
The Effect of Task-Based Language Learning and Learning Styles on the Students' Reading Ability

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Received: 20 July 2017. Revised: 25 August 2017. Accepted: 20 September 2017

Abstract

This study was aimed at examining the effect of task-based language learning (TBLL) and learning styles on students' reading ability. The research design of this study was experimental research in the form of factorial design. The population of this study was the eighth grade students of Islamic Junior High School in Jepara Municipality under The Ministry of National Education. The sampling used was simple random sampling which reached 68 respondents. Variables in this study were 1) independent variables (the use of task-based language learning to experimental group and conventional teaching strategy to control group), 2) moderator variable (students' learning styles; visual and auditory), and 3) dependent variable (students' reading ability). To test the hypothesis, this study used multifactor analysis of variance (MANOVA). The result revealed that started in the similar reading ability, regardless of the students' learning styles, students treated under TBLL had better achievement than those treated under conventional teaching strategy ($81.32 > 72.21$). Therefore, TBLL was more effective than conventional teaching strategy ($F > 7.04$ and $p: .01$). Then, students' learning styles differ significantly from one another in their effect on students' reading ability. Regardless of the teaching strategies, visual students performed better than auditory students ($79.12 > 74.41$). Finally, the data revealed no interaction between teaching strategies and students' learning styles; the value of F , 4.284, was not significant because it was smaller than the values shown in the table. It indicated that they were independent of each other; the effect of teaching strategies did not depend on the students' learning styles.

Keywords: task-based language learning, learning styles, reading ability

How to Cite: Husni Mubarok & Nina Sofiana. 2017. The Effect of Task-Based Language Learning and Learning Styles on the Students' Reading Ability. *Language Circle: Journal of Language and Literature*, 12(1), 19—29.

Introduction

Students in junior high school have to be able to use English either in spoken or written language. Spoken language can be in the form of listening and speaking skills, while written language can be in the form of reading and writing. Based on the national curriculum of Indonesia (K-2013), reading becomes one of important skills that

should be mastered well by students. Brown (2001:298) explains that reading skill could be developed well if it is associated with writing, listening and speaking. It means that reading cannot be separated from other skills of English.

Reading

Reading is an important tool for academic success (Patel & Jain, 2008:143), a key skill in language learning (Maxom, 2009:139), a combination of decoding and oral language (O' Malley & Pierce, 1996:94), and an essential basic skill which need to be learnt by junior high school students in Indonesia (Chotimah & Rukmini, 2017:47). Dealing with the importance of reading, it should be understood well by students in the aspects of symbols, grammar, and meanings.

Many experts try to define reading in the different context. Patel & Jain (2008:143) state that reading means to understand the meaning of printed words and it is not only a source of information and a pleasurable activity but also as means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language. Huang & Yang (2015:382) mention that reading is a complex activity in which a range of cognitive skills is required to get the extraction of textual meaning so that learners acquire literacy gradually. Reading could be easily acquired through positive communication between teacher and students (Alharbi, 2015:1258). Therefore the goal of reading is asking students/learners to find grammatical formation of words and identifying words that relate to the topic of reading passage.

Reading could be viewed from different perspectives; as practice, product, or process. The first view is from anthropologist and social psychologist that link reading to the uses in everyday life, not merely within schooling. The second view focuses on form and meaning. The last view pays greater attention to the role of reader in the on-going process and the strategy used in constructing meaning (Carter & Nunan, 2001:21).

The success of the reading process is determined by variables such as reading attitude, reading purpose, prior knowledge about the text, textual structure, vocabulary knowledge; comprehension is determined by the interaction of the reader with the text (Yildirim in Akyol, Cakiroglu, & Kuruyer, 2014). Readers construct new knowledge from the interaction between text

and their own background knowledge (O' Malley & Pierce, 1996:94).

If students in junior high school have low reading ability or been lacking in reading skills, it will make them fall in getting ideas, understanding the meaning of the text, comprehending reading text in different genres like narrative, recount, descriptive text and others, and lacking in reading strategies like scanning, skimming, finding the gist, and others. To overcome the problems above, Alharbi (2015:1258) argues that the teaching strategy used in teaching and learning process is a useful tool to maximize students' competencies at all levels. It is defined as the specifics activities manifested in the classroom that are consistent with a method and an approach as well (Brown, 2001:14). The use of teaching technique or strategy could aid teachers in bringing to conscious awareness the thinking that underlies the action (Larsen-freeman, 2003:7).

