Applying metacognitive strategies to improve English reading comprehension skills of the 11th grade students at Que Vo high school number 3, Bac Ninh province.

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension skill is always considered an obstacle for most learners at Que Vo high school number 3, Bac Ninh province. It is showed more clearly in reading comprehension skill learning process. Therefore, the main purpose of the study is to improve reading comprehension skills of the 11 students at Que Vo high school number 3, Bac Ninh province.

The survey questionnaires, pre-test and post-test were used as the major instruments to collect data about the applying metacognitive strategies to improve English reading comprehension skills of the 11th grade students at Que Vo high school number 3, Bac Ninh province. The subjects involved in the study were 39 students in class 11A5 at Que Vo high school number 3. They participated in the survey questionnaire, pre-test and post-test to help the researcher do better in this research. The results of the study showed that metacognitive strategies have positive influence on the development of students' reading skills and has the potential to help students deal with some challenges that they may encounter in reading lessons.

Based on the findings, some suggestions were given to teachers, students and researchers to cooperate to improve grade 11 students' reading comprehension skills.

Key words: reading comprehension skill, metacognitive strategies, improve, 11th grade students, Que Vo high school number 3

INTRODUCTION

Reading is considered one of the most important language skills. Through reading, students can develop their other language skills such as writing and speaking besides improving their language components, for instance vocabulary and grammar. It has argued that "there is a constant interplay between listening, speaking, reading and writing, besides that it is clear that in a lesson ostensibly labeled 'reading', opportunities exist for the language learners to develop the other language skills". Therefore, to encourage and advance the students' ability in reading, teachers have to teach reading integrated with the other language skills [1].

In fact, reading is not a favorite subject for some students. It can be seen from the way they behave when given a passage to read. Generally, in many schools, the teachers just ask the students to read and translate the passage. As a result, the teachers have to spend much time encouraging them to become interested in reading.

Reading comprehension is very important in all areas of learning including in acquiring a language. Students need to read books, articles, and other materials in order to master any subject areas that they learn, and

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they need to have a good reading comprehension to do so whether it is on their first or their second language. If students cannot comprehend their reading materials well, they will not be able to achieve a high achievement [2]. Therefore, it is very important for the students to master reading comprehension.

Moreover, the teaching of reading comprehension is one of the methods used to help students to answer questions related to finding the main idea of a text, getting specific information, comprehending the reading passage and understanding the vocabulary, references and inferences and so forth.

It appears that the techniques and strategies now used by teachers for teaching reading comprehension are not very effective to enable students to become competent readers. The teachers usually teach reading by asking the students to read the text orally and to find the meaning of any unfamiliar words from a dictionary and afterwards they are asked to answer questions based on the text they have just read to measure their comprehension. Moreover, the students often do not have enough time to practice reading, because the Curriculum only provides them with 45 minutes in one session for each subject, including English. Consequently, not all students have time to grasp the language.

Unfortunately, many high school students haven't learned effective strategies for comprehending expository text and for navigating this type of information. In addition, a lack of sufficient background knowledge and content-specific vocabulary also impede students' ability to comprehend the subject matter.

In the course of teaching English, the researcher noticed that students at Que Vo 3 high school always encounter difficulties related to all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, especially with reading skills and students can't achieve high mark when doing reading comprehension test. Current teaching and learning English at Que Vo 3 high school has not yet made progress and revealed many limitations although the teachers have applied new teaching methods, taught the students different strategies when dealing comprehension test, and used modern technique such as projectors, active boards.

The question now arises as to how to find the best way to improve reading comprehension skill of the 11th students at Que Vo high school number 3, Bac Ninh province, hence this study.

