Iranian EFL and Indian ESL College Students' Beliefs about Reading Strategies in L2

Creencias de estudiantes universitarios iraníes EFL e hindúes ESL acerca de las estrategias de lectura en L2

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The notion of "learner beliefs" has garnered much attention in the field of second language acquisition. Although different studies have been conducted to study learners' beliefs about language learning, little research has looked into the issue of L2 readers' beliefs and their relations to reading strategies. This study investigated whether there are any significant differences between EFL and ESL readers in reading awareness of metacognitive strategies use when they are reading in English. 190 undergraduate college students completed the Survey of Reading Strategies questionnaire. The results indicated that the subjects in both groups reported almost similar patterns of strategy awareness while reading; however, Indians reported more awareness of global, support and total metacognitive reading strategies than Iranians while no significant difference was reported when using problem-solving strategies. These results can contribute to the necessity of reading strategies training in both contexts.

Key words: Metacognitive reading strategies, metacognition, EFL and ESL readers, cognitive processes.

La noción de "creencias del estudiante" ha ganado mucha atención en el ámbito de la adquisición de la segunda lengua. Aunque se han realizado diferentes estudios sobre las creencias de los estudiantes respecto al aprendizaje de la lengua, poco se ha investigado acerca de las creencias de los lectores de segunda lengua y su relación con estrategias de lectura. Este estudio investigó si había diferencias significativas entre los lectores de inglés como lengua extranjera y los lectores de inglés como segunda lengua en cuanto a la conciencia lectora y el uso de estrategias metacognitivas cuando leen en inglés. Ciento noventa estudiantes de pregrado completaron el cuestionario sobre estrategias lectoras. Los resultados mostraron que los sujetos de los dos grupos reportaron un patrón casi similar al uso de conciencia de estrategia mientras leían. Sin embargo, los estudiantes indios reportaron ser más conscientes respecto a estrategias metacognitivas lectoras totales, globales y de apoyo que los estudiantes iraníes, mientras que no se hallaron diferencias significativas al usar estrategias para la resolución de problemas. Estos resultados pueden contribuir a la necesidad de capacitación en estrategias lectoras en ambos contextos.

Palabras clave: estrategias metacognitivas, metacognición, lectores de inglés como lengua extranjera y como segunda lengua, procesos cognitivos de lectura.

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Introduction

Interest in second language acquisition, particularly as it relates to reading in the second language, has burgeoned in the past decade. This change has resulted in a growing demand for both effective reading courses as well as high-quality second language materials. Research has demonstrated that, in essence, reading in a second language is a dynamic and interactive process by which learners make use of background knowledge, text schema, lexical and grammatical awareness, L1-related knowledge, and real-world knowledge, as well as their own personal purposes and goals, to arrive at an understanding of written material. At the same time, readers' views of the nature of reading are seen to be shaped by their own social, cultural, and personal histories.

According to Anderson (2003), reading is the interaction of four things: the reader, the text, the fluent reading or "the ability to read at an appropriate rate with adequate comprehension", and strategic reading, or "the ability of the reader to use a variety of reading strategies to accomplish a purpose for reading" (p. 8). Discovering the best methods and techniques or processes the learners choose to access is the goal of research in reading strategies.

In addition, reading is the kind of process in which one needs to not only understand its direct meaning, but also comprehend its implied ideas. As Tierney and Readence (2005) states, "Learning to read is not [only] learning to recognize words; it is [also] learning to make sense of texts" (p. 51). It involves a great deal of cognitive capacity available for comprehension (Pressley, 2002a). For example, good readers know that comprehension is most likely to occur from reading activity. They know how to relate what is being read to prior knowledge, how to predict what might be coming up in the text, and summarize what is being read (Pressley, 2002a). These comprehension strategies are metacognitive concepts in reading. If students are capable of comprehending what they are reading through a variety of strategies, they will create an interested and self-regulative attitude toward the path of academic achievement.

Regarding the importance of reading comprehension, it should be pointed out that it is specifically the basic goal for ESL/EFL students to gain an understanding of the world and of themselves, enabling them to think about and react to what they read (Tierney & Readence, 2005). According to Grabe (1991), reading is an essential skill and probably the most important skill for second language learners to master in academic contexts. Since reading comprehension has been distinctively important both in first and second/foreign languages, reading strategies are of great interest in the field of reading research. Reading research has also shed light on metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, perception of strategies, and strategy use / training in reading comprehension.

Theoretical Framework

Metacognition

Metacognition is defined as "thinking about thinking" (Anderson, 2002, p. 23). This term was first coined by Flavell in the mid 1970s. According to Byrd, Carter, and Waddoups (2001), it is accounted as self-awareness of mental process. Oxford believes that metacognitive strategies "provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process" (1990, p. 136).

