

Reading Strategies of Advance and Intermediate Iranian Students: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Reading is a skill that enables readers to acquire knowledge and obtain information from the text that they have read. It is a thinking process by which readers select facts, information or ideas from printed materials. In reading and understanding the printed materials effectively, many strategies have been suggested to cultivate good reading habits and also to motivate readers to read more. The aim of this study is to investigate the strategies used by Iranian postgraduate students while reading academic texts. There are two postgraduate students in two different level of proficiency: intermediate and advance.. Think-aloud protocol is the main source of data collection. The supplementary data collection of this study is questionnaire to identify the strategies that students have used while reading. Moreover, in-depth interview sessions also were conducted in order to lighten the unclear points. The results indicate that advance Iranian student mainly make use of more strategies (cognitive and metacognitive strategies), while intermediate Iranian student generally make use of cognitive strategies.

Introduction

Over decades, there have been various definitions and explanations on reading concept. The importance of reading has been unveiled to many researchers and readers. This is why Strang (1967) stated, reading is the “royal road” to knowledge. Reading is essential to success especially in academic subjects. In this modern era, learning heavily depends on ability of the readers to interpret the printed pages accurately and clearly.

Widdowson (1979) defines reading as the process that the reader tries to get linguistic information through print. It is actually a complex activity and it needs interdisciplinary studies and guidelines. Alderson and Urquhart (1984) illustrate two crucial elements involved in reading: a reader and a text. These two issues were the focal points for researchers over the years. The other point in research tradition into skills, proposed by Widdowson (1979) where he mentions that text does not have meaning by itself but it has potential for meaning. It means that “meaning is actually created by the reader in his interaction with the text” (Alderson and Urquhart 1984).

Overlay the research that has been done on two general aspects and matters of reading; process and product. Process of reading refers to the interaction between the

reader and a text. In other words, process refers to various mental activities that readers are engaged in during interaction with a text for the purpose of constructing meaning.

The reader according to his/her background knowledge grasp the meaning and he/she employs strategies in order to understand a text. Strategies readers use have an important role in text interaction. These strategies involve mental activities; therefore, many researchers have been investigating the models and tools in order to unveil the actual processes which are far beyond the human eye. These investigations and measurements are not easy or simple as reading is a completely an internal and silent process. For instance, Goodman (1967) proposes a primary source of data for the view of reading process which is the observation of oral reading and miscue analysis. He believed that language must be studied in process; in addition, he offers the five processes the readers use while reading (recognition-initiation, prediction, confirmation, correction and termination).

Another researchers such as Hosenfeld (1977), introduces think-aloud, as a robust tool for investigating the reading process. In contrast the product of reading refers to the readers understanding of a text and it relates to the levels of comprehension achieved by a reader. The product of reading refers to both quality and quantity of meaning representation that readers have constructed as a result of various mental interactions with the text. In measuring the product of reading a common research method (testing) has been used in order to investigate the reader's comprehension of a text (Urquhart and Weir, 1998). This method can be divided in various categories such as, multiple-choice questions, cloze and open-ended questions.

The motivation for this study derives from the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) results. This test is mainly conducted for the International students, who are willing to study in University Technology Malaysia; however, they do not have IELTS band or TOEFL score. These students should sit for this test and their level of language proficiency estimates doing this test. The test have two different papers (takes three and half an hour): writing an essay (similar toTask 2 IELTS) in 400 words, answering MCQ questions on language knowledge and reading comprehension (three passages). If the students pass the exam they can join their respective faculties and if they fail, they have to join the IELTS Preparation Classes (IPC) or Intensive English Course classes (in two levels: low-intermediate and intermediate). The test results indicate that a large number of Iranian students have problems reading, writing and obtaining the required language proficiency. This study mainly is focusing on these students reading problems, by investigating the strategies used while reading an academic L2 text.

Iranian Context

For the present study, which concerns Iranian readers, it is crucial to call attention to the terms of Second language or Foreign language. Cohen (1998) states that learning a second language means that language that is learned is the one which is spoken in the community while a foreign language is not spoken in the local community. In Iranian context the term “foreign language” is more appropriate than the term “second language”.