SUBJECTS AND RESEARCH METHODS Subjects of the Study

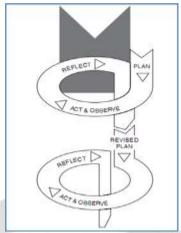
The researcher teaches 3 classes at Que Vo High School number 3, but she only selected 11A5 as the participant because of the limitation of time to conduct the study. The class has 39 students and they were subjected to the metacognitive strategies such as the modern techniques. These students were not good at English as well as reading comprehension skills. Most of them had no tendency towards taking English after leaving upper secondary. Their desire is working as workers in the companies in industrial zone. Actually, they have no motivation to study English. They seem to just focus on their tests, grammar and vocabulary in written form, rather than mastering four basic communicative skills. Consequently, reading comprehension skills is likely to be a challenging one for their learning English. They seem not to spend much time practicing their reading, especially in class. As a result, their reading performance is limited though they may be good at other skills when they do the tasks passively with pens and papers.

Research methods

In this study, the researcher's purpose is to investigate the challenges that her students face in developing their reading comprehension skills, identify the impacts of metacognitive strategies on improving their reading ability and based on the findings to make suggestions on how to apply effectively in her own teaching context. To achieve these aims, action research framework seems to be the most suitable; therefore, she decided to do this research following the steps proposed for the action research.

So far, a number of action research models have been proposed by various researchers. Action research has number of cycles, each cycle of an action research often involves the planning of a change, the acting and observation of the process and the consequences of the change, and the reflection on these processes and consequences. After a cycle ends, the new cycle begins, following the same steps. An illustration of action research's cycles is presented in the following figures.

Figure -1: Action research spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000:564)



The figure outlines four steps in action, the transition from one essential phase to another and how the progress can be done through the system. It can be clearly seen that in an action research study, the researcher does not stop after receiving the results from his actions. He must evaluate the effectiveness of his actions as well as the limitations of the methods. After that, he should modify the plan, make some changes and do it again for better results. These stages are inseparable but embedded in action and reflection [3].

In this study, the researcher underwent the following action research framework:

- ✓ Planning the action
- ✓ Implementing the action
- ✓ Observing the action
- ✓ Reflecting the action

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- 1. Analysis of the information collected from the survey questionnaires
- 1.1. Result of the questionnaires

Table -1: The number and percentage of the students using the reading strategies

	English Reading Strategies	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
Items		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	I take note while reading to help me understand what I read.	6	15.38	10	25.64	18	46.15	5	12.82	0	0.00
2	I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	11	28.21	10	25.64	12	30.77	4	10.26	2	5.13
3	I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	8	20.51	17	43.59	5	12.82	5	12.82	4	10.26
4	I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	4	10.26	5	12.82	11	28.21	12	30.77	7	17.95
5	I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	5	12.82	15	38.46	11	28.21	5	12.82	3	7.69

6	I review the text first by looking at characteristics like length and organization.	5	12.82	15	38.46	15	38.46	3	7.69	1	2.56
7	I underline or circle information in the text to help me to remember it.	9	23.08	18	46.15	10	25.64	2	5.13	0	0.00
8	When reading, I decide to read closely and what to ignore.	5	12.82	7	17.95	10	25.64	13	33.33	4	10.26
9	I use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	9	23.08	12	30.77	9	23.08	6	15.38	3	7.69
10	I stop from time to time to think about what I am reading.	8	20.51	10	25.64	15	38.46	6	15.38	0	0.00
11	I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	5	12.82	14	35.90	16	41.03	3	7.69	1	2.56
12	I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	5	12.82	15	38.46	14	35.90	5	12.82	0	0.00
13	I go back and forth in the text to find relationship among ideas in it.	6	15.38	18	46.15	12	30.77	3	7.69	0	0.00
14	When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	7	17.95	10	25.64	16	41.03	4	10.26	2	5.13
15	When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	5	12.82	8	20.51	16	41.03	8	20.51	2	5.13

Table 1 shows the number and percentage of the students using the reading strategies. As we can see in the table, most of the students use all of the strategies with different frequencies and each strategy shown in the table was applied by different number of students.

Referring item number 1 "I take note while reading to help me understand what I read", 6 students accounting for 15.38% always use this strategy, 10 students (25.64%) often use it, 18 students (46.15%) sometimes use it, 5 students (12.82%) rarely use it and no student (0%) chooses the last frequency "never".