Others contend that metacognition refers to the knowledge and control that we have over our cognitive processes. As far as it is concerned with reading, it is common to talk about metacognitive awareness (what we know) and metacognitive regulation or control (knowing when, where, and how to use strategies; that is, what we can do). As a

whole, metacognition involves awareness and control of planning, monitoring, repairing, revising, summarizing, and evaluating. Essentially, we learn strategies that support our comprehension (our awareness of strategies) and we learn how to carry out these strategies effectively (our control of strategies) (Baker, 2002; 2008; Pressley, 2002b).

Since its development in the late 1970s, the theory of metacognition has received a great deal of attention and serious consideration from cognitive and developmental psychologists as well as reading researchers. Although the theory of metacognition originated from research on learning and memory, the success of research studies in cognitive/ developmental psychology, especially Kreutzer, Leonard, Flavell, and Hagen (1975) study on children's metamemory, has undoubtedly exerted a significant influence on reading research. Cognitive and developmental psychologists have provided reading researchers with deep insights into problems of reading comprehension, and have created an ongoing enthusiasm for further exploration and investigation of reading problems within the theoretical and conceptual framework of metacognition.

Research on the relationship between metacognition and reading comprehension has progressed through several different stages. During the early stages, research focused on the investigation of the relationship between metacognition and reading comprehension from the developmental perspective. Brown (1980) and Baker and Brown (1984) were among the first influential researchers in this field. They concluded that young students are ignorant of metacognitive strategies in knowing when they are comprehending, knowing what they need to know and what they have comprehended, knowing where they fail to comprehend, and knowing what they need to do in order to repair comprehension failure.

Reading Strategy Research

A strategy is an individual's comprehension approach to a task; it includes how a person thinks and acts when planning and evaluating his or her study behavior. In effect, successful people are good strategy users; they know how to use a variety of goal-specific tactics, to execute a planned sequence for them, and to monitor their use (Adams & Hamm, 1994; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002; Weinstein & Mayer, 1985; Weinstein & Underwood, 1985). There are so many reading strategies employed by successful language learners who are able to find their own way, organize information, use linguistic knowledge of their first language when they are learning their second language, use contextual cues, learn how to chunk language, to name just a few.

Successful language learners know how to use such reading strategies efficiently. The purposes of reading strategies are to have general knowledge, to get a specific detail, to find the main idea or theme, to learn, to remember, to delight, to summarize and to do research (Hyland, 1990). Regarding the importance of reading strategies, Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) identified several key strategies that were evident in the verbal protocols they reviewed including: (a) overview before reading; (b) look for important information and pay greater attention to it; (c) relate important points to one another; (d) activate and use prior knowledge; (e) change strategies when understanding is not good; and (f) monitor understanding and take action to correct inaccuracies in comprehension.

The current understanding of reading strategies has been shaped significantly by research on what expert readers do (Bazerman, 1985; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). These studies demonstrate that successful comprehension does not occur automatically. Rather, successful comprehension depends on directed cognitive effort, referred to as

metacognitive processing, which consists of knowledge about and regulation of processing. During reading, metacognitive processing is expressed through strategies which are "procedural, purposeful, effortful, willful, essential, and facilitative in nature" and "the reader must purposefully or intentionally or willfully invoke strategies" (Alexander & Jetton, 2000, p. 295), and does so to regulate and enhance learning from text. Through metacognitive strategies, a reader allocates significant attention to controlling, monitoring, and evaluating the reading process (Pressley, 2000; Pressley, Brown, El-Dinary, & Afflerbach, 1995). Additionally, Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) stated it is the combination of conscious awareness of the strategic reading processes and the actual use of reading strategies that distinguishes the skilled from unskilled readers. Studies show that unsuccessful students lack this strategic awareness and monitoring of the comprehension process (García, Jiménez, & Pearson, 1998).

Research addressing metacognitive awareness and use of reading strategies by first and second language readers of English has shown that important reading strategies which deal with planning, controlling, and evaluating one's understanding (e.g. setting purpose for reading, prediction, summarization, questioning, use of text structural features, self-monitoring, etc.) are widely used by first and second language readers (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001). Furthermore, the supply of strategies used by proficient bilingual and biliterate readers often include some strategies that may be unique and particularly useful to reading in a second language e.g. code-mixing, translation, and use of cognates (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1995, 1996). With respect to this issue, Feng and Mokhtari (1998) examined the reading strategies 20 Chinese proficient college students employed when reading easy and difficult texts in English and Chinese. They found that readers appealed to a wide-ranging supply of strategies while reading in English and Chinese; however, a majority of the strategies employed while reading was used more frequently in English than in Chinese. Besides, more strategies were used when the subjects read difficult texts than when they read easy texts.

