

INDONESIAN EFL TEACHERS' SUCCESS IN READING TEST ITEMS OF CEFR LEVEL A1-C2: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY STUDY

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Abstract

This narrative inquiry study examines the success of Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers in navigating reading test items aligned with the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) levels A1 to C2. Utilizing a qualitative research design, data were collected through participants' narratives and an online questionnaire. The participants of this study were Indonesian EFL teachers who have experienced teaching English language learners. The study revealed that Indonesian EFL teachers' success in reading test items was attributed to their familiarity with the topics and effective implementation of reading strategies. Drawing from their prior learning and teaching experiences, teachers possess a deep understanding of various subjects, enabling them to approach test items with confidence. Strategies such as skimming and scanning facilitate quick identification of main ideas, locating specific information, and grasping the overall text structure. The application of contextual guessing aids in deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words, enhancing comprehension. Activating background knowledge supports teachers in making connections, predictions, and engaging with texts at a profound level. The study also highlights the efficacy of visual strategies such as semantic mapping and clustering in organizing information and augmenting comprehension. These findings hold implications for English language teaching in Indonesian EFL classrooms. By emphasizing topic familiarity and promoting the use of effective reading strategies, educators can enhance students' reading abilities and performance in test items. Further research can explore additional factors influencing teachers' success in reading test items and investigate the transferability of findings to different contexts and proficiency levels within the CEFR framework.

Keywords: EFL teachers, Self-reflection, CEFR, Reading Skills

INTRODUCTION

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a widely recognized framework that provides a comprehensive and transparent description of language proficiency levels (Council of Europe, 2020). It was developed by the Council of Europe and serves as a common reference point for language learning and teaching across Europe and beyond. The framework provides a standardized system for describing language proficiency levels in a transparent and consistent manner (Division, 2001). The CEFR has been widely adopted by language teaching institutions worldwide, including EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, to guide curriculum development, assessment practices, and language learning goals (Eckes & Althaus, 2020).

One of the key strengths of the CEFR is its comprehensive nature. It encompasses a wide range of language skills, including reading, listening, speaking, and writing, as well as other related competencies such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (North, 2014). The framework outlines specific descriptors and criteria for each proficiency level, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient), enabling learners, teachers, and institutions to assess and compare language skills effectively (Little, 2006).

Within the CEFR framework, reading is recognized as a fundamental language skill alongside listening, speaking, and writing. Reading proficiency encompasses the ability to comprehend, analyze, and interpret written texts, and it plays a crucial role in language learning and communication (Alderson & Alderson, 2000). The CEFR categorizes reading skills into different levels, ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient), each level indicating specific reading competencies and complexity of texts that learners are expected to handle (Richards & Schmidt, 2013).

The CEFR provides a systematic categorization of reading skills into different levels, offering a clear progression of reading abilities that learners can achieve. The levels range from A1, representing the beginner stage, to C2, indicating a highly advanced and proficient level of reading. Each level within the CEFR framework encompasses specific reading competencies and expectations, including vocabulary knowledge, grammatical understanding, comprehension strategies, and the ability to extract information, infer meaning, and analyze the structure and content of texts (Tannenbaum & Wylie, 2008).

At the A1 level, learners are introduced to basic reading skills, focusing on simple texts with limited vocabulary and sentence structures. As learners progress to higher levels, such as B1 and B2, they are exposed to more complex texts, requiring a broader range of vocabulary and comprehension skills. At the C1 and C2 levels, learners are expected to handle advanced academic and professional texts, demonstrating a high level of reading proficiency and the ability to critically analyze and evaluate written materials.

Reading proficiency in the CEFR framework goes beyond mere decoding of words. It emphasizes the development of reading strategies and techniques that enable learners to effectively comprehend and interpret texts (Kaowiwattanakul, 2021). These strategies may include skimming and scanning for information, identifying main ideas, making inferences, understanding context, and recognizing different text structures and genres.