One of the teaching strategies or techniques, which could be used to improve students' reading ability, is task-based language learning. Task-based language learning and content-based instruction are parts of various teaching strategies that can be implemented in teaching reading. Both strategies are the extension of communicative language teaching which is used to develop learners' communicative competence (Richards, 2006:27) and become a dynamic resource for the creation of the meaning (Nunan, 1989:12).

Task-Based Language Learning

In a process-based approach of communicative language teaching, there are two kinds of strategies, namely; 1) Task-Based Language Learning and 2) content-based instruction. In a Task-Based Language Learning, a task is defined as a piece of work undertaken for oneself or one others, freely or for getting some reward (Nunan, 1989:5), an activity that is based on professional field of the teacher and learner (Francom & Gardner, 2014:28), and an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective, and

which necessitates the use of language (Van den Braden in Thomas & Reinders, 2010:18). In this case, students are asked to complete the task given with teachers' guidance. Nunan (2005:216) argues that task-based teaching is an approach to language teaching organized around tasks rather than language structure. So, the essential aspect of a task is that learners are focused on the meaning of the content rather than on form (Cameron, 2001:30).

D. Willis & Willis (2001:173) explain that task-based language learning contrasts with grammar-based approach. It involves the specification of a sequence of communicative tasks to be carried out in the target language not of a sequence of language items. The central to the notion of a communicative task is the exchange of meanings. Task-Based Language Learning claims that students language learning will result from creating the right kinds of interactional processes in the classroom, and the best way to create these is to use specially designed instructional tasks (Richards, 2006:30).

There are two kinds of tasks which are different each other; pedagogical and real-world task. Pedagogical tasks are designed for classroom task which are intended to require the use of specific interactional strategies and may also require the use of specific types of language (skill, grammar, vocabulary). For example, a task in which two learners should try to find the number of differences between two similar pictures. Meanwhile, real-world task is intended to real-world use of language. The use of role-play in practicing job interview could be the example of this task (Richards, 2006:31). In addition, five main characteristics of task in learning process are; 1) meaning is primary, 2) learners are not given other people's meaning to regurgitate, 3) there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities, 4) task completion has some priority, and 5) the assessment of the task is in term of outcome.

The second teaching strategy of CLT is content-based instruction. Content refers to the information or subject matter that we learn or

communicate through language rather than the language used to convey it (Richards, 2006:28). Therefore, content-based instruction can be understood as an appropriate approach in teaching language which focuses on the particular information or topic and it does not have a direct attention to the language itself (Khaneghah, 2016:224). It integrates the learning of language with the learning of some other content such as academic subject matter which provide natural content for language instruction (Larsen-freeman, 2003:136). CBI sees language as a means of acquiring information, reflects students' needs for learning a second language, and provide coherent framework that can be used to link and develop all of language skills (Richards, 2006:28).

Both task-based language learning and content-based instruction are on the grand theory of communicative language teaching (Richards, 2006; and Nunan, 1989) which see that language teaching could be implemented in different ways, depending on the context of teaching, learners' age and level, and the learning objective. Besides that, both strategies offer process-based approach (see Larsen-freeman, (2003) which ask students to create meaning through communication and interaction in the form of some activities such as task, problem solving, and others. Larsen-freeman (2003:128) states that the goal of communicative language teaching is to enable students to communicate in target language. It could be deduced that communicative language teaching enables students to communicate effectively in foreign language. It differs with traditional teaching approach which pays attention to the mastery of grammar rules. Communicative language teaching has made the goal of communicative competence rather than grammatical competence.

Many researchers conducted studies on TBLL. Hadi (2016:31) showed that TBI had an effect on pragmatic competence of EFL learners. Nazari & Tabatabaei (2016:156) and J. Huang (2010:29) claimed that TBI was significantly more effective than explicit instruction in teaching grammar and Shajeri et al., (2016:517) added that

task had impact on the enhancement of structural complexity of EFL learners. D. Huang (2016:118) investigated that TBI could improve students' motivation, interest, enjoyment, learning autonomy, and language skills. On the other hand, Khaneghah (2016:219) found that CBI was useful for EFL students in learning vocabulary than TBI.