In addition, Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) examined differences in the metacognitive and perceived use of reading strategies among 105 United States (US) and English as Second Language (ESL) university students in the US. They drew these conclusions: first, that both the US and ESL students showed a high level of various reading strategies awareness; secondly, both groups attributed the same order of importance to categories of reading strategies in the survey, regardless of their reading ability or gender; thirdly, both ESL and US high-reading-ability students showed comparable degrees of higher reported use for cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies than lower-reading ability students in the respective groups, and while the US high-reading-ability students seem to consider support reading strategies to be relatively more valuable than low-reading-ability US students, ESL students attribute high value to support reading strategies regardless of their reading ability level.

Mokhtari and Reichard (2004) also investigated whether significant differences exist between first and second language readers in their metacognitive awareness and perceived use of specific strategies when reading for academic purposes in English. Regarding this study, a total of 350 college students including 141 US and 209 Moroccan students completed an instrument designed to measure their metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. The results revealed that despite the fact that the two groups had been schooled in significantly different socio-cultural environments, they reported remarkably similar patterns of strategy awareness and reported use when reading academic materials in

English. Both groups demonstrated a moderate to high awareness level of reading strategies. As far as types of strategies reported by the subjects are concerned, Moroccan students reported using certain types of strategies more often than their American counterparts.

Despite the rapidly expanding research on different aspects of second and foreign language reading, a limited number of research works has centered on reporting the type of metacognitive reading strategies EFL and ESL readers use while they are reading in English. In addition, no research currently exists regarding the study of the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies in different social, cultural, and linguistic contexts. As Mokhtari and Reichard (2004) stated, most of the research available has tended to focus on monolingual and bilingual children with similar backgrounds in specific metacognitive knowledge, metalinguistic skills, and reading performance. In addition, with the exception of a few research projects, most of the research on the reading strategies of first and second language readers has been limited to students at a lower level proficiency or those studying at secondary school or in pre-university programs.

However, EFL and ESL university students have to read a large volume of academic texts in English but many of them commence university studies unprepared for the reading demands placed on them (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). They show an inability to read selectively; that is, extracting what is important for the purpose of reading and discarding what is insignificant. Also, they often select ineffective and inefficient strategies with little strategic intent (Wood, Motz, & Willoughby, 1998).

Having known all about the importance of the reading strategies and their impact on learning, and considering the fact that no research has been done in relation to metacognitive reading strate-gies among EFL and ESL college learners, namely in Iran and India and varying in cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, this research work serves as the focus of the present study. My underlying hypothesis in doing this comparative study was that although both groups of subjects may be considered to possess the introductory language proficiency for college-level academic reading in English, they are not expected to utilize similar strategic awareness in dealing with their academic reading tasks thanks to the differences existing in their social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. I conducted the present research in order to find answers to the following two questions concerning students' awareness of reading strategies while reading texts for comprehension: (1) Are there any significant differences between EFL and ESL learners in their perceived use of reading strategies while reading an academic text in English? and (2) What reading strategies do EFL and ESL learners use more when they are reading an academic text in English?

Methodology

Subjects

The participants in this study consisted of 189 college students including 93 Indians and 96 Iranians. The students, who were both freshman and sophomore and were admitted to their respective universities for full-time academic study, were majoring in English Translation and Literature. All the participating students had completed 12 years of schooling and had graduated from high school prior to their enrollment in college. According to a background information questionnaire, both groups for the most part had similar characteristics with respect to age (Indian mean age = 20; Iranian mean age = 22), proficiency level (Indian mean = 17; Iranian mean = 15), language of instruction (English

for both Indian and Iranian), and gender distribution (Indian 54% males vs. 46% females; Iranian 32% males vs. 68% females). Clearly, the only obvious difference was the instructional context in which both groups were studying English i.e. ESL and EFL.

Instructional Context

In this study, the participants were studying English in two completely different instructional contexts, which represent significantly different socio-cultural levels. What has attracted more attention in this study is the place or context in which instruction is taking place, particularly in regard to the instructional practices used in teaching reading to students. Iranians are enjoying learning English in a monolingual society in which learning English is confined to the classrooms while Indians are experiencing it in a multilingual country in which, at least, three primary languages coexist: Kannada, Hindu, and English. It should also be mentioned that English is being learned as their second language. However, Nayar (1997) characterized the English situation existing in India today as ESL1 thanks to some reasons including first, English is not "native" to the Indian environment, although it is used extensively by a small but influential group of people "as a medium of communication in a variety of domains like education, administration, and commerce" (p. 15). Second, in multilingual Indians, English serves as a link language among educated Indians, who typically speak a variety of indigenous languages. Third, there is "a certain amount of environmental support for English in the form of, for example, popular English media and indigenous literature in English" (p. 15). Fourth, English is one of the official languages of the country with the status of associate national language, and mastery of English is considered a social and educational accomplishment as described by Gupta (1995, p. 76) as follows: [Indians] secretly believe , if they do not