For item number 2 "I think about what I know to help me understand what I read", 11 students (28.21%) always use this strategy, 10 students (25.64%) often use it, 12 students (30.77%) sometimes use it, 4 students (10.26%) rarely use it, and 2 students (5.13%) never use it.

For item number 3 "I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it", 8 students (20.51%) always use this strategy, 17 students (43.59%) often use it, 5 students (12.82%) rarely use it, and 4 students (10.26%) never use it.

For item number 4 "I read aloud to help me understand what I read", 4 students (10.26%) always use this strategy, 5 students (12.82%) often use it, 11 students (12.82%) sometimes use it, 12 students (30.77%) rarely use it, and 7 students (17.95%) never use it.

For item number 5 "I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading", 5 students (12.82%) always use this strategy, 15 students (38.46%) often use it, 11 students (28.21%) sometimes use it, 5 students (12.82%) rarely use it, and 3 students (7.69%) never use it.

For item number 6 "I review the text first by looking at characteristics like length and organization", 5 student (12.82%) always uses this strategy, 15 students (38.46%) often use it, 15 students (38.46%) sometimes use it, 3 students (7.69%) rarely use it, and 1 student (2.56%) never uses it.

For item number 7 "I underline or circle information in the text help me to remember it", 9 students (23.08 %) always use this strategy, 18 students (46.15%) often use it, 10 students (25.64 %) sometimes use it, 2 students (5.13%) rarely use it, and 0 student (0%) never uses it.

For item number 8 "When reading, I decide to read closely and what to ignore.", 5 students (12.82%) always use this strategy, 7 students (17.95%) often use it, 10 students (25.64%) sometimes use it, 13 students (33.33%) rarely use it, and 4 students (10.26%) never use it.

For item number 9 "I use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.", 9 students (23.08%) always use this strategy, 12 students (30.77%) often use it, 9 students (23.08%) sometimes use it, 6 students (15.38%) rarely use it, and 3 students (7.69%) never use it.

For item number 10 "I stop from time to time to think about what I am reading", 8 students (20.51%) always use this strategy, 10 students (25.64%) often use it, 15 students (38.46%) sometimes use it, 6 students (15.38%) rarely use it, and no students (5.13%) never use it.

For item number 11 "I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.", 5 students (12.82%) always use this strategy, 14 students (35.9%) often use it, 16 students (41.03%) sometimes use it, 3 students (7.69%) rarely use it, and 1 student (2.56%) never uses it.

For item number 12 "I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read", 5 students (12.82%) always use this strategy, 15 students (38.46%) often use it, 14 students (35.9%) sometimes use it, 5 students (12.82%) rarely use it, and no student (0%) never uses it.

For item number 13 "I go back and forth in the text to find relationship among ideas in it", 6 students (15.38%) always use this strategy, 18 students (46.15%) often use it, 12 students (30.77%) sometimes use it, 3 students (7.69%) rarely use it, and no student (0%) never uses it.

For item number 14 "When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.", 7 students (17.95%) always use this strategy, 10 students (25.64%) often use it, 16 students (41.03 %) sometimes use it, 4 students (10.26%) rarely use it, and 2 students (5.13 %) never use it.

For item number 15 "When reading, I translate from English into my native language.", 5 students (12.82%) always use this strategy, 8 students (20.51%) often use it, 16 students (41.03%) sometimes use it, 8 students (20.51%) rarely use it, and 2 students (5.13%) never use it.

In general, most students often use item number 3 "I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it", item number 5 "I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading", item number 6 "I review the text first by looking at characteristics like length and organization.", item number 7 "I underline or circle information in the text help me to remember it", item number 9 "I use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.", item number 12 "I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read" and item number 13 "I go back and forth in the text to find relationship among ideas in it". They sometimes use item number 1 "I take note while reading to help me understand what I read", item number 2 "I think about what I know to help me understand what I read", item number 6 "I review the text first by looking at characteristics like length and organization", item number 10 "I stop from time to think about what I am reading", 11 "I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading", item number 14 "When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.", and item number 15 "When reading, I translate from English into my native language". The students rarely use item number 4 "I read aloud to help me understand what I read", and item number 8 "When reading, I decide to read closely and what to ignore".