Learning Styles

Learning styles could be defined as the different learning methods which are taken by students in understanding new information. Learning style is not only how an learner works cognitively, affectively, and physiologically (Olsson, 2009:6) but also learner's orientation toward his/her learning (Nunan, 2005:215). Students with different learning styles may respond to aural and visual messages in their own distinctive ways (Alharbi, 2015:1259). Olsson (2009:10) investigated four different learning style; auditory (based on hearing), visual (students' sight as their primary sense), tactile (prefer using hands), and kinaesthetic (physically active while learning).

The field of learning style is closely related with the field of learning strategy. Oxford (2001:166) states that learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information, specific actions taken by learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situation. All language learning strategy are related to the feature of control, goal directedness, autonomy, and self-efficacy (Oxford, 2001:166).

O'Malley and Chemot (1990) in Willis (1996:10) elaborated three main types of learners learning strategies; metacognitive (like planning and organizing students' learning, monitoring and evaluating students' speech, and others), cognitive (like advance preparation for a class, using a dictionary, listing or categorizing new words, and others), and social (like asking for a help, interacting with native speakers, and others). Learning strategies relate to the way students make their learning style. Learning strategies refer

to more or less conscious ways a second language learners use their language until they reach the goal of learning language (Olsson, 2009:7). Tornberg as cited by Olsson (2009:9) states that learning strategies have more of a mediating role and are based on students' previous knowledge and their learning styles. What learning strategy students choose also depends on the assignment at hand.

The connection of reading and students' learning style could be seen from the way what individual differs in order to be able to read and enhance their reading ability as good as possible. Enhancing reading ability which considers students' reading style and individual strengths will result good enhancement. Student's reading style correlate very closely with his or her learning style and perceptual preference (Olsson, 2009:12).

Based on the review of the related literature above, this study focused on finding out the impact of Task-Based Language Learning and students' learning style (visual and auditory) to their reading ability.

Methodology

The research design on this study was factorial design of experimental research since it used more than one independent variable (Task-Based Language Learning, conventional teaching strategy). As stated by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007:280), factorial design is one of experimental study that takes account of the interaction of the independent variables. There are three variables in this study. They are independent variables (the use of Task-Based Language Learning and conventional teaching strategy), moderator variable (students' learning styles in reading comprehension), and dependent variable (students' reading ability of grade VIII of Junior High School taken from test).

The population of this study was the eighth grade students of Islamic Junior High School in Jepara Municipality under the Ministry of National Education. This study used simple random sampling in selection 68 students which

was based on different learning styles; auditory and visual learning style. The researchers chose two classes to be subjects of the research; one class was for experimental group (Task-Based Language Learning group) and one class was for control group (conventional teaching strategy). In choosing the class, the researchers considered the result of homogeneity test in which the class had the similar characteristics. In each group, there were students with visual and auditory learning style.

There were two kinds of data collection used in this study; questionnaire and test. The first data collection was questionnaire used to categorize students' learning style into auditory and visual learners (adapted from Olsson, 2009). The questionnaire was distributed to both groups; experimental and control group, before doing the treatment. There were twelve English statements of questionnaire distributed to students to know students' learning styles in reading. The result showed that there were 17 students of experimental group categorizing as visual learners and 17 students of experimental group categorizing as auditory learners. Moreover, there were also 17 students of control group categorizing as visual learners and 17 students of control group categorizing as auditory learners.

The second data was collected by applying two kinds of test; pre-test and post-test. Both tests were applied for experimental group and control group. The test was in the form of multiple choice tests used to measure students' reading ability before and after the treatment by using those strategies. Before it was administered to the students, it was tested first in the form of validity and reliability. The validity of the test met the requirement of good statistical pattern which was showed with the significant correlation at 0.05 (5%) at significant level of product moment.