openly say so, that competence in English makes a considerable difference in their career prospects-politicians and bureaucrats denounce the elitism of [English-medium] students but surreptitiously they send their children to schools that teach it. Ultimately, as Kachru (1986) announced, English "has now become an integral part of the Indian's linguistic repertoire" (p. 32).

In spite of the importance of English and demand for it, the teaching of reading in English in both countries (Iran and India) at the college level is still fraught with a multitude of difficulties and obstacles or, better stated, it is an overlooked skill.

However, it is crucial to mention that while the theoretical foundations and instructional approaches employed in teaching reading may be similar in some ways in both contexts, the Indian students studying English in an ESL setting have two obvious advantages over their Iranian counterparts studying it in an EFL context. First, they have more access to educational resources because most of their courses are presented or taught in English. Second, English is considered a native-like language for Indian students, in most cases, while it is a foreign language for the Iranian students with little exposure to it.

Materials

Reading Comprehension Test

The test of reading comprehension was taken from Kit of Reading Comprehension (Rajinder, 2008). The time allotted to this study was 60 minutes as had been determined at the piloting stage. The reading passages used in this study included a general content, which were of interest to the students.

Also, running through K-R21, it was demonstrated that this reading comprehension test was reliable enough (0.78 and 0.68 for Indians and Iranians, respectively) for the relevant goals in the

current study. Then, the test turned out to be suitable for this study after the correlation coefficient (0.70 and 0.66) between the TOEFL proficiency test and the test of reading in English in the piloting stage was calculated for creating a valid test.

Background Questionnaire

A background questionnaire was developed by the investigator for the purpose of eliciting information about the participants including age, gender, hometown and/or address, years of studying English, and medium of instruction (see Appendix 1).

Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI)

The students' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies was assessed through this instrument, which was designed for measuring adolescent and adult students' awareness and use of reading strategies while reading academic or school-related materials. The MARSI questionnaire (see Appendix 2) measures three broad categories of reading strategies including the following:

- Global Reading Strategies (GLOB), which can be thought of as generalized or global reading strategies aimed at setting the stage for the reading act (for instance, setting purpose for reading, previewing text content, predicting what the text is about, etc.);
- Problem-Solving Strategies (PROB), which are localized, focused problem-solving or repair strategies used when problems develop in understanding textual information (for instance, checking one's understanding upon encountering conflicting information, re-reading for better understanding, etc.); and
- Support Reading Strategies (SUP), which involves using the support mechanisms or tools aimed at sustaining responsiveness to reading

(for instance, use of reference materials like dictionaries and other support systems).

The 30-item questionnaire was validated by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) using large subject population representing students with equivalent reading abilities ranging from middle school to college. The internal consistency reliability coefficient for its three above subscales ranged from 0.89 to 0.93 and reliability for the total sample was 0.93, showing a reasonably dependable measure of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. However, to see whether this question is reliable for the subjects of this study or not, it was given to 20 students of the similar group participating in the study for both contexts. Based on the collected data, the reliability coefficient alpha for this questionnaire was calculated to be 0.70 and 0.65 for Indian and Iranian students, respectively, which confirmed the appropriateness of this questionnaire for both contexts.

Procedure

The following procedures were adopted in order to meet the objective of this study. First, the background questionnaire was given to the subjects after some modifications were made due to some recommendations given on the part of some advisors. Second, the subjects were given the reading comprehension test in order to answer the questions based on the background knowledge on reading strategies. Finally, the subjects were given the metacognitive reading strategies questionnaire after completing the reading comprehension test. The MARSI instrument was administered to the subjects in a similar way in Iran and India as was the case for all questionnaires in this study. It was conducted during a regular class period, with the help of the classroom instructors who were well acquainted with the general objective of the research

project. After an overview of the purpose of the study, a description of the instrument, and an explanation of the steps involved in completing it, it was presented to the subjects in both contexts by the researcher. The students were instructed to read each of the 30 statements in the MARSI questionnaire, and circle the number which best described their perceived use of the strategies described in the statement using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (I never or almost never use this strategy) to 5 (I always or almost always use this strategy). The students were also informed to work at their own pace and reminded to bear in mind the reading comprehension test and other academic reading materials while they were responding to the strategy questionnaire. Lastly, they were told that there were no "right" or "wrong" responses to the statements and they could take as much time as they needed to complete the inventory.

