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Teaching Reading Strategies in EFL Reading Classrooms: A Classroom -Centered Research

Jahanbakhsh Nikoopour[1] [1] & Mohammad Amini Farsani[2]

Abstract

Reading skill is considered as a process that involves the activation of relevant knowledge and language skills to get information across from one individual to another. Thus, reading requires active mental processing for communication. Teaching reading strategies assists learners to acquire, store, and retrieve new information. Readers can improve reading comprehension and rate, and monitor their own improvement in reading comprehension (Chamot, 2004). The current study which was a classroom-based, true-experimental design focused on the effectiveness of teaching reading strategies explicitly on the improvement of reading skill of EFL adult students at intermediate level in Iran. The sample of participants randomly selected was a total number of 132 students at different English language institutes in Tehran. The researchers worked on instructing a number of subcategories of cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies in the experimental group, while a comparison group did not receive any explicit strategy instruction. Results revealed that reading strategies did indeed affect students` performance. That is, teaching students to become more strategic when they read increases their understanding of important information, improves their fluency, enhances learner autonomy, and makes them motivated.

Keywords: reading comprehension, reading strategy, reading strategy instruction, EFL learners

[1] . Assistant professor at Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch, Iran.nikoopour2000@gmail.com
[2] Young Researchers Club, Islamic Azad University, Tehran North Branch, Iran

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I. Introduction

Learning to read requires considerable cognitive effort and a long learning process, whether one is learning to read in the L1 or in a second language (L2). If a person is not taught to read, in one way or another (e.g., by a teacher, a parent, a sibling), that person will not learn to read (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Readers may perform differently due to their way of reading. Celce-Murcia (2001) points out that a reader who reads every single word at a time and focuses on the meaning of individual words with regression is a slow or inefficient reader even if he reads with complete comprehension. In return, a fast reader who reads rapidly but without adequate comprehension is an inefficient reader, too. Therefore, comprehension is the most important key factor in reading process.

The main point in reading resides in the way that L2 reading comprehension may not be easily defined. A complete model of reading comprehension has to be devised. Due to the deficiencies of previous reading models such as skills-model, psycholinguistic model, and interactive model, a new model should show specific characteristics of reading comprehension as showing what is brought to, made use of and what happens during the reading process, at what levels of processing and for what purposes (Bernhardt, 2000; Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

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Over the last few decades, there has been a steady shift resulting in less emphasis on teachers and teaching and more emphasis on learners and learning process (Tamada, 1997). Language teachers have tried to make their students become less dependent on the teachers and reach an appropriate level of autonomy (Wenden, 1991). At the same time, there has been a shift of attention from the products of language learning to the processes through which learning takes place in second language acquisition research recently (Oxford, 1990). As a result of this shift in the field of language learning, language learning strategies, in general, have emerged as inseparable components of theoretical models of language proficiency (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Ellis, 2008) and also helped language learners to achieve autonomy in language learning process (Benson & Voller, 1997).

Some researchers have investigated the importance of language learning strategies in making language learning more effective and in creating a positive effect on the learners (Oxford, 1996; Cohen & Weaver, 1998). Nevertheless, research in this area has indicated that not all learners use language learning strategies in the same fashion. It seems that a number of factors may affect the choice of language learning strategies among learners (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Cohen, 1990a; Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2004; Bernhardt, 2005).

The present study has investigated reading strategies specifically, classifications of reading strategies, and the recently done studies into reading strategy instruction, which will be explained in details in the following sections.

II. Strategies The actions that learners perform in order to learn a language have been variously labeled, "behaviors, tactics, techniques, and strategies." The term most commonly used is "learning strategies", defined as "behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed, and enjoyable" (Oxford, 1989).

Since 1990s, reading comprehension has been viewed increasingly to be the results of complicated interactions between text, setting, reader's background, reading strategies, the L1/L2, and the reader's

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decision making (Bernhardt, 2005; Koda, 2007). Nevertheless, associated strategy use has continued to be useful for reading research (Brantmeier, 2002). Another issue in the L2 reading strategy literature is the classifications of the reading strategies (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). Reading strategies have been hypothesized in relation to levels of reading processes and to reading skills as consciously chosen actions that activate effective processing (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; McDonough, 1995).