The CEFR's categorization of reading skills provides a roadmap for learners and teachers, guiding the selection of appropriate reading materials, designing reading activities, and assessing learners' progress (Ishak & Mohamad, 2018). It ensures that learners receive targeted instruction and practice at their specific proficiency level,

allowing for a gradual and systematic development of reading skills (Khair & Shah, 2021).

In the context of language teaching, teachers' self-reflection has gained considerable attention as a valuable tool for professional development and instructional improvement (Farrell, 2014). With the help of the CEFR, teachers can critically reflect on their teaching practices, instructional approaches, and their effectiveness in facilitating language learning (Ngo, 2017). They can examine how well their teaching aligns with the expectations and benchmarks set by the CEFR, and identify areas where they can enhance their instructional strategies to better support their students' language development.

Self-reflection involves teachers critically examining their own teaching practices, beliefs, and experiences to enhance their understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth (Freeman, 2002). Through self-reflection, teachers gain insights into their instructional approaches, their students' needs, and their own professional development goals.

By engaging in self-reflection, teachers have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of their teaching approaches and their impact on student learning (Kilgour et al., 2015). They can reflect on their instructional strategies, materials, and classroom management techniques to identify what is working well and what needs improvement. Through self-reflection, teachers can also gain insights into their students' needs, learning preferences, and challenges, allowing them to tailor their instruction accordingly.

Self-reflection encourages teachers to question their assumptions, beliefs, and biases about teaching and learning (Sanders et al., 2014). It prompts them to consider alternative approaches, explore new instructional methods, and adapt their practices to better meet the diverse needs of their students. It also helps teachers become more aware of their own strengths and areas for growth, leading to more targeted professional development efforts.

Furthermore, self-reflection enables teachers to foster a reflective and metacognitive approach among their students (Desautel, 2009). By modelling the process of self-reflection, teachers can inspire their students to reflect on their own learning processes, set goals, and take ownership of their learning (Stover et al., 2011). This promotes a more student-centred and empowering learning environment.

Engaging in self-reflection can take various forms, such as journaling, participating in reflective discussions or workshops, seeking feedback from colleagues or mentors, or using reflective tools and frameworks (Farrell, 2019). The key is for teachers to engage in a deliberate and systematic process of self-inquiry, regularly examining

their teaching practices, reflecting on their experiences, and making informed adjustments to improve their instructional effectiveness.

There are some studies which have explored the use of the CEFR framework for language teaching. For example, Uri & Abd Aziz (2018) conducted a study that investigate English teachers and Ministry of Education officials' views on the implementation of CEFR in Malaysia. This study can provide insights into potential challenges or limitations of using the CEFR framework for language teaching. In addition, Kaowiwattanakul (2021) implemented Reader-Response based activities aligned with the CEFR at the C1 level. The result of the study showed that the activities not only develop reading ability but also cultivate critical thinking skills, equipping students with the necessary competencies to navigate complex texts and engage critically with the diverse information they encounter in their professional lives.

Some studies have also been conducted using self-reflection in English teaching. For example, Ratnaningsih (2017) employed self-reflection model to actively engage English teachers in critical analysis and evaluation of their teaching practices. This enabled them to identify areas for improvement and implement targeted strategies for enhancing their teaching competences. This self-reflective approach empowers teachers to adapt their instructional methods, tailor their approaches to meet the needs of their students, and continuously refine their teaching skills.

Furthermore, incorporating self-reflection practices in the context of listening skills English proficiency courses delivered through online platforms provides an additional avenue for teacher development (Rabbani, B. H. & Sulistyaningrum, 2022). Through web-based self-reflection activities, teachers can assess their own listening skills and gain insights into effective strategies for teaching listening comprehension. This process enables them to bridge the gap between their own English language proficiency and their instructional practices, leading to more effective teaching and improved outcomes for their students.

While the CEFR provides a valuable framework for English teaching and self-reflection is acknowledged as a crucial aspect of teacher development, there is a notable gap in the existing research regarding Indonesian EFL teachers' success in reading test items within the CEFR levels. This study aims to fill the gap by conducting a narrative inquiry of Indonesian EFL teachers regarding their experiences and strategies on doing the A1 to C2 CEFR reading skills through their self-reflections.