In Iran English is taught both in guidance and high schools. In guidance schools, English is taught for two years as a subject to introduce the basic English concepts to students, such as basic vocabularies and grammar and in high schools English is taught for four years, whereby it mainly introduces the learners the concept of language knowledge, accompanying grammar, vocabulary, language functions and phonetics. Generally the English Program in high schools is exam-oriented and it is devised to prepare the students for University Entrance Exam where the questions are mainly based on grammar, vocabulary and language knowledge in multiple-choice format. As a result, the focus of teaching is mainly on grammar which is taught in the form of pattern-drills (Audio-Lingual Method), vocabularies which are taught in context, short reading texts with new vocabularies followed by numerous product-oriented comprehension questions, language functions without any introductory part of the concept and situation of the dialogue, and finally phonetics.

In addition, at the tertiary level in Iran all the subjects are taught in official language (Persian) and Iranian students only have to attend the English classes (2 credits) in accordance with their field in order to gain extra knowledge, and specific terminologies.

Reading strategies

Urquhart and Weir (1998) define strategies as ways of getting round difficulties encountered while reading. Parry (1996) states that the element of consciousness is important regarding this specific word, because this is what distinguishes strategies from those processes that are not strategic. Oxford (1990) classifies language learning strategies to direct and indirect strategies. The direct strategies refer to memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies, while indirect strategies include metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. He believes that all these strategies support each other.

Referring to reading, he asserts that learners combine strategies in a predictable way. In regard to reading Goodman (1987) define a strategy as a broad schema for gathering, evaluating, and using information, while the other scholars such as Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick, and Kurita (1989) consider it as conscious, instantiated, and flexible plans readers apply and adapt to a variety of texts and tasks. Duffy (1993) defines reading strategies as plans for solving problems encountered in constructing meaning.

According to Janzen (1996) a reader's plan for solving problems in constructing meaning range from bottom-up vocabulary strategies, such as looking up an unknown word in the dictionary, to more comprehensive actions, such as connecting what is being read to the reader's background knowledge. Winograd and Hare (1988) define strategies as "deliberate" actions that learners select and control to achieve desired goals or objectives. Dijwandono (1993) simply defines strategies as ways and tactics readers use to comprehend print. Burns et al.'s (1999) account of strategies used by readers is categorized in which it includes sampling, predicting, confirming or rejecting and correcting or refining. The reader samples the text regarding his/her familiarity to the text, the format of the material, the vocabulary used, the style of writing and the relevance of the illustrations. During the sampling stage the reader will be able to predict its content. The stage of predicting does not stop at the initial stage, but proceeds with the coming of the new information from the next parts of the text. If the information in the text matches the reader's expectation, the prediction is confirmed; if it does not, it will be rejected. Where a prediction does not fit with the reader's subsequent processing of the print, correcting or refining is likely to occur.

Shearer and Lundeberg (1996) indicate that instruction of reading comprehension strategies has been found to improve the reading of elementary school children. They have also shown that mature readers such as law students and professionally active teachers can improve their understanding of more complex reading materials. They concluded that the strategy instruction is good for all readers and learners. These scholars suggest that understanding the reading process improves L2 reading. Grabe (1991) suggests that reading strategies should remain a major focus of second or foreign language reading research for the next decade. In addition, Parry (1996) claims that the effect of cultural background is an important factor in the formation of individual reading strategies as well.

Oxford (1989) suggests that good language learners manage their own learning process through metacognitive strategies (will be discussed later) such as paying attention, self-evaluating and self-monitoring. They make use of affective strategies (anxiety reduction

and self-encouragement), social strategies (asking questions and becoming culturally aware), memory strategies (grouping imagery and structured review), cognitive strategies (practicing naturalistically, analyzing contrastively and summarizing) and finally compensatory strategies (guessing meaning and using synonyms).

From the definitions given above, it can be inferred that “strategies” are ways readers use in their attempts to achieve the reading goal, the comprehension of print.

In a study conducted by Fotovatian and Shokrpour (2007), the researchers compared three categories of reading comprehension strategies (metacognitive, cognitive , and socio-affective) to determine their effects on 31 EFL Iranian students’ reading comprehension. A standard reading comprehension test taken from the First Certificate in English (FCE) and a questionnaire were used to collect the data. The results revealed that metacognitive strategies have positive effects on reading comprehension. These researchers mentions that there are different studies have been conducted on different factors that affect learning to read (Adamson, 1991; Block, 1992; Carrell et al., 1989; Doyle & Garland, 2001; Grabe & Stroller, 2002; Li & Munby, 1996; Margolis, 2001; Salataci & Akyel, 2002; Setiadi et al., 2005; Wa-Mbaleka, 2002).