The term *strategies* is used to describe a variety of different notions in reading and reading instruction (both for L1 and L2), ranging from using it to describe broad *approaches* to learning or using the L2; to the specific automatic reading *skills* readers use; and even to various *techniques* that teachers can use to help students develop aspects of reading they find may difficult (Pressley, 2002; Zhang, Gu, & Hu, 2008). Strategies refer to procedures, actions, techniques, or behaviors that learners choose and apply to improve their comprehension from what they read. Strategies are "nothing more than a listing of the processes required to accomplish a particular task efficiently," and begin to see that "learning to use strategies is not the mechanized sequencing of processes, but rather a *flexible, constructive execution of the processes"* that might be needed to carry out all sorts of important day-to-day as well as academic tasks (Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995).

Reading strategies can be defined as "plans for solving problems encountered in constructing meaning" (Duffy, 1993). They are of various types ranging from bottom up vocabulary strategies, such as looking up an unknown word in the dictionary, to more comprehensive activities such as connecting what is read to the reader's background knowledge (Janzen, 1996). According to Cohen (1990b), reading strategies are "those mental processes that readers consciously choose to use in accomplishing reading tasks" (p.83).

Types of Reading Strategies

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Over the last three decades, many different reading strategies have been identified. Reading strategies can be categorized into metacognitive including purpose-oriented, comprehension-monitoring, and strategies that focus on learning from text. Cognitive strategies include strategies interacting with the author and the text, those involving different ways of reading, those for handling unknown words, and those making use of one's prior knowledge in some way as well as social and affective strategies (Table 1).

Research in the L1 and L2 studies has indicated that strategy use is different in more proficient and less proficient readers. More proficient readers apply different types of reading strategies and they use them in different ways (Block, 1986, 1992; Pressley, Beard El-Dinary, & Brown, 1992; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1995). According to the study done by Zhang & Wu (2009), the high-proficiency group outperformed the intermediate and low-proficiency group in global and problem solving metacognitive reading strategies but regarding support strategies there was no significant difference. Furthermore, when reading strategies are taught to students, they help students improve their reading comprehension and recall (Carrell, 1985; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Pearson & Fielding, 1991). By now, numerous studies on reading in both L1 (Baker & Brown, 1984; Bereiter & Bird, 1985; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995) and L2 (Hosenfeld, 1984; Hamp-Lyons, 1985; Barnett, 1988a, 1988b; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Kern, 1989; Carrell, 1998; Farrell, 2001; Macaro & Erler, 2008; Zhang, 2008) show that teaching learners to use reading strategies helps students improve their reading comprehension.

Table 1: Classification of Reading Strategies

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Key Reading Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

Purpose-oriented Strategies:

- Planning what to do next or steps to take
- Reminding oneself about the purpose for reading
- Evaluating information in terms of whether a text is relevant to one's purpose
- Comparing information from one text with that of another
- Reflecting on how well objectives were met
- Evaluating the quality of a text
- Checking the time one has available

Reflecting on What has been Learned from the Text:

- Underlining or marking in text
- Thinking how to use a text in the future
- Making notes about what one has read
- Paraphrasing what the author said in order to remember it

Comprehension-monitoring Strategies:

- Assessing comprehension
  - Evaluating one's understanding
  - Identifying difficulties in understanding
  - Summarizing what one has read
  - Restating for oneself what one has read
  - Reviewing a text after reading is completed
- Repair strategies
  - Re-reading
  - Slowing down and reading again
  - Trying to pronounce words

Cognitive Strategies

Strategies for Interacting with Author and Text:

- Previewing a text
- Predicting the contents of the text
- Checking/confirming predictions
- Asking questions about the text
- Looking for answers to questions about the text
- Connecting one part of the text to another
- Critiquing the author
- Critiquing the text
- Evaluating and revising hypotheses that arose while reading
- Interpreting the text

Strategies Involving Different Ways of Reading:

- Reading slowly
- Reading quickly
  - Skimming for a general idea
  - Scanning for specific information
- Re-reading
- Ignoring certain texts or parts of a text
- Reading out loud (and listening to how it sounds)
- Reading selectively/deciding whether or not to read something
- Reading ahead

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Adopted from Oxford, 1990; Anderson, 1991, 1999; Sarig, 1993; Pressley, 2000; Grabe and Stoller, 2002