EFL teachers play a vital role in facilitating language learning, and their own perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding their reading abilities are likely to influence their instructional practices and ultimately impact their students' reading

development. Therefore, it is crucial to explore and understand EFL teachers' self-reflection on their success in reading test items within the CEFR framework to comprehend their experiences including strategies in doing the CEFR reading tests. By gaining insights into EFL teachers' experiences of their own reading abilities and the strategies they used during the tests, we can enhance teacher training, professional development, and ultimately improve reading instruction in EFL contexts.

METHODS

Design

This study employs a small-scale narrative inquiry approach to gather firsthand accounts from a select group of Indonesian EFL teachers regarding their experiences with success in reading test items of CEFR levels A1-C2. The narrative inquiry approach is particularly suitable for this study as it focuses on exploring human experiences through methods such as life-story interviews, oral histories, photo-voice ventures, biography, and autoethnography (Ford, 2020).

Participants

The participants consist of three English master students who are currently or were teaching English at various academic levels. The first participant graduated from the English department of a private university. She took an English course for a year when she was in the second year of primary school. She has been teaching primary schoolers for two years. The second participant is a teacher in a private vocational school. She has been teaching at the school for 23 years. Her education background was a bachelor degree at the English department in a private university. She never had an English course before. The third participant was a secondary English teacher at a private school. She had a ten-year experience of teaching secondary schoolers. She was from the English department in a state university and she never had a formal English course before. These individuals were purposefully chosen from a larger group of seven students enrolled in an English Proficiency for Teachers course at Universitas Negeri Jakarta during the 2023 academic year.

Data collection

In this study, data collection involves participants' individual self-reflection reading assignments and an online questionnaire conducted through Google Form. Google Form is chosen as the platform for conducting the questionnaire due to its user-friendly interface and the convenience of using linked Google Drive to gather individual self-reflection data. The researcher recruited participants who demonstrated proficiency in completing the test items on each level within a single

attempt, as the primary objective of the study was to investigate the strategies employed by these individuals to attain a perfect score. Furthermore, the questionnaire was exclusively administered to participants who did not make any explicit references to the strategies employed in their reflective statements.

Data Analysis

To systematically analyse and interpret the collected data, the researcher follows the narrative inquiry approach. This approach involves several steps, including identifying the topic or phenomenon of interest, selecting research participants, collecting their stories, retelling those stories, collaborating with the participants, writing a narrative account of their experiences, and validating the accuracy of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In line with this approach, once the data is collected, the researcher will retell the participants' experiences related to their engagement with CEFR reading skills at A1-C2 levels, drawing from the narratives shared.

In coding, each individual transcript will be coded and the individual narratives will be built using emerging themes. The construction of the narrative will provide a sequence of experiences that reflect their learning experiences, strategies employed, and challenges encountered in doing the tests

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Within this section, the researcher retold the stories shared by the participants regarding their experiences and strategies they used in doing the CEFR reading tests in their self-reflection notes. The narratives of each participant were separately presented.

Participant 1's experiences in Reading A2 Level

In this level, the participant described her experience with two different topics: "Free time" and "Signs." She mentioned the number of questions and their score for each topic, as well as their perception of the difficulty level.

In the "Free time" topic, which consisted of 10 questions with three options (true, false, or not in the text), she was able to achieve a perfect score of 10 out of 10. She found this topic relatively easy as they only had to determine if the answer was present in the text or not. The participant expressed the belief that this format made it straightforward to locate the correct responses.

Free time: "There are 10 questions in this topic and there are 3 options that you can choose one of them (true, false, or not in text). First, I was asked to read the instant messaging conversation between Tiffany and Jack. I got the score 10 from 10. I think the topic is still easy because I was only asked to find the answer in the text (false, true)

or if it wasn't in the text."

For the "Signs" topic, which involved matching notices to sentences, there were 6 questions in total. The participant successfully answered all 6 questions correctly, resulting in a perfect score. She also considered this topic to be easy.

Signs: "I was asked to match notices to sentences. There were 6 questions. I got score 6 from 6. I think in this topic was still easy."