The participants of this study were all Iranian students regardless their age and gender. They were enrolled in Reading Comprehension classes offered by Shiraz University and were in the same level of proficiency. They were given 24-item questionnaire after the three-month instruction and asked to put the stars in front of the strategies they most frequently use. The results show that the good readers used a higher percentage of metacognitive strategies, although both poor and good readers did not differ much in the use of cognitive and socio-affective strategies. They also found out that there is a significant difference in the use of this strategy between the good and poor readers. Table 1 compare and contrasts the reading strategies between different readers.

Table 1. The results of Fotovatian and Shokrpour (2007) study according to Chi-square indexes.

Poor readers	Good readers
Simplifying	Elaboration
Paying attention to single words	Directed attention

Translating	Recognizing text structure
	Imaging
	Note-taking
	Anticipating
	Evaluating comprehension

Metacognition And Metacognitive Strategies

As Flavell (1976) mentions metacognition refers to “one’s knowledge concerning one’s own cognitive processes and products or anything related to them”. It is considered by most educators to be an element necessary for many cognitive learning tasks. In other words it can be mention that the learners have knowledge about their cognitive processes and are able to use that knowledge to choose the most efficient strategies for problem solving. Simply metacognition is the ability to stand back and observe oneself Li and Munby (1996).

Metacognitive strategies include planning, monitoring and checking. It refers to the activities undertaken by the participants to control or monitor and evaluate their own comprehension in the process of L2 academic reading. Li and Munby (1996) indicate that academic reading required in-depth comprehension. As a result, the metacognitive awareness is the crucial element to be considered especially for L2 readers. In the study conducted by these two researchers the participants make use of various metacognitive strategies; for instance, use of background knowledge, translation, self questioning, summarization, prediction, picking out key words and using L1 domain to compare and contrast the strategies being used by readers.

The study by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) presents and describes an instrument, the Survey Of Reading Strategies (SORS), which is intended to measure adult’s metacognitive awareness of reading strategies (mental plans, techniques, etc). It is a simple tool for enabling students to develop a better awareness of their reading strategies. This instrument was initially inspired by the review of Metacognitive Awareness Of Reading Strategy Inventory (MARS) which was developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) and it was originally designed for native speakers. Later on the authors introduces this remarkable method SORS, which specified for adult non-native speakers.

This method is divided in three subscales (Global strategies, Problem-solving strategies and Support strategies). To accomplish the objectives of the SORS, the researchers revised three basic components of the previous study. Firstly, they refined the wording of several items in order to make them more comprehensible for EFL students; secondly, they added two key strategies not used by L1 readers (translating and thinking in the target language while reading); thirdly, they removed two items (summarizing and discussing what one read with others). Later on they pilot the study on EFL students of two universities in USA and they found consistent results.

This instrument is utilized to measure the type and frequency of reading strategies that EFL adults use while reading academic materials. The results from this study can be useful for students increasing their awareness of reading strategies while reading. The results also can be helpful for teachers in helping their students learn to be thoughtful readers. In a recent study, the authors also found out that student's reading ability was related to their awareness of reading strategies while reading. In addition, they found out students who lack metacognitive awareness often have difficulties coping with academic reading materials. This survey should be used to supplement and it should be analyzed in conjunction with other measures of reading ability.

In a study done by Zare-ee (2008) on Iranian students, the researcher examined the relationships between the use of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies on the one hand and EFL reading achievement on the other hand. Subjects were 30 randomly selected EFL learners at Kashan University, Iran. They were six males and 24 females. These students had different language abilities (6 successful, 19 moderately successful and 5 unsuccessful learners). The collected data included reading comprehension achievement scores and responses to a 35-item five-point likert-scale cognitive and metacognitive questionnaire. Pearson product moment correlations were conducted to investigate the relationship between strategies and the reading test performance. MANOVA was used to compare groups of test-takers (i.e. highly successful, moderately successful and unsuccessful).

The results indicated that the correlation between reading achievement and metacognitive strategies was 0.39 and it was significant at the 0.05 level. In addition, the correlation between meta-cognitive strategies and cognitive strategies was .630 and it is significant at the 0.01 level. MANOVA also showed that students at higher levels of reading ability use meta-cognitive strategies more often than less successful readers. The findings of the study suggest that the use of meta-cognitive strategies can account for variation in EFL reading achievement and needs to be promoted by EFL teachers. Furthermore, Gender did

not have a determining role in the use of either cognitive or meta-cognitive strategies in this study.