1.2. Result of the Questionnaires from Global strategy, Problem solving strategy and Support strategy

1.2.1. Result of the Questionnaires from Global Strategy

Table - 2: The number and percentage of the students using the Global Strategy

T4	Clabal Danding Streets along	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
Items	Global Reading Strategies	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2	I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	11	28.21	10	25.64	12	30.77	4	10.26	2	5.13
3	I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	8	20.51	17	43.59	5	12.82	5	12.82	4	10.26

6	I review the text first by looking at characteristics like length and organization.	5	12.82	15	38.46	15	38.46	3	7.69	1	2.56
9	I use reference materials (e.g. a		23.08	12	30.77	9	23.08	6	15.38	3	7.69
11	I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.		12.82	14	35.90	16	41.03	3	7.69	1	2.56
	Average	7.6	19.49	14	34.87	11	29.23	4.2	10.77	2.2	5.64

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of students using the metacognitive reading Global. 5 items of Global Reading Strategies are item number 2 "I think about what I know to help me understand what I read", , item number 3 "I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it", , item number 6 "I review the text first by looking at characteristics like length and organization", , item number 9 "I use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help me understand what I read", and item number 11 "I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading". On average 7.6 turns of students (19.49%) always use this reading strategy group, 14 turns of students (34.87%) often use it, 11 turns of students (29.2%) sometimes use it, 4.2 turns of students (10.77%) rarely use it, and 2.2 turns of students (5.64%) never use it.

In addition, Global reading strategies were reported to be the next most frequently used strategies, especially "previewing text before reading" and determining what to read" and "using prior knowledge". As drawing attention these strategies are usually encouraged as a pre-reading activity in textbooks and teachers preferred to active students' "prior knowledge "about the content of text so the participants of the previous study might favor these strategies [4].

1.2.2. Result of the Questionnaires from Problem Solving Strategy

Table - 3: The number and percentage of the students using the Problem-Solving Strategy

Items	Problem Solving Strategies	A	lways	(Often	Son	netimes	Rarely		Never	
Items	Problem -Solving Strategies		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
5	I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading	5	12.82	15	38.46	11	28.21	5	12.82	3	7.69
8	When reading, I decide to read closely and what to ignore.		12.82	7	17.95	10	25.64	13	33.33	4	10.26
10	I stop from time to time to think about what I am reading	8	20.51	10	25.64	15	38.46	6	15.38	0	0.00
12	I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read		12.82	15	38.46	14	35.90	5	12.82	0	0.00
14	When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.		17.95	10	25.64	16	41.03	4	10.26	2	5.13
	Average	6	15.38	11	29.23	13	33.8	6.6	16.92	1.8	4.62

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of students using the Problem-Solving Strategies. 5 items of Problem-Solving Strategies are item number 5 "I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading", item number 8 "When reading, I decide to read closely and what to ignore", item number 10 "I stop from time to time to think about what I am reading", item number 12 "I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read", and item number 14 "When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases". On average, 6 turns of students (15.38%) always use this reading strategy group, 11 turns of students (29.23%) often use

it, 13 turns of students (33.8%) sometimes use it, 6.6 turns of students (16.92%) rarely use it, and 1.8 turns of students (462%) never use it.

Moreover, in the previous study, the participants in that study preferred to apply the strategy of "guessing unknown words from context" most frequently among problem-solving strategies. This strategy is usually encouraged in the courses and the learners are usually trained to apply this strategy if they encounter any comprehension problem due to an unknown word [5].