Controversies on Reading Strategy Use

Anderson (1991) detected a total of 47 strategies that he allocated to five distinct categories: supervising, support, paraphrase, coherence, and test taking. Both top-down (general/holistic) and bottom-up (analytic) strategies appeared within these five categories. He maintained that his better readers used more but not different strategies than did the less successful readers. There was not a distinct set of strategies which contributed to successful reading but rather the better readers chose combined, utilized, and monitored strategies more effectively.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) labeled Anderson's readers' monitoring strategy use as metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies were emphasized in the successive studies by Carrell (1992), in which she studied 45 university students with respect to their L2 reading ability and their judgments (or metacognitive awareness) about various reading strategies. Once students' metacognitive knowledge about reading strategies is developed, they will become better readers (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Farrell, 2001; Zhang, 2008; Zhang & Wu, 2009). Carrell, Gajdusek, and Wise (1998) posited that metacognitive strategies were the most valuable strategies for developing reading comprehension.

According to Grenfell and Harris **(**1999), good language learners are also good strategy users; that is, they have a wider repertoire of strategies than do poor language learners. This ignores the possibility that good learners may also be better at articulating their strategies than poor learners. Inability to consciously introspect on their strategy use does not mean that learners are employing fewer strategies. To the contrary, poor learners may use more strategies because they have more problems to solve, and yet they fail for other reasons. What often seems ignored in strategy research is that language acquisition is largely an unconscious process (Gass & Selinker, 1994; Sharwood

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Smith, 1994). They claim that validation of successful strategies, which need not come solely from good learners, should constitute a major concern in strategy research and strategy training.

Research in the last two decades has shown that L2 reading strategy instruction has been successful to some extent, but this has not been consistently confirmed (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Some strategy training has been effective in reading comprehension but not in other skills. However, some other studies have ignored powerful affective and social strategies such as positive self -talk, self- reward, and cooperative learning (Horwitz, 1990; Lavine & Oxford, 1990) in favor of a concentration on metacognitive and cognitive strategies. However, some strategy training programs have focused on a more even balance of strategies including affective and social strategies along with a variety of others. Researchers (Oxford, Crookall, Cohen, Lavine, Nyikos, & Sutter, 1990) show strategy training success despite very different populations.

Furthermore, the research suggests a number of qualities for such instruction to be maximally beneficial (Duffy, 1993; Oxford, 1994; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995; Janzen & Stoller, 1998). Cohen (1998b), Chamot (2005), and Zhang (2008) maintained that the context of learning situation may have influence on learners' choice of reading strategies. The findings reported in different EFL contexts (Noguchi, 1991 in Japan; Yang, 1992 & Klassen, 1994 in Taiwan; Oh, 1992 & Park, 1997 in Korea; Wharton, 2000 in Singapore; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001, Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002, Rahim Bohlooli, 2002, Rasekh & Ranjbary, 2003, & Rahimi, 2005 in Iran; Zhang & Wu, 2009 in China) revealed that EFL learners are strategy users; however, it has not been clearly stated that learners are using exactly which certain types of reading strategies and how (Cohen, 1998b; Macaro, 2001; Cohen & Macaro, 2007). Rahim Bohlooli (2002) pointed out that instruction of consciousness-raising strategies improved the reading comprehension of Iranian junior high school students.

Studies have shown that the most effective strategy instruction is explicit; learners are told overtly that a certain strategy is likely to be

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helpful and they are taught how to use it and how to transfer it to new situations (Richards & Renandya, 2002; Hudson, 2007; Zhang, 2008). They stated that blind training, in which students are led to use certain strategies without realizing it, is less successful particularly in the transfer of strategies to new tasks; therefore, strategy training succeeds best when it is along with regular class activities on a normal basis. Various studies (Hadwin, Winne, Stockley, Nesbit, & Woszczyna, 2001; Paris, 2002; Zhang, 2003; Cohen, 2003,2007; Grabe, 2004) indicated that strategies are not merely good or bad of and in themselves, but there is a potentiality for them to be used effectively or ineffectively in different settings. What makes readers informed of the strategies and how these strategies can solve their reading comprehension problems is their explicit awareness of the reading-strategy use (Carrel, 1998; Carrel, Gajdusek, Wise, 1998; Wenden, 1998; White 1999; Cohen, 2007). Given that strategies can be taught, and the main goal of teaching reading is to help students develop as strategic readers, the question is how this instruction should be done. Teaching reading strategies has been discussed in general (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994); however, in TESOL settings, little attention has been particularly given to teaching reading strategies in an ongoing classroom reading program (Janzen, 1996), which was an incentive for carrying out the present study.