The author defines this concept of metacognition as knowledge of the mental processes which are involved in different kinds of learning. Metacognitive knowledge is thought to influence the kinds of learning strategies learners choose (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). This study by Zare-ee (2008) reveals that various studies have shown, learning can be enhanced if students use metacognitive processes, that is, if they are aware of, monitor and control their own learning (Baird, 1998; Hacker, 1998; White & Gunstone, 1989). This present study illustrates that metacognitive strategies consist of two interrelated strategies: a) planning and b) monitoring strategies. Planning strategies are test-takers' action of previewing or over viewing tasks to complete in order to develop directions of what needs to be done, how and when to do it. While, Monitoring strategies are deliberate action used by test-takers to check, monitor and evaluate their thinking and performance so that verifications can be made if necessary to perform the given task successfully.

The other crucial issue is that, cognitive strategies are different from metacognitive strategies. They are ongoing mental activities used by test-takers to utilize their world knowledge and language to solve the given tasks. There are different types of cognitive strategies. Making prediction, summarizing, translating, guessing meaning from context and use of grammatical rules are some examples of cognitive strategies (Oxford, 1990).

Background to the study

The study by Brantmeier (2002) highlights some L2 reading strategies that are conducted for participants beyond the elementary school grade levels, in order to enlighten us with the differences in different research methods, because the interactive nature of reading variables is vary. Her research attempts to evaluate different studies which examine L2 strategies in terms of their generalizability. It includes a considerable discussion of some research. Brantmeier states that learner strategies are the cognitive steps learners use to process L2 input. These cognitive procedures include different crucial issues such as retrieving and storing new input. Brantmeier mentioned that these strategies are comprehension processes that the readers use to understand the reading text. This process may involve skimming, scanning, guessing, recognizing cognates and word families, reading for meaning, predicting, activating general knowledge, making inferences, following references, and separating main ideas from supporting ideas (Barnett, 1988).

In her study, she mentions that there are diverse methods used in different studies in order to measure the reading strategies while, the participants are quite diverse in terms of their levels (university levels, remedial reading classes, etc.) and their age. Regarding the research method, researchers make use of diverse methods such as think-aloud verbal reports, interviews, questionnaires, observations and written recalls (Bernhardt and Kamil, 1991). They also make use of different text levels and text types regarding to their vary participants.

In her paper, Brantmeier (2002) summarized 13 selected studies related to the topic mentioned above. . For instance, in a qualitative study Hosenfeld (1977) tested successful and unsuccessful readers to find out what kind of cognitive operations the participants used to process written texts. The participants were ninth grade students learning French (20 good readers and 20 poor readers. The method used to investigate their strategies was think-aloud reports and she used two different coding schemes (main-meaning line and word-solving strategies). The results indicate that successful readers kept meaning of passage in mind whereas poor readers focused on solving unknown words.

In her study she examined reading strategies used by students learning French. She was primarily concerned with the real and perceived strategy use among university level students and how it affects comprehension. She used a “text-level” and “word-level” coding scheme. By text-level she referred to the processes used to read the passage as a whole, such as utilizing background knowledge, predicting, reading the title, skimming and scanning (this classification echoes the codes of prior studies that utilized local strategies, top-down strategies, and main-meaning line strategies). When students used word-level strategies they used context to guess word meanings, identified grammatical categories of words, used reference words, and identified word families (this classification of “word-level” strategies is similar to local strategies, bottom-up strategies, and word-solving strategies. She concluded that there is a relationship between strategy use and reading comprehension level. The students who considered context while reading, and classified effective strategy, comprehended more than those who did not use this strategy.

Carrell (1989) investigated metacognitive awareness of L2 reader strategies in both their native language and second language, and the relationship between this awareness and their comprehension. Her first group of subjects was native Spanish speakers of intermediate and high-intermediate levels studying English as a second language at a university-level institute. Carrell (1989) correlated strategy use with comprehension and

concluded that the ESL readers of more advanced proficiency levels perceived "global" or top-down strategies as more effective. With the Spanish as a L2 group she found that at the lower proficiency levels subjects used more bottom-up or "local" strategies.