To test the hypothesis, this study used MANOVA (Multifactor Analysis of Variance) to find out the significant difference between the mean scores of the groups. The first step before calculating the pattern, the researchers conducted normality test of pre-test and post-test for

experimental and control group. This was used to make sure that the data was distributed normally.

The treatment of both groups; experimental and control group could be elaborated as the following:

1. For experimental group, Task-Based Language Learning was used. Task-Based Language Learning was done in three different cycles; pre-task, task, and language focus activities (adapted from Richards (2006)). In pre-task, teacher helped students to understand the topic introduced, learning and task objective by doing brainstorming, using picture or relating to students' experience. Teacher highlighted useful words and phrases but it was not implemented in grammar form. Teacher gave task in the form of text and students could read it.

In a task cycle, students do the task given by teacher. They could use whatever language they want to express. In this term, teacher helped students to formulate what language that they want to express but he did not intervene to them. Teacher grouped students in some groups so that they would use spontaneous talk and build confidence. This made students more motivated in achieving the goal. Students' point of view about the task would be written and discussed among other students on the same group. In this term, teacher's role was facilitator by giving advice and suggestion to students who found difficulties. Then, teacher asked students to present the result of discussion about the task in front of class for public presentation.

In language focus, teacher set language focused-tasks in the form of finding words or phrases related to the text and finding all words in simple past

form. After that, he did choral repetition of phrases identified, sentence completion, and matching past tense verb.

2. For control group, conventional teaching strategy was used in which it meant that there was no teaching aid used in teaching and learning process. Students were given a reading text to read and analyse. The questions should be answered and clarified to whole class. Topic of the text was same with the content stated in English book they used.

The hypothesis of this study, which was tested through two-way ANOVA, could be elaborated as the following:

1. H01: There is no significant difference between reading ability of the students

taught by Task-Based Language Learning and conventional teaching strategies.

2. H02: There is no significant difference between reading ability of the students with visual and auditory learning style.
3. H03: The two main effects teaching strategies (Task-Based Language Learning and conventional teaching strategy) and students' learning styles (visual and auditory) are independent.

Results and Discussion

This study was aimed to investigate whether there were differences in students' reading ability between experimental and control groups that had different learning styles. Before carrying out the treatment, the first step was performing a pre-test analysis to determine the initial condition of the research subject. It is elaborated as follows:

Table 01. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test Result

Learning Styles	Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Visual	TBLL	72.06	10.164	17
	Conventional	69.71	12.927	17
	Total	70.88	11.512	34
Auditory	TBLL	63.24	10.889	17
	Conventional	62.06	10.761	17
	Total	62.65	10.677	34
Total	TBLL	67.65	11.297	34
	Conventional	65.88	12.338	34

Table 01 shows the mean scores of students before they got the treatment. The mean scores of experiment and control students with visual learning style were 72.06 and 69.71. Meanwhile the mean scores of auditory students of experiment and control groups were 63.24 and 62.06. In addition, the total mean scores of both visual and auditory students of experimental and control groups were 67.65 and 65.88. It indicated that there was a slight difference in initial

conditions between the experimental and control group.

After conducting pre-test, the researchers analysed the homogeneity and normality test. This kind of analysis was used to decide that the experimental and control group was homogeneous or had similar characteristics. Based on the output of Levene's test of equality of error variances was found that F-test (0.473) was higher than F-table at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, it could be said that the treatment for experiment and control

groups were begun from similar reading ability level. The test between-subjects effect could be seen from the table below.

Table 02. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects in Pre-test

Dependent Variable: Score					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1211,765 ^a	3	403,922	3,201	,029
Intercept	303111,765	1	303111,765	2401,934	,000
Strategy	52,941	1	52,941	,420	,519
Style	1152,941	1	1152,941	9,136	,004
Strategy * Style	5,882	1	5,882	,047	,830
Error	8076,471	64	126,195		
Total	312400,000	68			
Corrected Total	9288,235	67			

a. R Squared = ,130 (Adjusted R Squared = ,090)

The results of this study also indicated that there was no significant difference between students who had visual learning style with students who had auditory learning style. The pre-measure reading ability showed that F-test was lower than F-table ($0,420 < 3.99$). It could be deduced that both groups had similar initial conditions in their reading ability even though they had different reading learning styles. The results showed that both the experimental and control groups had the same ability in reading before the treatment. F-table is also supported by

probability value which showed 0.830. It was smaller than the .05 level of significance.