While some researchers ignored the powerful influence of some strategies in favor of some other strategies (Horwitz, 1990; Lavine & Oxford, 1990), the researchers in the current study included three categories of reading strategies. A number of subcategories of cognitive strategies such as analyzing and using context clues, as well as compensation strategies as a subcategory of metacognitive strategies which included inferencing, guessing while reading, etc. and also, social strategies such as cooperation with peers, questioning, asking for correction and feedback have been used.

Studies on reading strategy use in different EFL contexts have gone through different directions. Various researchers have emphasized the extent of strategy use (Anderson, 1991; Zhang,

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2001,2002; Yang, 2002; Zhang, Gu, & Hu, 2008), the success of strategic language learners (Grenfell & Harris**,** 1999), the use of certain types of strategies while ignoring others (Horwitz, 1990; Lavine & Oxford, 1990; Carrell, Gajdusek, & Wise, 1998), the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies among native and nonnative readers (Anderson, 1999; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Macaro & Erler, 2008;), the balanced use of various reading strategies (Oxford, Crookall, Cohen, Lavine, Nyikos, & Sutter, 1990), and the explicit instruction of reading strategies (Richards & Renandya, 2002; Hudson, 2007; Zhang, 2008) each from a single separate perspective. That L2 reading strategy instruction is successful to some extent, but it is not consistently confirmed (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) was also another motive to do the present study in Iranian EFL context. The purpose behind the present study was to investigate whether teaching a combined balanced inventory of reading strategies in an ongoing regular reading program *explicitly* replicate similar results or not. That is, whether explicit instruction of reading strategies makes any improvement in Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension.

III. The Study

Participants

The participants were 132 Iranian adult female students selected randomly among different intermediate classes at different English Language Institutes in Tehran. The number of participants who participated in this study exceeded 195. After taking a teacher-made language proficiency test and calculating the mean score, 132 students were selected. The age range of participants was from 18 to 27. The rationale behind selecting participants suitable for this study was to select homogeneous students regarding their language proficiency. To do so, participants who gained the score with one standard deviation below and above the mean were selected. Therefore, almost 68 percent of the participants have been selected for the purpose of this

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study. Then, the participants were randomly assigned into two groups, one group for which reading strategy instruction was explicitly offered as treatment and the other one for which reading strategy was not explicitly instructed. That is, in the control group, the researchers were handling the reading classes traditionally, while not consciously raising the students' attention onto reading strategy use.

Instrumentation

A teacher-made language proficiency test (Nikoopour, 2002) was used to help the researches select two homogeneous groups for the purpose of the study. The test consists of 29 vocabulary items, 14 structure items, 6 language function items, 5 sentence comprehension items, 17 cloze test items, and 9 reading comprehension items. It was already piloted with 32 students in order to find out the item and test characteristics. Having investigated the results of the pilot study, the researcher excluded the poorly constructed items and finalized the test. The reliability coefficient of the test in the pilot study was 0.83. The same test showed the reliability of 0.78 in the present study.

The second instrument was a reading comprehension test used as pre-test and post-test consisted of several passages which were chosen from Standard Tests of Reading Comprehension for Intermediate Students (Anani Sarab & Nikoopour, 1999). These passages were extracted from TOEFL sample tests by the writers. Therefore, several reading comprehension texts were examined and finally six passages with the readability of 10.95, 11.11, 11.93, 11.05, 12.95, and 13.41 with the mean of 11.87 were found to be appropriate (Rahim Bohlooli, 2002). The average difficulty level of these reading passages with the utilization of the Fog Index Formula of readability was in harmony with that of the Interchange Third Edition- Book 2 which was 10.93. To compute the average readability of the students' previous textbook, the researchers selected five passages randomly with the readability of 9.50, 9.11, 14.34, 10.50, and11.20 respectively. The average readability was 10.93 and the standard deviation was 2.07. Therefore, the selected reading passages were in the range of 10.93 plus one standard deviation below and above the mean; that is, from 8.86 to 13.