Results

The paired T-test was employed to analyze the data in this study. Statistical representation of the analyzed data is given in the following tables:

Table 1 contains data regarding the first question: *Are there any significant differences between* EFL *and* ESL *learners in their perceived use of reading strategies while reading in English?* As indicated in Table 1, EFL (Iranian) and ESL (Indian) college students differed significantly in their total metacognitive reading strategies (t = 3,465; p < 005) and two of the subscales (Global and Support reading strategies) and 19 individual strategies. Regarding the total reading strategies, Indians as ESL learners reported more use of these strategies (M = 104.16; SD = 12.81) than Iranians as EFL learners (M = 95.81; SD = 19.52). As far as global reading strategies are concerned, Indians also reported more use of these strategies (M = 43.47; SD = 6.83) than Iranians (M = 40.90; SD = 9.09).

Besides, with respect to support reading strategies, Indians reported using these strategies more (M = 31.83; SD = 4.73) in comparison with Iranian counterparts (M = 26.61; SD = 5.99). However, both groups of subjects reported the same use of problem-solving strategies. Concerning the significant difference among individual strategies use on the part of both groups, in all except four strategies, Indian students reported greater strategy use than Iranian students. Among the global reading strategies, Indians reported to be better in using the strategies like *setting purpose for reading, previewing text, determining what to read, resolving conflicting information,* and *confirming prediction* while Iranians reported better use of two strategies, namely, *using typographical aids* and *critically evaluating what is read.* With regard to problem-solving strategies, Indians as ESL learners reported using three strategies better- *reading slowly and carefully, adjusting reading rate,* and *visualizing information read-* whereas Iranians, as EFL learners, reported using only the strategy *pausing and thinking about reading.* Regarding support strategies, Indians reported their preference in using almost all strategies including *note-taking, reading aloud, summarizing, discussing reading, underlining, paraphrasing,* and *asking questions* while Iranians reported better employment of *using reference materials such as dictionary* as a strategy.

As Table 1 indicates, for Indian ESL students, the means of individual strategy use ranged from a high of 4.23 (*Reading slowly and carefully*) to a low of 2.60 (*Checking how text content fits purpose*), with a low overall reported strategy usage mean of 104.16 (SD = 12.81). On the other hand, for Iranian EFL students, the mean of individual strategy usage ranged from a high of 4.13 (*Using reference materials*) to a low of 2.34 (*Taking notes while reading*), with an overall reported strategy usage mean of 95.81 (SD = 19.52).

Table 1. Differences in metacognitive awareness of reading strategies used by Iranian and Indian students

Name	Strategy	Iranian		Indian		T	p-value
		Mean	SD	**Mean**	SD		
GLOB1	Setting purpose for reading	3.26	1.29	3.71	.92	2.751	.007
GLOB2	Using prior knowledge	3.45	1.26	3.48	1.17	.203	.839
GLOB3	Previewing text before reading	3.13	1.32	3.65	1.20	2.824	.005
GLOB4	Checking how text content fits purpose	2.56	1.18	2.60	1.42	.209	.835
GLOB5	Skimming to note text characteristics	3.18	1.34	2.89	1.31	1.479	.141
GLOB6	Determining what to read	3.06	1.08	3.44	1.32	2.154	.033
GLOB7	Using text feature (e.g. tables)	2.84	1.35	2.78	1.21	.316	.753
GLOB8	Using context clues	3.22	1.30	3.27	1.14	.281	.779
GLOB9	Using typographical aids (e.g. italics)	3.55	1.12	2.89	1.22	3.870	.000
GLOB10	Critically evaluating what is read	2.90	1.05	3.56	1.17	4.112	.000
GLOB11	Resolving conflicting information	3.19	1.10	3.82	1.05	4.022	.000
GLOB12	Predicting or guessing text meaning	3.63	1.10	3.65	1.13	.124	.901
GLOB13	Confirming prediction	2.94	1.32	3.73	1.26	4.224	.000
PROB1	Reading slowly and carefully	3.77	1.20	4.23	.99	2.837	.005
PROB2	Trying to stay focused on reading	3.73	1.01	3.51	1.27	1.340	.182
PROB3	Adjusting reading rate	3.10	1.21	3.63	1.23	2.873	.005
PROB4	Paying close attention to reading	3.68	1.35	3.81	1.19	.698	.486
PROB5	Pausing and thinking about reading	3.48	1.18	3.01	1.28	2.617	.010
PROB6	Visualizing information read	3.20	1.24	3.66	1.20	2.571	.011
PROB7	Re-reading for better understanding	3.92	1.10	3.92	1.15	.049	.961
PROB8	Guessing meaning of unknown words	3.44	1.23	3.12	1.29	1.684	.094
SUP1	Taking notes while reading	2.34	1.29	3.74	1.17	7.805	.000
SUP2	Reading aloud when text becomes hard	2.83	1.29	3.34	1.38	2.633	.009
SUP3	Summarizing text information	2.58	1.19	3.49	1.21	5.207	.000
SUP4	Discussing reading with others	2.59	1.17	3.31	1.19	4.177	.000
SUP5	Underlining information in text	3.43	1.42	3.83	1.28	2.035	.043
SUP6	Using reference materials	4.13	1.27	3.62	1.09	2.970	.003
SUP7	Paraphrasing for better understanding	3.00	1.35	3.43	1.19	2.323	.021
SUP8	Going back and forth in text	3.31	1.17	3.45	1.03	.867	.387
SUP9	Asking oneself questions	2.40	1.16	3.61	1.18	7.163	.000
GLOB	Global Reading Strategies	40.90	9.09	43.47	6.83	2.198	.029
PROB	Problem-solving Reading Strategies	28.30	6.15	28.86	4.59	.705	.482
SUP	Support Reading Strategies	26.61	5.99	31.83	4.73	6.630	.000
ORS	Overall Reading Strategies	95.81	19.52	104.16	12.81	3.465	.001