Participant 1's experiences in Reading B1 Level

The participant described their performance and experience in different topics of a test, including "Hotel reviews," "Travel," "Villages," and "Madagascar." Here's a description of the statements:

In the "Hotel reviews" topic, which consisted of 14 questions, the participant achieved a perfect score of 14 out of 14. She found it challenging to identify similarities or dissimilarities among the reviewers. This aspect of the task added difficulty to the overall assessment.

Hotel reviews: "There are 14 questions in this topic and I got the score of 14 out of 14. the thing that makes it difficult for me is to look for similarities or not in each reviewer."

Similarly, in the "Travel" topic, which also had 14 questions, the participant obtained a perfect score of 14 out of 14. However, no specific difficulty or challenge is mentioned for this topic.

Travel: "There are 14 questions in this topic. I got the score of 14 out of 14."

Moving on to the "Villages" topic, the participant had to read a text about various villages and decide if the given sentences were true or false. There were 10 questions in total, and they were able to answer all of them correctly, achieving a score of 10 out of 10.

Villages: "In this topic, I was asked to read the text about some villages and then look at the sentences at the bottom of the page and decided if each sentence is true or false. There are 10 questions and I got the score 10 from 10 questions."

Participant 1 also narrated that she employed various strategies while working on these levels, including skimming the text to grasp the main ideas, scanning the text to locate specific information, making educated guesses when uncertain, and analysing unfamiliar vocabulary encountered during the reading process. These strategies demonstrate a proactive approach to comprehending the text and overcoming

challenges such as unfamiliar words. By employing these techniques, the individual aimed to enhance their overall understanding and performance.

"The strategies I used in doing these levels were skimming the text for main ideas, scan the text for specific information, guessing when I'm not certain, and also analyse vocabulary every time I found unfamiliar words."

Another contributing factor to her successful attainment of a perfect score was her familiarity with the topics covered in the test. This familiarity can be attributed to her prior learning experiences, which equipped her with knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. By having a solid foundation in the topics, she was able to approach the test with confidence and effectively apply her existing knowledge to answer the questions accurately.

"Another reason that I successfully passed the perfect score was because I am familiar with the topics as I had learned during my learning experience."

Participant 2's experiences in Reading A2 Level

The participant described her performance and experience in one topic: "Transport". Here's a description of the statements:

In the "Transport" topic, the participant took a test consisting of 10 multiple-choice questions, each accompanied by a short text. She was able to answer all 10 questions correctly, resulting in a score of 10 out of 10. The participant reflected that she performed well on this test and attribute their success to improving her comprehension by focusing on key words in each text.

Transport: "Total: 10 Correct: 10 Incorrect: 0 The test is in the form of 10 multiple choice question with a short text each. I can do the test very well. I should improve my comprehension by looking at the 'key' word in each text."

The participant also added that she was able to achieve a perfect score on tests was directly linked to their understanding of the topic being discussed. She found it easier to comprehend the given questions when she had prior knowledge or familiarity with the topic, which aided in her overall understanding. In cases where the topic was unfamiliar, the individual employed the strategy of guessing from context to fill in any knowledge gaps. Specifically for reading tests, the individual emphasized the importance of rereading the text to ensure accurate comprehension.

"I am able to complete the test perfectly when I possess a thorough understanding of the topic at hand. Typically, when I have previously encountered or studied the topic, it significantly enhances my ability to comprehend the questions provided. If I confronted with an unfamiliar topic, I rely on the strategy of deducing meaning from the

surrounding context. In particular, for reading tests, I adopt the practice of revisiting the given text to verify and validate my comprehension accuracy."

Participant 3's experiences in Reading A2 Level

The participant described her performance and experience in different reading sections of a test.

In the "Shopping" section, the individual had to read about a new shopping mall and find detailed information about where to go for certain things. The mall had five different areas catering to different needs. The participant noted that the challenge for readers was not knowing the lexical cohesion among words, such as the connection between "butcher" and "bacon." She suggested that understanding the lexical cohesion among words would help readers solve the questions easily and save time. She achieved a perfect score of 10 out of 10 in this section.