1.2.3. Result of the Questionnaires from Support Strategy

Table - 4: The number and percentage of the students using the Support Strategy

Thomas	Support Reading	Al	ways	Of	ten	Som	etimes	Rai	rely		Never
Items	Strategies	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	I take note while reading to help me understand what I read	6	15.38	10	25.64	18	46.15	5	12.82	0	0.00
4	I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	4	10.26	5	12.82	11	28.21	12	30.77	7	17.95
7	I underline or circle information in the text to help me to remember it.	9	23.08	18	46.15	10	25.64	2	5.13	0	0.00
13	I go back and forth in the text to find relationship among ideas in it.	6	15.38	18	46.15	12	30.77	3	7.69	0	0.00
15	When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	5	12.82	8	20.51	16	41.03	8	20.51	2	5.13
	Average	6	15.38	12	30.26	13	34.4	6	15.38	1.8	4.62

As we can see in the table 4, 5 items of Supporting Reading Strategies are item number 1 "I take note while reading to help me understand what I read", item number 4 "I read aloud to help me understand what I read", item number 7 "I underline or circle information in the text to help me to remember it", 10 "When reading, I translate from English into my native language", and item number 13 "I go back and forth in the text to find relationship among ideas in it". On average 6 turns of students (15.38%) always use this reading strategy group, 12 turns of students (30.26%) often use it, 13 turns of students (34.4%) sometimes use it, 6 turns of students (15.38%) rarely use it, and 1.8 turns of students (4.62%) never use it.

Support Strategy is basic support mechanisms intended to aid the reader in comprehending the text such as using a dictionary, taking notes, underlining, or highlighting textual information. The previous study suggests it is more important to equip these learners with online learning skills to help them learn effectively in a hypermedia learning environment. For instructors, selecting appropriate support mechanisms for effective reading online helps these learners have meaningful reading online experience.[6].

2. Analysis of the information collected from pretest and posttest

2.1. Distribution of Pre-test Scores

Table - 5: Distribution of Pre-test Scores

Scores	Frequency	Percent				
0	0	0.00				

10	0	0.00
9.5	0	0.00
8.5	0	0.00
8	0	0.00
7.5	0	0.00
7	5	12.82
6.5	4	10.26
6	3	7.69
5.5	4	10.26
5	5	12.82
4.5	3	7.69
4	3	7.69
3.5	6	15.38
3	4	10.26
2.5	0	0.00
2	1	2.56
1.5	1	2.56
1	0	0.00

In the table 5, no student could get good mark 8, 9 or 10. There were 5 students (12.82%) got mark 7. The number of the students who got average mark (mark 5, 5.5, 6, ad 6.5) was 16 (41.03%). The remainders who got mark below the average were 18 students (accounting 46.15%). It is not surprising because most students pay attention to studying English grammar and they do not like reading in English, so they are not good at reading comprehension.

2.2. Distribution of Post-test Scores

Table -6: Distribution of Post-test Scores

Scores	Frequency	Percent			
0	0	0.00			
1	0	0.00			

Average mark: 5.88	Total: 39	Total: 100%
10	0	0.00
9.5	0	0.00
9	0	0.00
8.5	0	0.00
8	1	2.56
7.5	2	5.13
7	5	12.82
6.5	7	17.95
6	10	25.64
5.5	7	17.95
5	2	5.13
4.5	1	2.56
4	2	5.13
3.5	0	0.00
3	1	2.56
2.5	0	0.00
2	1	2.56
1.5	0	0.00

As we can see in the table 6, after applying metacognitive strategies in reading lessons, the students seemed to get improvement in reading skills and get better marks in the post-test. It can be seen that students' results in the post-test were partly improved. There were no students who got mark 1.5 compared with the pre-test results although there was still one student (2.56%) get the lowest mark (mark 2), the total number of the students who got marks below average mark was 5 students (12.82%), much less in compared with that of the Pretest. The number of students gaining mark 5, .5, 6, 6.5 increased from 16 to 26 students (66.67%). Whereas, there were still 5 students achieving mark 7. However, surprisingly, there were 2 students getting mark 7.5 and one student getting mark 8, which was not seen in the result of the pretest.