Table 2. Reading strategies reported being used MOST and LEAST by Iranian and Indian students

Iranian (n = 96)		Indian (n = 93)	
Name	Strategy	Name	Strategy
SUP6	Using reference materials	PROB1	Reading slowly and carefully
PROB7	Re-reading for better understanding	PROB7	Re-reading for better understanding
PROB1	Reading slowly and carefully	SUP5	Underlining information in text
PROB2	Trying to stay focused on reading	GLOB11	Resolving conflicting information
PROB4	Paying closer attention to reading	PROB4	Paying closer attention to reading
GLOB12	Predicting or guessing text meaning	SUP1	Taking notes while reading
GLOB9	Using typological aids (e.g. italics)	GLOB13	Confirming predictions
PROB5	Pausing and thinking about reading	GLOB1	Setting purpose for reading
GLOB2	Using prior knowledge	PROB6	Visualizing information read
PROB8	Guessing meaning of unknown words	GLOB12	Predicting or guessing text meaning
SUP5	Underlining information in the text	GLOB3	Previewing text before reading
SUP8	Going back and forth in text	PROB3	Adjusting reading rate
GLOB1	Setting purpose for reading	SUP6	Using reference materials
GLOB8	Using context clues	SUP9	Asking oneself questions
PROB6	Visualizing information read	GLOB10	Critically evaluating what is read
GLOB11	Resolving conflicting information	PROB2	Trying to stay focused on reading
GLOB5	Skimming to note text characteristics	SUP3	Summarizing text information
GLOB3	Previewing text before reading	GLOB2	Using prior knowledge
PROB3	Adjusting reading rate	SUP8	Going back and forth in text
GLOB6	Determining what to read	GLOB6	Determining what to read
SUP7	Paraphrasing for better understanding	SUP7	Paraphrasing for better understanding
GLOB13	Confirming predictions	SUP2	Reading aloud when text becomes hard
GLOB10	Critically evaluating what is read	SUP4	Discussing reading with others
GLOB7	Using text features (e.g. tables)	GLOB8	Using context clues
SUP2	Reading aloud when text becomes difficult	PROB8	Guessing meaning of unknown words
SUP4	Discussing reading with others	PROB5	Pausing and thinking about reading
SUP3	Summarizing text information	GLOB9	Using typological aids (e.g. italics)
GLOB4	Checking how text content fits purpose	GLOB5	Skimming to note text characteristics
SUP9	Asking oneself questions	GLOB7	Using text features (e.g. tables)
SUP1	Taking notes while reading	GLOB4	Checking how text content fits purpose

Furthermore, a closer look at Table 1 indicates the fact that, for Indian college students, 16 (48%) of the 30 strategies reported fell within the high usage category (3.5 or a higher mean), 14 strategies (42%) place in the medium usage category of mean (mean between 2.5 and 3.49), while none of the strategies fell in the low usage category (mean below 2.4). However, for Iranian counterparts, the results were reported to be completely different; 7 (21%) of the 30 strategies reported fell in the high usage category; two strategies (6%) fell in the low usage category, while the remaining 21 (63%) strategies had means in the medium use range.