Shopping: "There were 10 numbers in this reading section. The reading was about the new shopping mall. Every reader was asked to find the detailed information about where we should go to get certain things. Basically, the shopping mall had five areas; main street, Bohemia, market square, the palisade, and the showground. Each area had its own target markets as it provided different needs. The challenge for readers might be for not knowing the lexical cohesion among words like butcher and bacon. In my opinion using semantic mapping would help readers to easily solve the questions and minimise the time for reading. For examples; butcher, meat, bacon; jewellers, necklace, earrings, bracelets; food, meal; beverages, drink; furniture; cupboards, beds; cinema, film; post office; mail, letters, and etc. I got 10 out of 10."

In the "Education" section, readers were presented with options of schools and colleges, each offering their own specialties. The participant had to identify the main purpose of the text and determine which schools or colleges were suitable for students interested in specific fields of study. She mentioned that scanning for information about the names of schools and colleges with their specialties would help readers, and she obtained a perfect score of 10 out of 10 in this section.

Education: "They were St. Leopold's school, Knowle Grammar school, Wyle River academy, Northacre college, Milldown college, or apprenticeship with local or national company. Then readers were asked about the main purpose of the text and which schools or colleges that are suitable for the mentioned students who were interested in some fields of study. Scanning for getting information for some names of schools and colleges with their own specialties would help readers much as 8 out of 10 numbers questioning about them. I got 10 out of 10."

In the "Accommodation" section, the participant read about Spring House, a rental

accommodation, and had to choose the correct pictures based on the descriptions. She noted that familiarity with accommodation terms and home appliances, as well as scanning for details, helped her answer the questions. She achieved a perfect score of 8 out of 8 in this section.

Accommodation: "This part was describing about Spring House, rental accommodation. The text described the location and parts of this house. Readers were asked to choose the correct pictures based on the descriptions. There were 8 numbers in this part. In answering questions, readers needed to be familiar with the accommodation terms and home appliances like twin bedroom, single bedroom, ensuite bathroom and toilet, fridge, washing machine, tumble dryer, and etc. scanning for details would also help readers to finish this part. I got 8 out of 8."

In the "Weather" section, the participant read about the climate in Madagascar on a travel website. She had to answer true or false questions related to directions, climate, and time. She suggested that activating prior knowledge about climate and paying attention to seasonal periods helped her answer the questions accurately. She achieved a perfect score of 10 out of 10 in this section.

Weather: "The text tells readers about the climate in Madagascar on a travel website. The questions were true or false questions. Questions in this part dealt with directions, climate, time. Readers are suggested to know when the time of the season such as; the winter months. To activate your knowledge about climate also helps you. I got 10 out of 10."

In the "Signs" section, the participant had to find the correct sign that had the same meaning as the given statements. She mentioned that finding clues in the statements and signs helped her determine the correct answers. She noted a challenge related to understanding the seasonal period, such as mistakenly choosing the wrong answer based on the season. She achieved a perfect score of 6 out of 6 in this section.

Signs: "This part was contrary to the transport part. Here, readers were asked to find the correct sign which had the same meaning with the given statement. There were six numbers in this part. My suggestion in doing this part was to find the clue in the statement and in the sign. For example; if readers do not understand the meaning of if you saw a car drive into another car was a car accident, just read the clue that you should call this number, and find the sign that stated please contact. Or buses will not wait here means that the bus stop isn't in use. The challenge was about knowing the season period such autumn (it begins in September). Readers might mistakenly choose the answer. I got 6 out of 6."

Participant 3's experiences in Reading B1 Level

The individual describes their performance and experience in different reading topics.

In the "Education 1" topic, readers were presented with options of schools or colleges that offer their own specialties. The participant had to determine the main purpose of the text and identify which schools or colleges were suitable for students interested in specific fields of study. She mentioned that scanning for information about the names of schools and colleges with their specialties helped them answer the questions. She obtained a perfect score of 10 out of 10 in this section.