Pritchard (1990) also utilized two different reading passages: a culturally familiar and culturally unfamiliar passage to examine the process of how a reader activates and utilizes the relevant schema to facilitate comprehension. Pritchard's findings suggested that "reading is a content-specific activity; that is, when the content of reading materials changes, processing behavior changes as well.

The other example is the study of Brantmier (2000) which indicates that there is no significant effect of gender-based content on local strategy use (paraphrase, reread, question meaning of a clause or sentence, etc.), but significant effects of gender-based content were found with global strategy use (anticipate content, recognize text structure, integrate information, distinguish main ideas, etc.). More specifically, males reported using more global strategies than females with the male-oriented passage.

The present study

The present study reviewed the past studies on reading strategies. The present study was designed to investigate the effective reading strategies used by Iranian students of advanced and intermediate level of proficiency in English.

Participants

Subjects were two Iranian postgraduate students; one is in advanced level who is studying in his respective faculty and the other in an intermediate level. The criteria of choosing them as the participants of the study, is their results in ELPT and IELTS band. The researcher chooses the random sampling, choosing the samples. Both participants in this study are from the same cultural background. They lived in Iran with a mixture of Persian and Islamic culture. As mentioned before, the official language of Iran is Persian and English is considered a foreign language. The participants of this study are both educated, while they are not used to read in L2 except in some special cases. These participants are planning to

study and fulfill their tasks in their respective faculties in UTM; as a result, reading in L2 is a must and an essential need for these participants. As mentioned before, the criterion of selection of this group is according to their grades obtained in IELTS (The advanced student got the band 6 in IELTS exam) and English Language Proficiency Test (The intermediate student placed in intermediate level after ELPT) which conducted in UTM.

Instruments

Task

This study focuses on the performance of the subjects on think-aloud task, questionnaire and in-depth interview whatever findings gathered from the study that will be relevant to the samples only. For the purpose of the study, the subjects chosen were given a multiple-choice reading proficiency test to determine their level of proficiency. Later on, the subjects were asked to read silently, while they had to report at the end of a sentence. The researcher recorded and transcribed the think-aloud protocols in order to analyze and categorize the strategies.

After the think-aloud task, the subjects were asked to answer a set of questionnaire to identify the strategies that they used while reading not only through the think-aloud task but also through the set of questionnaires that was used. Finally an in-depth interview session was conducted in order to shed the lights on vague processes and statements.

Data collection procedures

The data collected through different phases and instruments. These phases are as follows: multiple-choice test, in which the researcher measured the student's reading ability, think-aloud task, where the researcher recorded the voice of the participants and transcribed them in order to analyze the strategies used by the participants, a 20-item questionnaire, where the students can circle the strategies they most frequently use while reading a text and finally the in-depth interview in order to shed the lights on unclear points. The data collected through different phases that mentioned before and analyzed from the results of the multiple-choice test, think-aloud protocol, questionnaire and in depth interview. The strategies used by these participants were analyzed mainly based on a study by Block (1986) and the study by Fotovatian and Shokrpour (2007).

Table 2. The strategies categorized by the researchers mentioned above

Block (1986)	Fotovatian and Shokrpour (2007)
General Strategies	Metacognitive strategies
Anticipate content	Selective or directed attention
Recognize text structure	Planning
Integrate information	Monitoring
Question information in the text	Evaluating
Interpret the text	Cognitive strategies
Using general knowledge and experience	Rehearsing
Comment on behavior or process	Organizing
Monitor comprehension	Inferring
Correct behavior	Summarizing
React to the text-the reader reacts emotionally to information in the text	Deducing
Local Strategies	Imaging
Paraphrase	Transferring or inducing
Reread	Elaborating
Question meaning of a clause or sentence	Socio-affective strategies
Question meaning of a word	Cooperation
Solve vocabulary problem	Questions for clarification
	Self-talk

Results

The advance reader spends about 15 minutes to complete the thinking-aloud task. While reading she underlined the key points (as she mentioned). She mentioned that

“ I notice the key words in the text while I am reading, so I can understand it better”.

She prefers to look up the words in bilingual dictionary, while she was checking. she checked all the meanings that offered one by one and regarding the context of the text she chose one. The intermediate reader spends about 25 minutes doing the same task. The intermediate student stated that

“I usually read the text as a whole, especially when I do not get the one sentence, I'll try to read the next sentence, so I can read and understand the text better”.

She did not make use of dictionaries and she said

“ I do not know some of these words, but I like to guess and finally if I cannot, I will look them up.”