After performing pre-test analyses conducted prior to treatment, the researchers treated two groups with different reading learning styles; visual and auditory. The experimental group was treated by using task-based language learning, while the control group was treated by using conventional teaching strategy. The results of the tests performed after the treatments were described as follows.

Table 03. Descriptive Statistics of Post-test Result

Learning Styles	Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Visual	TBLL	85.00	5.303	17
	Conventional	73.24	4.982	17
	Total	79.12	7.831	34
Auditory	TBLL	77.65	5.037	17
	Conventional	71.18	5.736	17
	Total	74.41	6.248	34
Total	TBLL	81.32	6.314	34
	Conventional	72.21	5.392	34

Based on the comparison table among mean scores above, it can be seen the main effects for task-based language learning and conventional

teaching strategy. Compared to the mean score of the two task-based language learning groups, 81.32, with that of the two conventional teaching

strategy groups, 72.21, it was found that the difference between the mean scores is 9.11 point. Therefore, it can be concluded that task-based language learning is more effective than conventional teaching strategy; the task-based language learning implemented has great effect on the students' reading ability. In detail, the subjects of the study in the experimental group obtained a higher mean score compared to the research subjects in the control group. Students' average score in reading with a tendency of visual learning style who got task-based language learning as a teaching strategy (85.00) was higher than those who got conventional teaching strategy (73.24). Then, students' average score in reading with a tendency of auditory learning style who got task-based language learning as a teaching strategy (77.65) was higher than those who got conventional teaching strategy (71.18). It indicated that task-based language learning, whether it was implemented for those had visual or auditory learning style, was more effective than conventional teaching strategy.

Regarding to the main effect of students' learning styles on the students' reading achievement scores, it can be seen that the table

showed the mean score of 79.12 for visual students and 74.41 for the auditory students. This indicated there was a considerable distance between the two groups of 4.71. This meant that visual students, regardless the teaching strategy, performed better in reading skill than auditory students. The visual students group, which was treated by using Task-Based Language Learning and conventional teaching strategy, could do reading task better than auditory students. Therefore, either task-based language learning or conventional teaching strategy was effective in improving students' reading ability for visual students.

In conclusion, the data explained reveal no interaction between teaching strategies and students' learning styles. Task-based language learning appears to be more effective regardless of the students' learning styles. In other words, teaching strategies (task-based language learning and conventional teaching strategy) and students' learning styles (visual and auditory) are independent of each other; the effect of the treatments was the same for both visual and auditory students. The lack of interaction is illustrated graphically in the following figure.