2.3. Comparison of Data on the Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Figure -2: Distribution of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

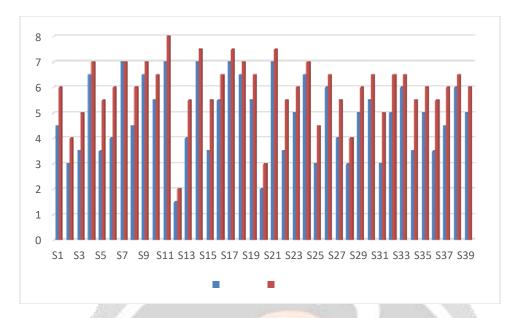


Figure 2 shows the distribution of the pre-test scores and post-test scores of the students. It is evident from the figure that the scores in the post-test have increased as compared with the scores in the pre-test. The highest score which used to be 7 has increased to 8 and lowest score which used to be 1.5 has also increased to 2. This indicates that the students have acquired learning based on the metacognitive strategies.

2.4. Comparison of Data on the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Students Table -7: Test of Difference between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the students

Students	Mean Average	Mean	t computed	t tabulated	Remarks
1 11	Scores	Difference			
Pre-test	4.82	0.05	11.9	2.02	Significant
Post-test	5.88	W-74-	-		A

Table 7 shows the comparison of the mean score of students in the pre-test and post-test. The difference of the means in pre-test and post-test using the metacognitive strategies is significant when tested at $\alpha=0.05$. The computed value of t is equal to 11.9 which is higher than the tabulated t-value which is equal to 2.02. Therefore, with 95% level of confidence, it can be implied that the mean score of students in the pre-test is lower than the post-test using the metacognitive strategies or there is a significant difference between mean scores of students in the pre-test and post-test using the metacognitive strategies $\alpha=0.05$. This indicates that the students have gained mastery of the subject matter when exposed to this modern instruction. The increased level of performance of the students in the post-test scores also shows that there are improvements in the amount of learning and retention [7]. The concepts of verbs were not only re-learned, moreover, using the metacognitive strategies, the students were able to practice and rehearse the application of the principles through the drill activities. In this method, the students relearned the principles, acquired information and learned the application of the concepts of verbs, thus, an increase in the level of language performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

It is necessary for students to improve their English proficiency, especially reading comprehension skills. In this study, the researcher aimed to improve students' English, then implemented metacognitive strategies to help them improve their reading comprehension skills. Subjects of the research were 39 students of class 11A1 at Que Vo

High School number 3 in Bac Ninh province. The major data collection instruments were questionnaires, pretest and posttest.

The data collected from the questionnaire and T-test has clarified the impacts of metacognitive strategies on students' reading comprehension skills. The benefits were shown through the marks compared in T-test. Before applying metacognitive strategies, the low scores were much, the high scores were little. However, after applying metacognitive strategies, the problem became different because the increase of average marks and good marks and the decrease of bad marks. The implementation of metacognitive strategies has proved to make positive.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, some recommendations are suggested. Firstly, English lecturers may use metacognitive strategy to improve students' reading comprehension skills, and should be recognized of the advantages of metacognitive strategy. Some of researchers think that metacognitive strategy is the frequently used in learning strategy, and the teachers should stimulate the students by conducting metacognitive strategy in learning English. Secondly, the teachers could develop students' deeper understanding of text, it also improves the students' thinking to higher level, and it steers the students into adulthood when the students would transfer use of these skills from their school lives to their personal lives and continue to apply them as they mature. In the first step, planning is to design the activities and behaviors that they should do. Monitoring is used to control and manage their activities in learning process. In evaluating, for finding out what are their strength and weakness in learning English. If the students applied this strategy, hopefully they could improve their skill in reading comprehension skills and could get perfect score in teaching learning process.

As for students, they should be informed about the importance of reading skills and reading in English. They should be aware of the different reading strategies, and have chance to practice the strategies. Also, they should be more active in both learning in class and their self- studying at home.

Moreover, the researcher suggests to other researchers. The researchers expected to conduct research about the use of metacognitive strategies to improve students' reading comprehension skills. The researcher hopes that, the other researchers add the media when they apply this strategy and make the students more interest in the learning process. This research could be a reference for other researchers to develop further research and also suggested to future research what are learning distraction that found by the students in learning English.

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