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The reading comprehension test included six passages with a total score of 50 which was piloted with 23 students and showed reasonable item and test characteristics. The reliability coefficient was 0.73 in the pilot study and 0.79 in the actual study.

Materials

The researchers used a book entitled "Read and Reflect: Academic Reading Strategies and Cultural Awareness 1" by Adelson-Goldstein and Howard (2006), published by Oxford University Press, and another book entitled "Interchange Third Edition Students' Book 3" by Jack C. Richards (2005), published by Cambridge University Press. The first book was used for the purpose of teaching reading strategies (offering treatment) to the experimental group, while the second book was used as the main textbook in both experimental and control group.

Interchange Third Edition is a fully revised edition of New Interchange, the world's most successful series for adult and young adult learners in EFL/ESL settings. The course has been thoroughly revised to reflect the most recent approaches to language teaching and learning. It remains the innovative series teachers and students have grown to love, while incorporating suggestions from teachers and students all over the world. This edition offers updated content in every unit, additional grammar practice, and more opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills. *Interchange Third Edition* features contemporary topics and a strong focus on both accuracy and fluency. Its successful multi-skills syllabus integrates themes, grammar, tasks, situations, functions, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The underlying philosophy of the course remains that language is best learned when it is used for meaningful communication. Written in American English, *Interchange Third Edition* reflects the fact that English is the major language of international communication and is not limited to any one country, region, or culture. This book was used as the main textbook for the participants of the study.

Read & Reflect, is an EFL/ESL textbook for adults. The four main objectives are to develop students' awareness and use of reading strategies, increase academic vocabulary, provide a forum for students

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to learn about and discuss American culture, and increase students' enjoyment of the reading process. *Read & Reflect* seems appropriate for the identified audience. It focuses on developing skills that proficient readers and especially students planning to use English in an academic setting will need, such as metacognitive reading strategies and vocabulary development. The topics have appeal for a wide range of different learners since they incorporate several types of reading documents, ranging from movie reviews, advice, and personal anecdotes to conflicting viewpoints. Therefore, this book was only used for the purpose of teaching reading strategies in the experimental group.

Procedure

The Actual Study

First, the language proficiency test was used to help the researchers select homogenous students as the participants of the study. Therefore, the test was given to 195 students and from among them, only 132 students were selected.

After homogenizing the students through administering the teacher-made language proficiency test and excluding 63 participants, the researchers divided the remaining students into two groups of experimental and control group. 67 students were in the control group and 65 in the experimental one. Each group consisted of three classes. Afterwards, the pre-test was administered to both groups, which was a reading comprehension test consisting of 6 passages with a total score of 50 and the appropriate time allocated to answer the questions by the students was found to be 50 minutes.

Treatment

A number of subcategories of cognitive strategies including analyzing texts, using context clues, asking questions about the text, previewing the text, skimming, and scanning as well as compensation strategies as a subclass of metacognitive strategies, which included inferencing, guessing while reading, slowing down and reading again, re-reading,

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and trying to pronounce words; and finally social strategies such as cooperation with peers, questioning, asking for correction and feedback, and encouraging oneself were used as treatment in the experimental group. The first reason why this collection of strategies was used was the choice of the researchers since it was a challenging issue whether the use of more effective strategies could improve reading comprehension. The choice of strategies to be taught has depended on the researchers' perception of which strategies would be most effective for improving reading comprehension in a particular teaching and learning setting (Cohen, 1998b; Macaro, 2001; Cohen & Macaro, 2007). The second reason was the variety of the subcategories of three reading strategies. In fact, the researchers attempted to utilize different types of reading strategies so that they could justify a more balanced use of reading strategies as recommended by some researchers (Oxford, Crookall, Cohen, Lavine, Nyikos, & Sutter, 1990).

The main point in carrying out the treatment was making the subjects consciously aware of the use of reading strategies to improve their comprehension; hence, the students were explicitly exposed to the strategies in "Read and Reflect: Academic Reading Strategies and Cultural Awareness 1" while utilizing them in the reading samples they covered. It is worth mentioning that the instruction of these reading strategies was carried out in such a way that students could apply them either individually or chorally while reading texts.