Education 1: "This topic served readers with options of some schools or colleges offering their students with their own specialties. They were St. Leopold's school, Knowle Grammar school, Wyle River academy, Northacre college, Milldown college, or apprenticeship with local or national company. Then readers were asked about the main purpose of the text and which schools or colleges that are suitable for the mentioned students who were interested in some fields of study. Scanning for getting information for some names of schools and colleges with their own specialties would help readers much as 8 out of 10 numbers questioning about them. I got 10 out of 10."

In the "Hotel reviews" topic, the participant had to read and review feedback from guests about an old hotel. She noted that scanning the text helped them answer the 14 questions, but she had to be careful as some choices allowed for selecting multiple reviewers if they shared the same opinion about the hotel. She achieved a perfect score of 14 out of 14 in this section.

Hotel reviews: "This topic had 14 numbers to select from who the statements were. This was about reviewing an old hotel. There were some guests who left the positive testimonies for the hotel and there were also some who gave their bad testimonies about services, cleanliness, food, the room facilities, the cost, and so on. Scanning might help to finish all numbers. but be careful as there were choices that allow to choose two reviewers and all reviewers if they share the same idea about the hotel. I got 14 out of 14."

In the "Free time" topic, the activity involved choosing suitable titles for each paragraph about making the most of free time. The participant mentioned that skimming helped them in this activity, and she obtained a perfect score of 10 out of 10.

Free time; "This activity was dealing with choosing the suitable titles from each paragraph about make the most of your free time. There were 10 paragraphs with 10 options for their titles. From each paragraph, I need to draw conclusion which titles

should be appropriate. Skimming might help readers in this activity. I got 10 out of 10."

In the "Holidays" topic, the participant had to match the beginnings of complaints made by holidaymakers to their endings. She noted that finding clues in the beginning sentences helped her determine the correct matches. She achieved a perfect score of 12 out of 12 in this section.

Holidays: "This topic required me to match the beginnings to the end of each complaint made by holidaymakers. This was easy as the beginning sentence would have a clue for readers. E.g. curry relates to spicy food, water park relates to swimsuits and towels. The strategy used here was to find the clue on each sentence. I got 12 out of 12."

In the "Travel" topic, the participant had to answer questions based on a memorandum from a hospital to its staff. She noted that scanning the text helped her solve each question, but there was a challenge in counting the cost of parking and transportation. She obtained a perfect score of 14 out of 14 in this section.

Travel: There were 14 numbers regarding the text about memorandum from a hospital to its staff. There three options provided for answering each question. The challenge might be about counting the cost of a parking lot and transportation. Scanning might help readers to solve each question in this part. I got 14 out of 14.

In the "Health" topic, the participant had to read short paragraphs about the illness Norovirus and match a question related to each paragraph. She mentioned a challenge in distinguishing between questions about symptoms and risks of the illness. She used a strategy of finding clues in each paragraph to answer the questions and obtained a perfect score of 13 out of 13.

Health: "In this topic, there were 13 numbers about the illness Norovirus. Readers were asked to read 13 short paragraphs and match one question that was related to those paragraphs. The challenge for me to differ the numbers asking the symptoms and the risks of this illness. The symptoms are for the feeling that patients feel if they are infected with the virus. The risks are talking about the consequence if patients suffer from this illness. E.g. it can cause casualties, or although it's not dangerous but the worst might be dehydration. The strategy that I had in this part was that to find the clue in every paragraph that contains words or phrases in the questions. I got 13 out of 13."

In the "Madagascar" topic, the participant read about the climate in Madagascar and had to answer true or false questions related to directions, climate, and time. She suggested that knowledge about seasonal periods and climate helped her answer the

questions. She achieved a perfect score of 10 out of 10 in this section.

Madagascar: "The text tells readers about the climate in Madagascar on a travel website. The questions were true or false questions. Questions in this part dealt with directions, climate, time. Readers are suggested to know when the time of the season such as; the winter months. To activate your knowledge about climate also helps you. I got 10 out of 10."