As far as the second research question is concerned (What reading strategies do EFL and ESL learners use better when they are reading in English?), and as Table 2 indicates, the strategies used by Iranian and Indian students have been arranged in order from most to least used. For more clarification, the top five and bottom five for each group are highlighted. Among the most-used strategies, *re-reading for better understanding* (Prob7), *reading slowly and carefully* (Prob1), and *paying closer attention to reading* (Prob4) were reported to be used by both groups, although Iranians preferred to use the strategy of "*using reference materials* (Sup6)" at the top and Indians favored the use of "*underlining information in text* (Sup5)" at the top. On the contrary, among the least-used strategies, three strategies were reported to be used less by both groups including *using text features* (Glob7), *using context clues* (Glob8), and *checking how text content fits purpose* (Glob4). Besides, Indians reported making the best use of "*Note-taking*" as a support strategy while reading although Iranians preferred not to use this strategy as a useful one. Regarding other strategies included in the table, both groups showed a mix of global, problem-solving, and support reading strategies.

Discussion

In this study, I wanted to explore whether there were any significant differences in the meta-cognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies between EFL and ESL college students while reading academic materials. Regarding this research hypothesis, both groups completed a 30-item scale of MARSI questionnaire. The results of the study showed that both groups exhibited almost similar patterns of strategy awareness and reported usage when reading college-level materials in English, although both of them were studying English in quite different socio-cultural environ-

ments (EFL vs. ESL). With respect to the differences existing between both groups, Indian students reported using most types of strategies more often than did their Iranian counterparts. As mentioned before, Indians reported using almost all the strategies included in "support reading strategies" better than Iranians such as summarizing, paraphrasing, note-taking, etc. This means that Indians are more interested in using top-down strategies for more comprehension during reading while Iranians are more hooked on using bottom-up strategies as they are more interested in using reference materials like a dictionary to find the meaning of unknown words, which cause interference in comprehension, during reading. Another justification for this result is that Indians are good at writing as was observed by the researcher in the study done for the effect of paraphrasing strategy in both Iranian and Indian contexts, which can be accounted as the main reason for better use of the abovementioned strategies on the part of this group.

In addition, both EFL and ESL college students reported using some problem-solving strategies as the most-used strategies such as "reading slowly and carefully" or "re-reading for better understanding". It can be inferred at this point that both groups are not well aware of employing some useful and effective strategies for better comprehension such as summarizing, underlining, note-taking, etc.

As a result, the findings reported in this study are related to the importance of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies among EFL and ESL college readers. The researcher believes that it is necessary and important for all readers to be familiar with the significant strategies proficient reading necessitates. As Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) articulate, teachers can play a part in enhancing students' awareness of such strategies and

in assisting them to become "constructively responsive" readers. We should keep in mind that an awareness of strategic reading does not necessarily lead to actual use of these strategies while reading because students may be well aware of a strategy but using it in a real language situation necessitates more attention. However, the researcher contends that the integration of metacognitive reading strategies instruction within the overall reading curriculum plays a vital role in enriching students' awareness of the mental processes involved in reading and the development of thoughtful and constructive responsive reading. Teaching students can help, as Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) support, students to become constructively responsive readers and can be regarded as a powerful way to promote skillful academic reading, which will, in turn, enhance academic achievement.

In addition, metacognitive strategies help students "outline logical organization of a text", distinguish a relationship between cause and effect, understand the problem and solution, and make comparisons (text structure) (Hughes, 1989, p. 139). As such, students can become aware of and develop good reading processes to improve their comprehension. In effect, reading itself is a far more complex process than had been visualized earlier by reading researchers (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991). If EFL and ESL students' reading comprehension can be improved by putting metacognitive strategies into practice in the context of reading, they will mostly benefit from meaningful learning and be propelled into multidimensional application in any realm of the educational field.

Therefore, incorporating learning strategy instruction into L2 classroom teaching promotes a way of thinking, a way of approaching a learning task or similar problematic situations for our learners. Learners are coming into the L2 classroom with developing language skills and, often,

low level study or learning skills as well. Before the learners can become successful L2 learners, the dilemma of how to approach the learning process in the L2 context should be addressed. In response to the needs of the learners as learners, teaching learning strategies in the L2 classroom, whether in an EFL or ESL context, can provide learners with opportunities for success by encouraging them to apply the learning strategies they have internalized before and, also, to develop new ones. The findings presented here serve as a reminder that second or foreign language classroom learning is a complex process, related to a number of variables including but not limited to language learning strategy use.

Implications and Recommendations

The results of this study point to several practical implications for reading instruction in Iran and India in EFL and ESL contexts, respectively. This can also be relevant for similar contexts in other countries. First, it is important for all second language readers, whether or not they are proficient in the target language, to be aware of the significant strategies proficient reading necessitates. As Paris and Winograd (1990) suggest, English teachers could offer direct explanation of the processes and steps involved in reading strategically and constructively. For example, as Sheorey (2006) mentions, the following steps must be taken into account: (a) describing what the strategy is, (b) explaining why the strategy should be learned and used, and (c) providing examples of the circumstances under which the strategy should be used.