The treatment was to instruct 16 reading strategies during 8 weeks of the educational program of the institutes. Each week, participants attended two sessions, and learned one strategy regularly in every session. They were being taught consciously while being instructed to use the strategies in their classroom reading process. Along with the reading passages of their textbooks, the students were provided with some more supplementary reading selections to practice the strategy use regularly throughout their educational program. Therefore, after a couple of sessions, they could apply even more strategies taught previously in each successive session.

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The reason behind strategy instruction in the students' regular reading program was that strategies should be taught through "direct explanation, teacher modeling, and feedback" (Janzen, 1996). In strategy instruction, the researchers followed a number of classroom processes or moves including (a) general strategy discussion, (b) teacher modeling, (c) student reading, (d) analysis of strategies used by the teacher or students, and (e) explanation or discussion of individual strategies on a regular basis in their routine classroom activities steadily. Therefore, students were never doubtful about what the strategies are, when and where they are used, and how they should be used, while their strategy use was supported by teacher's feedback.

Placebo

However, in the control group, teaching reading strategies was not consciously instructed in their regular classroom activities, although students might have attempted some activities to comprehend the text. Since the textbook ("Interchange Third Edition, Students' Book 3" by Jack C. Richards) was the same in both experimental and control groups, the students were exposed to the same textbook and classroom procedures. The only difference between these two groups was that the participants in the control group were not taught reading strategies explicitly; that is, their attention was not explicitly and consciously attracted to reading strategies.

After giving the treatment to the experimental group, the researchers administered the post-test and compared the results by using an independent T-test formula to find out whether there was any significant difference between the two groups.

IV. Results

It can be inferred from Table 2 that the two groups performed almost similarly in the pre-test; that is, participants' mean scores and standard deviations were very close to each other. There were 67 participants in the control group and 65 in the experimental one. This, also, confirmed the results of the teacher-made proficiency test which proved the homogeneity of the two groups before the treatment.

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Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the pre-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	SD Error Mean
Control	67	36.41	6.63	0.80
Experimental	65	36.23	6.69	0.83

The findings of the post-test in Table 3 show that there is a great difference in the participants' mean scores and standard deviations. Apparently, the results showed that the instruction of reading strategies influenced the participants' reading comprehension in the experimental group since the participants in the post-test showed a slight increase in their performance after a period of eight weeks, whereas the participants in the experimental group made a drastic change in their performance.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for the post-test

Group	N	Mean	SD	SD Error Mean
Control	67	38.01	6.18	0.74
Experimental	65	46.67	9.25	0.88

As for the inferential statistics, the results of the pre-test reveal that there is not a significant difference between the control and experimental groups in terms of the participants' reading comprehension. Since the value of t-critical with the degree of freedom of 130 and level of significance of 0.05 is 1.960, and the value of t-observed is much less than the critical value, there is not a significant difference between the two groups. That is, the two groups are equally competent in reading comprehension before the treatment (Table 4).

Table 4: Inferential statistics for the pre-test

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	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	SD Error Difference	Lower Upper
Equal variances Assumed	0.07	0.78	0.15	130	0.87	0.17	-2.11	1.16 2.47
Equal variances not assumed			0.15	129.36	0.87	0.17	-2.12	1.16 2.47

The results of the post-test indicate that there is a significant difference between the participants' reading comprehension in the two groups. The subjects in the experimental group performed much more differently than that of the control group. The value of t-observed is 2.02 with the degree of freedom of 130 and the 0.05 level of significance, so higher than the critical value, and the difference is statistically significant (Table 5).

Table 5: Inferential statistics for the post-test

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	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	SD Error Difference	Lower Upper
Equal variances Assumed	0.006	0.93	2.02	130	0.02	0.54	1.08	-1.59 2.68
Equal variances not assumed			1.50	129.31	0.61	0.54	1.08	-1.59 2.68

The researchers in this study went through the experimentation process and found the instruction of a more balance of reading strategy types increased students' understanding of important information of the texts. It was found that more strategic readers could perform better in reading comprehension activities and spend less time on processing the texts and grasping the ideas within the passages. Accordingly, at the end of the study, the strategic readers were never hesitant about what the reading strategies are; and when, where, and how they should be used. Since the study was a classroom-centered research and the students' strategy use was supported by the researchers' feedback, some qualitative improvements in the students' fluency, reading autonomy, and motivation were also observed. During the study, the learners were more convenient in reading since they improved their reading speed. The better they could apply reading strategies to some new tasks, the more independently they could read and the better extensive readers they were. As far as

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motivation was concerned, the students were quite willing to read more texts beyond the requirements of the course. Therefore, the students having been instructed to use reading strategies could read more efficiently, autonomously, and eagerly.