In the "Country kids" topic, the participant read about activities for young people in the countryside and had to determine the truth or falsehood of statements. She noted that this activity was easy as the text and statements were not difficult, and reading for details helped her answer the questions. She obtained a perfect score of 10 out of 10 in this section.

Country kids: "The text was about activities for young people living in the countryside. There were 10 true/false numbers. As usual, true or false questions can be solved with reading for details. This activity was categorized as the easy one as the text doesn't consist of difficult words and so do the statements on each number. I got 10 out of 10."

Participant 3's experiences in Reading B2 Level

In the provided statement, the participant selected the topic of sports and specifically read a text about the world of parkour. She encountered 10 questions related to the topic and successfully answered all of them, achieving a perfect score of 10 out of 10. She highlighted the challenge in this text, which was finding synonyms for words or phrases given in the options for each question. To overcome this challenge, she employed the strategies of scanning and reading for details.

"Sports is the topic that I choose. The text in this topic talks about the world of parkour. There are 10 numbers related to it. I got 10 out of 10. The challenge in this text is that I need to find the synonym of words or phrases in the options on each number. The strategy I used in doing this part was scanning and reading for details."

Participant 3's experiences in Reading C1 Level

Based on the provided description, the participant utilized a reading strategy that involved careful attention to detail, keyword identification, and locating relevant information within the text. They also highlighted the challenge of finding synonymous meanings from the text in the given answer options. By adopting this approach, the individual aimed to select the most appropriate responses despite variations in phrasing between the text and answer choices.

"There were five numbers in this part with their corresponding options. The strategy I used for this part was to read for details and search for the keywords in every number and in which paragraph those keywords should be found. The challenge for me was to find the similar meaning extracted from the text into the corresponding options. Never expect the options will have the same phrases as in the text."

Participant 3's experiences in Reading C2 Level

Based on the given description, the participant engaged with a magazine article that shed light on the life of Imelda Marcos, a notable individual whose story has gained international attention through various artistic representations. The subsequent multiple-choice questions tested the participant's comprehension of the article by presenting options that required her to infer and make accurate deductions from the content. Notably, the challenge arose from the fact that the answer options did not mirror the exact language used in the original article, thereby necessitating careful analysis and interpretation of the provided information.

"In this part, I was served with a magazine article about Imelda Marcos. Her life story became the subject of musicals, song cycles, and shows on a worldwide arena. There are 7 multiple-choice questions about the article. The options were quite challenging as they changed the language from the original article. As a result, I should be able to draw a correct conclusion from the article."

The third participant also added that she possessed familiarity with the topics addressed in the test. This familiarity was acquired through a combination of personal learning and teaching experiences. During her learning journey, she actively pursued the study of diverse subjects, thereby establishing a robust understanding of the topics at hand. Moreover, her teaching experience served as a means to reinforce and enhance her comprehension of these subjects, as she had the opportunity to actively engage with and instruct others on these topics.

"I am familiar with the topics covered in the test. My familiarity with these topics stems from both my learning experience and teaching experience. Through my learning experience, I have actively studied and gained knowledge on various subjects, which has provided me with a solid foundation in understanding the topics. Additionally, my teaching experience has allowed me to further deepen my understanding of these topics as I have had the opportunity to engage with and teach them to others."

We have so far narrated about participants' experiences in successfully getting perfect scores in A2-C2 CEFR levels. We used the narratives of the participants as a collective story as part of the interpretive analysis process, and discussed the interrelated themes and sub-themes that arose through a cross-case analysis technique from the stories. From the data, two prominent themes from the

participants' collective stories have been identified. These themes include the types of test items on each level and topic and strategies participants used in gaining success doing the reading test items.

The types of test items in each level and topic

The researcher discovered from the participants' narratives that across A2 to C2 CEFR levels, three test formats were prevalent: multiple choice, true or false (not given), and matching. These formats are commonly employed in standardized language tests (Popham, 2010).