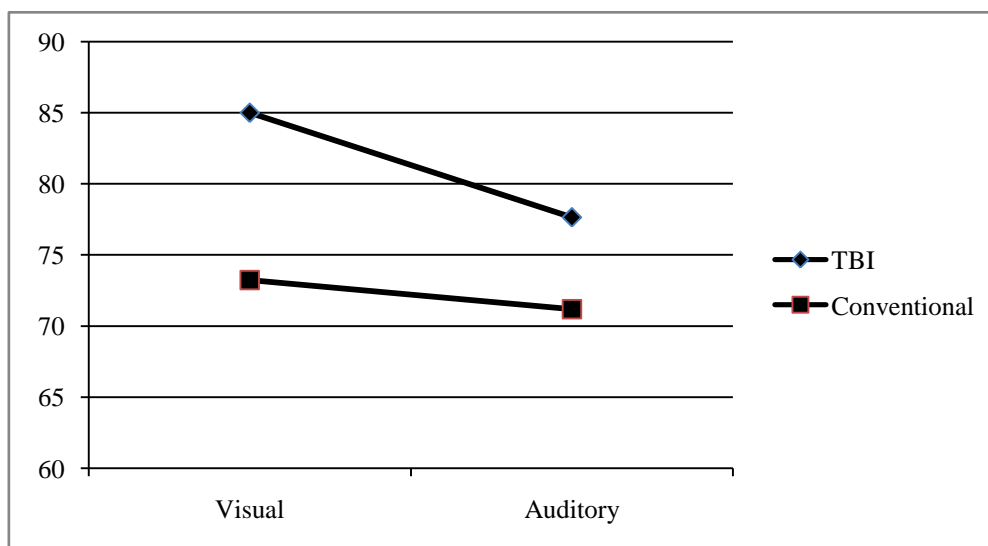


Figure 01. Estimated Marginal Means of Score in Post-test

Table 04. Tests of Between-Subjects Effect in Post-test

Dependent Variable: Score						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Corrected Model	1908.824 ^a	3	636.275	22.885	.000	
Intercept	400711.765	1	400711.765	14412.377	.000	
Strategy	1413.235	1	1413.235	50.830	.000	
Style	376.471	1	376.471	13.540	.000	
Strategy * Style	119.118	1	119.118	4.284	.043	
Error	1779.412	64	27.803			
Total	404400.000	68				
Corrected Total	3688.235	67				

a. R Squared = .518 (Adjusted R Squared = .495)

The result of MANOVA testing above showed the combined effect of two teaching strategies (task-based language learning and conventional teaching strategy) and students' learning styles (visual and auditory). It can be seen from the table 04 that there was direct effect among independent variables; teaching strategies and learning styles. Teaching strategies gave F-test 50.830 at the .05 level of significance which meant that Task-Based Language Learning differed with conventional teaching strategy. Since the obtained value of F exceeds 3.99 (.05 level), it is significant at the .05 level of significance.

On the other side, learning style, which is significant at the .05 level of significance, is based on the comparison of the students' reading ability of the visual students groups with those in auditory students groups. From the significance of this F-ratio, it can be seen the difference between the students' reading ability of those subjects treated by Task-Based Language Learning and those treated by conventional teaching. Examining the data presented in table 04, it can be seen that those groups who had visual learning styles have gained a combined mean of 79.12 as compared with a mean of 74.41 for those groups who had auditory learning style. Since there was a significant F-ratio for the difference, it can be concluded that both teaching strategies in this study can be implemented better when the

students had visual learning style than they had auditory learning styles.

For the interaction between teaching strategies and students' learning styles, with 1 and 64 degrees of freedom, an F-ratio of 3.99 (.05 level) or 7.04 (.01 level) is needed. The obtained value of F, 4.284, did not exceed one of these values and thus is not significant at the .01 level. It could be deduced that both teaching strategy and learning style did not influence each other or there was no a joint effect on students' reading ability. F-table is also supported by probability value which showed 0.043. It was lower than the .05 level of significance. The result of F-table indicated there was no interaction between teaching strategies and learning styles on students' reading ability.

The evaluation of the implementation of task-based language learning in Islamic Junior High School in Jepara Municipality under The Ministry of National Education found that students in the grade eight increased English reading ability as a result of experiencing task-based language learning activity. Both visual and auditory students treated under task based instruction had better reading ability that the students treated under conventional teaching strategy. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and an alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Some evidences during the learning process also support the fact that task-based

language learning increased the students' motivation to learn. The choice of authentic tasks and real world activities is essentially motivating the students. They feel the tasks are interesting and applicable to their lives. As stated by Mao (2012:28) that the activity of comprehending, accomplishing, and thinking on the task create abundance of real use of the target language, all of which promote in cyclical, continuing manner. In addition, Chowdhury (2014:50) also states that the framework of task-based language learning not only can be used to motivate students but also to assist students to be more confident in using target language. Thus, task-based language learning is an effective means to improve reading ability of junior high school students.

Conclusion

Based on the finding and discussion above, it could be concluded that both groups; experimental

and control groups, had similar condition in reading ability before the treatment was conducted in which F-test was lower than F-table. After the treatment, F-test resulted a significant difference between experimental and control group. It indicated that task-based language learning could enhance better than conventional teaching strategy on students' reading ability either for students with a tendency of visual learners or auditory learners. It was also found that all independent variables; Task-Based Language Learning, conventional teaching strategy and students' learning style influenced students' reading ability.

Task-based language learning was better to implement in reading class than conventional teaching strategy. Students who had visual learning style performed better than those who had auditory learning style either in learning reading through task-based language learning or conventional teaching strategy.

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