V. Discussion & Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that the reading strategy training made a sound change in the students' reading comprehension. In other words, instructing students to use reading strategies while reading improves their comprehension, increases their reading speed, enhances their reading autonomy, and makes them more motivated to read independently and involves them in the reading process more.

The researchers in the present study focused on a number of subcategories of cognitive, compensation, and social strategies. A number of subcategories of cognitive strategies such as analyzing texts, using context clues, asking questions about the text, previewing the text, skimming, and scanning as well as compensation strategies as a subclass of metacognitive strategies, which included inferencing, guessing while reading, re-reading, slowing down and reading again, and trying to pronounce words; and also social strategies such as cooperation with peers, questioning, asking for correction, and encouraging oneself were used as treatment. The main focus in carrying out the treatment was making the subjects consciously aware of the use of reading strategies to improve their comprehension; therefore, the students were explicitly exposed and taught to use strategies while utilizing them in the reading samples they covered.

There has been a steady shift during the previous studies from the teaching process to the learning process and learner characteristics. Researchers (Wenden, 1991; Tamada, 1997) have tried to put more emphasis on the learners so that they could reach an appropriate level of autonomy. Therefore, there was a subsequent emphasis on the learning process rather than the product (Oxford, 1990). Meanwhile, the focus on language learning strategies convinced researchers to include it in the theoretical models of language proficiency (Bachman

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& Palmer, 1996; Ellis, 2008) and helped teachers to motivate language learners to become autonomous through using language learning strategies in general and reading strategies in particular (Benson & Voller, 1997).

Various scholars (Oxford, 1996; Cohen & Weaver, 1998) attempted to study the importance of language learning strategies in language learning process and tried to find out its effectiveness and positive impact on the learning outcome. However, such studies have indicated that language learners do not use strategies in much the same way. In choosing language learning strategies, learners perform differently (Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Cohen, 1990a; Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2004; Bernhardt, 2005) due to a number of factors including motivation, gender, cultural background, type of task, age and L2 stage, and learning style.

In the previous studies, it has always been challenging that researchers have not agreed on the most effective strategies which could improve learners' reading comprehension in certain settings (Cohen, 1998b; Macaro, 2001; Cohen & Macaro, 2007). While some scholars hesitated the success of reading strategy instruction in L2 settings (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), in other studies, strategies such as metacognitive and cognitive strategies have been emphasized while ignoring other reading strategies including affective and social strategies (Horwitz, 1990; Lavine & Oxford, 1990). Although strategy instruction has been discussed in general (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994), in TESOL little has been published which relates to teaching reading strategies specifically in an ongoing classroom reading program (Janzen, 1996). According to Richards and Renandya (2002), Hudson (2007), and Zhang (2008), blind training in which students are led to utilize certain strategies without realizing it is less successful particularly in the transfer of strategies to new tasks; therefore, strategy training succeeds best when it is along with regular class activities on a normal basis.

The findings of the present study are in line with those of research done in L1 (Baker & Brown, 1984; Bereiter & Bird, 1985; Pressley &

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Woloshyn, 1995) and in L2 (Hosenfeld, 1984; Hamp-Lyons, 1985; Barnett, 1988a, 1988b; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Kern, 1989; Carrell, 1998; Farrell, 2001; Macaro & Erler, 2008; Zhang, 2008) and also in different EFL contexts (Noguchi, 1991 in Japan; Yang, 1992 & Klassen, 1994 in Taiwan; Oh, 1992 & Park, 1997 in Korea; Wharton, 2000 in Singapore; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001, Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002, Rahim Bohlooli, 2002, Rasekh & Ranjbary, 2003, & Rahimi, 2005 in Iran; Zhang & Wu, 2009 in China) that instructing students to use reading strategies improves their reading comprehension. Moreover, some researchers went further and suggested a number of qualities for making the reading strategy instruction much more effective and beneficial (Duffy, 1993; Oxford, 1994; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995; Janzen & Stoller, 1998).