Multiple choice

In A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 CEFR levels, the topics that employed multiple choice formats are *transport, shopping, education, travel, education 1, hotel reviews, free time, health, sports, life on Mars (C1), and unlikely muse (C2)*. That made multiple choice as the most popular test format used in reading comprehension. It is aligned with (Brandtmeier, 2005) that MC is the most popular and highly regarded means of assessing students' reading comprehension abilities. The participants were asked to choose one correct answer among three options. Multiple choice items comprise two components: a stem that presents a situation or question in need of resolution, and a set of several possible answers or choices, typically three, four, or five, which offer potential solutions to the problem (Hinterlehner, 2010).

True or False (Not Given)

There are four topics that use true or false (not given) format in A2 and B1 levels. They are *free time, weather, Madagascar, and country kids*. Within the test, the participants are provided with two or three options presenting statements related to the text. Their objective is to ascertain the accuracy of these statements by determining whether they are true, false, or cannot be determined (not given) (Hughes, 2003).

Matching

The topics in A2 and B1 level that employ matching format are *signs, accommodation, and holidays*. In these topics, the participants are asked to match pictures and descriptions, reviews and reviewers, and headlines for paragraphs with their corresponding paragraph (Brown & Hudson, 2002).

Strategies used by the participants to obtain perfect scores

Based on the participants' experiences in doing the test and getting the perfect scores, they employed some reading strategies that include skimming, scanning,

guessing meaning, activating background knowledge and use semantic mapping or clustering. The participants employed skimming in helping them solve questions such as deciding titles for each paragraph in the text (Yusuf et al., 2017). Scanning is the second strategy employed by the participants to help them locate supporting evidence and manage the time (Fauzi & Raya, 2018), and identify the clues (Azman et al., 2020). Guessing meaning is the third strategy employed to help them make progress, maintain momentum, and continue engaging with the task or problem, rather than getting stuck or feeling discouraged by uncertainty (Frazier & Brown, 2001). The next reading strategy employed by the participants is activating background knowledge. It allows participants to make connections, predictions, and interpretations based on their existing understanding of the subject matter (Sua, 2021). Using semantic mapping and clustering becomes the last reading strategy the participants employed. It is an effective strategy to enhance comprehension and facilitate the organization and categorization of information (Zahedi & Abdi, 2012).

Other than strategies, the familiarity of the topics also contributed to the success in obtaining perfect scores. This familiarity was absorbed in both their learning and teaching experience. Having familiarity with the topics in reading can significantly impact comprehension and overall reading success. When readers are familiar with the topics, they are more likely to have a better understanding of the content, make connections to their prior knowledge, and effectively engage with the text. Familiarity with the topics allows readers to activate their background knowledge, which helps in interpreting and assimilating new information (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This narrative inquiry study examined the success of Indonesian EFL teachers in tackling reading test items across CEFR levels A1 to C2. Through the analysis of participants' narratives and the identification of interrelated themes and sub-themes, valuable insights were gained regarding the factors contributing to their success.

One prominent factor found in this study was the teachers' familiarity with the topics covered in the reading test items. Their prior learning and teaching experiences played a crucial role in developing a deep understanding of various subject matters. The teachers' extensive background knowledge allowed them to approach the test items with confidence and proficiency.

Furthermore, the teachers' utilization of effective reading strategies proved instrumental in their success. Strategies such as skimming and scanning enabled them to quickly identify main ideas, locate specific information, and grasp the overall structure of the texts. Guessing meaning from context helped them infer the

meanings of unfamiliar words or phrases, enhancing their comprehension.

Additionally, the activation of background knowledge proved beneficial in making connections, predictions, and engaging with the texts on a deeper level. The teachers' prior experiences and familiarity with the topics facilitated a more meaningful and comprehensive understanding of the reading materials.

Moreover, the study highlighted the effectiveness of semantic mapping or clustering as a visual strategy in organizing information and enhancing comprehension. These techniques allowed the teachers to visually represent and categorize information, aiding in the organization and retention of knowledge.

This study contributes to the existing body of literature on EFL teaching and assessment by providing insights into the success factors of Indonesian EFL teachers in reading test items. It highlights the importance of English proficiency, topic familiarity, and effective reading strategies. Further research in this area could explore additional factors that influence teachers' success and investigate effective instructional approaches for improving reading skills among EFL learners.

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