



**READING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY SECONDARY  
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN COMPREHENDING AN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE (L2) READING TEXT**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates reading strategies employed by secondary school students in comprehending an English (L2) text. Fifty Form One students of SMK Datuk patinggi Abdul Gapor, Stampin, Kuching, Sarawak were randomly selected and given questionnaires to fill in. Later, another six from the group were also randomly selected for the think-aloud protocols and retrospective interviews. "Reading Profile" of each subject was composed of information obtained from a Personal background Questionnaire, which specifically addressed individual reading habits in the L1 and/or in additional languages; types of reading English written articles and the number of hours spent per for school-based reading and personal reading.

In the think-aloud verbal protocols, subjects were asked to think-aloud in the language of their thought. In the retrospective interviews, subjects were asked to listen to their tape-recorded think-aloud protocols and were asked to clarify and explain their thoughts.

The results of the study confirmed that reading comprehension is directly affected by the mother tongue of students and they resort to the dictionary mainly to verify their inferences.

# Chapter 1

## 1.1 Introduction

Reading comprehension is a self-discovery process. In this process, readers interact with written texts by investing cognitive as well as meta-cognitive effort to deconstruct the incoming information in order to make or infer meaning. It involves many factors, which may have an impact on learners' target language reading ability. Some of these factors are: learners' lack of target language proficiency and vocabulary (Kasper, 1993), not being familiar with content and/or formal-schemata of the texts to be read (Carrel and Floyd, 1987) and inefficient reading strategies. Nevertheless, readers, as they read will try to employ various strategies to help them comprehend the texts they read.

Numerous strategies have been investigated for reading comprehension in general and in second language and foreign language contexts, in particular. Some of these studies have discovered that readers spontaneously use different strategies in the reading process, as cited by Paris and Jacobs (1984, p. 2083)

Skilled readers often engage in deliberate activities that require planful thinking, flexible strategies, and periodic self-monitoring... [while] novice readers often seem oblivious to these strategies and the need to use them.

In Malaysia, the system of education strongly emphasizes examinations and academic performance of students. As such, students need to struggle very hard in order to succeed in their studies. And, in order to succeed, they need to read more; especially in core subjects that are taught in English. But then, how have students grasped information when reading texts

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of the literature**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Sarig (1987) and Anderson (1991) have pointed out that reading in the native language and in other languages is of a highly individual nature; that is, no two readers approach or process a written text in exactly the same way. It involves a variety of factors which may have an impact on reading comprehension. Some of these factors are: learners' lack of proficiency in the target language and vocabulary, unfamiliarity with the content and formal schemata of reading texts and inefficient reading strategies (Carrell, 1983).

Several studies have shown that translation, using the first language as a means for understanding and/or producing the second language, is not an uncommon cognitive strategy for secondary school and adult language learners (Block, 1986; Chamot, Kupper, & Impink-Hernandez, 1988a; Chamot, Kupper, & Impink-Hernandez, 1988b; Chamot, O'Malley, Kupper, & Impink-Hernandez, 1987. Cook (1992) argues further that all second language learners access their L1 while processing the L2. She suggests that "the L2 user does not effectively switch off the L1 while processing the L2, but has it constantly available" (Cook, 1992, p.571).

Cook also argued that when working with second language learners, teachers must not treat the L2 learners in isolation from the L1. In fact, according to him, one cannot do so: "The L1 is present in L2 learners' minds, whether the teacher wants it to be there or not. The L2 knowledge that has been created in them is connected in all sorts of ways with their L1 knowledge" (Cook, 1992, p. 584).