The present study tried to cast light on the results of those studies which focused on a more balanced use of reading strategies including cognitive, compensation as well as affective and social strategies (Oxford, Crookall, Cohen, Lavine, Nyikol, & Sutter, 1990). Not only does the present study emphasize the balanced instruction of all categories of reading strategies, but it also indicated that the explicit and conscious learning of reading strategies is helpful and improves learners' reading comprehension. Also, the focus of the present study was to emphasize how reading strategy instruction should be done over the long term because it is estimated that it takes several years for L2 students to develop as strategic readers.

The present study did not include sex as a moderator variable due to the results of some previous studies in which sex did not prove to make a significant difference between male and female students' strategy use in EFL settings (Ok, 2003; Phakiti, 2003; Amini Farsani and Nikoopour, 2010). Another rationale for the present study of strategy use in reading comprehension was that some strategy training has been effective in reading comprehension but not in other skills (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Therefore, the present study tried to confirm the validity of the previous research findings regarding reading skill.

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VI. Implications & Suggestions for Further Research

Over the past 10 years, a set of implications for L2 reading strategy instruction has emerged from overviews of the research literature (Koda, 2005). These implications provide a way to examine how research supports effective reading-instruction practices, and how teaching, material development, and curriculum design could become more effective. Drawing on extensive and still accumulating research, the following implications for reading instruction and curriculum design are reasonably well supported. Although stated as instructional implications, they also represent component abilities of learners that need to be developed for effective reading comprehension.

1. Ensure word recognition fluency
2. Emphasize vocabulary learning and create a vocabulary-rich environment
3. Activate background knowledge in appropriate ways
4. Ensure effective language knowledge and general comprehension skills
5. Teach text structures and discourse organization
6. Promote the strategic reader rather than teach individual strategies
7. Build reading fluency and rate
8. Promote extensive reading
9. Develop intrinsic motivation for reading

The findings of this study have pedagogical implications for instruction and curriculum development. First, teachers should become more aware of the learner strategies and styles that their students are or are not using so that teachers can develop teaching styles and strategies that are compatible with their students' ways of learning. Second, learners of English as a foreign language should learn to recognize the strategies they are using and be advised to select most appropriate techniques for the instructional environment. Third, language curricula, materials, and instructional approaches should incorporate diversified activities to accommodate the various

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characteristics of the learners found in the foreign language classroom. In addition, the use of appropriate reading strategies can enable students to take responsibility of their own learning by enhancing learner autonomy, independence and self-direction.

Interpretations of the findings of this study also lead to several recommendations for further research. It is recommended that a replication of this study be done wherein (a) the subjects in this study are compared with other EFL populations, (b) the data gathering technique of the present study is compared with other types of data collection tools, (e.g., diaries, interviews, questionnaires), (c) proficiency in other language skills, (e.g., listening, speaking, writing) be related to the use of strategy.

On the basis of strategy training studies, it is suggested that EFL teachers use reading strategies effectively in their classrooms. The following guidelines are recommended for the effective use of reading strategies:

- Teachers should pay attention to the processes of reading comprehension, and should be enthusiastic to allocate instructional time to the teaching reading strategies through direct explanation, modeling, and feedback.
- Teachers should take into consideration how a certain strategy is best utilized and in what contexts. Also, teachers can find out the students' weak and strong points regarding the strategy choice and use. This will help the teachers to provide effective and appropriate strategy training.
- Teachers should instruct strategies as applicable to texts and tasks in more than one content area so that strategies can be utilized in various reading passages.
- Teachers should instruct strategies over a longer period of time to allow the students to learn how to use strategies while reading intensively and extensively. Certainly, the decontextualized teaching of individual strategies for a short period of time is not likely to have long-term impact on

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students or to effectively help them develop as strategic readers.

- Teachers should provide students with chances to apply strategies they have been taught in the real-life situations.
- Teachers should be prepared to allow students to help each other in reading and the studying processes.
- Teachers should help students constantly recycle reading strategies over new texts and tasks so that students can use individual and groups of strategies autonomously. In this way students better understand the usefulness and effectiveness of reading strategies.

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