Second, there are numerous ways to inform students about strategies. For instance, teachers and students can brainstorm lists of reading strategies and can create class charts or reference handouts for students to utilize as they work. Each strategy must be clearly defined, indicating what the strategy

is, why it is used, and how and when it can be used. An important point to be considered for many of the reading strategy studies is that readers' behaviors are often simply described in terms of strategy type, such as "cognitive" or "metacognitive", but fail to regard the description of the actual reading behaviors of the students.

Third, for any metacognitive reading strategy instruction program to be effective, it is important to design effective reading tasks and activities that are not only interesting, but they should also be meaningful and relevant to the objectives of the course.

Fourth, it is necessary for instructors to provide the essential motivation for learning to read and being a good reader. Engagement in reading relies on a complex combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors include curiosity, aesthetic involvement, challenge, feeling of competence, and enjoyment. Extrinsic motivations include recognition and performance (Guthrie et al., 1996). Motivation can be created from many sources including positive views about texts and the need for development in reading, students' interest in tasks and content involved, the level of challenge offered by tasks and materials, the quality and amount of feedback given to students with regard to their work, the supports and scaffolds available to the learners, and the nature of learning context.

Suggestions for Further Research

An area of future research could be to seek an answer to this idea of why certain strategies are used or not used in EFL and ESL contexts. Individual learning styles may play a role in which strategies are implemented during the reading process. Perhaps future research could examine the interaction between metacognitive reading strategies

and learning styles using a group of EFL and ESL learners.

Further research is also needed to investigate the role of teaching some important strategies and studying their impacts on increasing reading comprehension of learners in both contexts. Simply knowing what strategy to use is not sufficient and, thus, an investigation into the orchestration of strategies should be closely examined.

Finally, the researcher would recommend future research to expand the current study into educational curricula. This will improve less and/ or more proficient English language learners' reading abilities and awareness of literature in an attempt to increase students' academic achievement in Iranian universities as well as all educational institutions as a context in which English is taught as a foreign language.

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Appendix 1: Students Pro Forma

Attention: Please answer the questions honestly. We keep them strictly confidential.

1. Name of the student: _____

2. Age: _____

3. Gender _____

4. Name of college _____

5. Class studying _____

6. Medium of instruction _____

7. Are you coming from Urban or Rural areas? _____

8. I have _____ familiarity with English language.

   a. complete

   b. average

   c. a little

9. How many years have you been studying English except the usual classes in school?

   _____ years   _____months.

10. What is your purpose of learning English?

   a. To continue education

   b. To travel

   c. To find a good job

   d. To compete with other studentse.

   Others (please write) _____

11. My attitude toward English is _____

   a. positive

   b. negative

   c. no comment

Appendix 2: Metacogntive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory

Direction: Listed below are statements about what people do when they read academic or school-rated materials such as textbooks or library books. Five numbers follow each statement (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and each number means the following:

– 1 means "I never or almost never do this".
– 2 means "I do this only occasionally".
– 3 means "I sometimes do this".
– 4 means "I usually do this".
– 5 means "I always or almost always do this".

Strategy

1. I have a purpose in mind when I read. (GLOB)
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read. (SUP)
3. I summarize what I read to reflect on important information in the text. (SUP)
4. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration. (PROB)
5. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it. (SUP)
6. I use reference materials such as dictionaries to help me understand what I read. (SUP)
7. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding. (GLOB)
8. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading. (GLOB)
9. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read. (SUP)
10. I guess the meaning of unknown words by separating different parts of a word. (PROB)
11. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read. (GLOB)
12. I preview the text to see what it is about before reading it. (GLOB)
13. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read. (SUP)
14. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose. (PROB)
15. I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I am reading. (PROB)
16. I discuss what I read with others to check my understanding. (SUP)
17. I skim the text first by noting characteristics like length and organization. (GLOB)
18. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading. (PROB)
19. I decide what to read closely and what to ignore. (GLOB)
20. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading. (PROB)
21. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading. (PROB)
22. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read. (PROB)
23. I use typological aids like boldface and italics to identify key information. (GLOB)
24. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text. (GLOB)
25. I go back and forth in the text to find relationship among ideas in it. (SUP)

26. I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information. (GLOB)

27. I try to guess what the material is about when I read. (GLOB)

28. When text becomes difficult, I reread to increase my understanding. (PROB)

29. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text. (SUP)

30. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong. (GLOB)