teaching methods to make strategies more engaging and comprehensible. Create a supportive learning environment that encourages active participation and collaboration. Provide targeted training on underperforming strategies, such as summarizing and questioning, to help students overcome difficulties.

Students also bear responsibility for enhancing their reading skills. By engaging with the materials and strategies provided, they can take ownership of their learning journey. Building motivation and curiosity will help students develop critical thinking and comprehension skills necessary for academic success. This research was conducted in an extensive reading class, emphasizing the importance of exposure to a variety of texts. According to Bamford and Day (2013), extensive reading encourages students to confidently engage with materials at their level, fostering improved comprehension. Similarly, Perkins (2015) highlighted the active nature of comprehension, involving cognitive processes that require both student effort and strategic instruction.

CONCLUSION

Teaching reading is a complex process that requires thoughtful planning and adaptation to meet students' needs. Strategies like brainstorming, predicting, and making connections are preferred by students for improving reading comprehension and engagement, while visualizing, summarizing, and questioning are less favored. These findings suggest that teachers/lecturers should focus on incorporating activities aligned with students' preferences, while also reevaluating less effective strategies to make them more engaging. Adapting teaching methods based on student perceptions can increase motivation, improve learning outcomes, and encourage students to take ownership of their progress. Effective reading instruction not only enhances academic success but also supports the development of lifelong learning skills.

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