After think-aloud session, the participants were asked to complete the 20-item questionnaire. They have to circle the strategies they use while reading a text in L2.

The results indicate that the advanced reader make use of more strategies (14 out of 20) than the intermediate reader (11 out of 20). The advanced reader makes use of metacognitive strategies more than the intermediate reader. Both participants did not make use of some of the strategies mentioned in the questionnaire such as taking notes, summarizing (The intermediate student acts differently in think-aloud task), reacting to the text and recognizing the text structure. The intermediate reader mentioned that

” While I am reading I cannot direct my attention to the text, I lose my concentration”. The advanced reader mentioned that *” Is reacting to the text a way of understanding? I never tried it before.*

The in-depth interview clears more reader's insights toward strategies they had been used while reading. The advance reader notified that she usually notice and underline the key words periodically, that is the reason she can read the text fast. She stated that

“ While I am reading I like to underline the keywords”.

In using dictionary they both prefer to make use of bilingual dictionaries than monolingual dictionaries. They mentioned that they can *“understand better”* while they are using bilingual

dictionaries. The advance reader tended to write the meanings that she found in the dictionary in Persian on the reading text; however, the intermediate reader looked up the new words without jotting them down. The advance reader mentioned that

“ It is better to jot down the meanings we find on the text, because the lightest pencils will last longer than our memory”.

The intermediate participant indicates that

“ When I do not understand a sentence, I usually read the next sentence. Sometimes I understand the message, but most of the time I feel that I confused. I understand the message of a sentence better when I re-read the sentences”.

She mentioned that

“ Sometimes I like to guess the words, but each time I found the meanings different from what I guessed.”

Discussion

Success in reading generally refers to a complete grasp of meaning while reading a text in which a dynamic and increasing appreciation of interrelationships in the text is required (Phakiti, 2003). In this study a strategy was reported to function negatively in terms of efficiency but not effectiveness. The problem with such strategy as paying attention to single words may lie in their time-consuming nature. Both Iranian students make use of this negative strategy.

The results of the study conducted by Upton (1997) are in the same line with those of my study. The poor readers relied more on local, text-based or bottom-up strategies in order to understand the text, while good readers relied on both types of strategies. The high-level group used reading comprehension strategies more frequently than the low group.

The difference revealed in Zhang's study (2001) between poor and good readers is in the same line with the results of this study in that good readers are more familiar with the demands of reading tasks and use more efficient strategies in the comprehension of the text. According to him, the more command of metacognitive knowledge, the more efficient the

comprehension of what is read. Also, in Setiadi, et al.'s study (2005), metacognitive strategies constituted 100% of the variance contributed by the language learning strategies. They concluded that metacognitive strategies function as a "powerful tool" in learning English; metacognitive strategies direct the execution of learning processes and are superior to other strategies under the study in contributing to the increase in language performance.

As to the efficiency of strategies, the results indicated that not all the reading comprehension strategies are helpful for the readers. Some strategies decreased the comprehension rate and the speed of the readers while reading. For example, paying attention to single words can be regarded as negative strategy in terms of efficiency. There were some strategies like reacting to the text that showed to be very helpful; however, some readers are not able to use them or do not consider it as a strategy. Piper's research (1994) demonstrated that the subjects at different levels had a model, although limited, of language and strategies for learning. It seems to be a trend similar to that of the subjects of this study.

As concluded by Carrell et al. (1989), the combined effect of cognitive and metacognitive strategy instruction is effective in enhancing reading comprehension. In agreement with the ideas in this regard, Marzban (2006) stated that helping learners to become efficient EFL readers requires them to bring all their cognitive and metacognitive strategies into play. Obviously, there is a need for teaching support, adequate time and energy, and a well-organized program for our students in order to help them develop strategies necessary for meaningful reading.

Implications

Limitations of the study

This study had some limitations which might have affected the findings. The first limitation of the study was the low sample size. As mentioned before, there were just two participants in this study. Regarding to the difficulty of think-aloud task, the size of the samples should be larger. This matter affected the generalization of findings. The other limitation of this study is the way which tests the reading proficiency (multiple-choice format) and it showed itself the variability of scores.

Implications for EFL teachers

Despite the limitations of the study, it has some implications for teachers and students. By enhancing this useful knowledge (process of reading) Iranian lecturers and students may change their attitude toward reading. As a result, they can decide on appropriate strategies that can be taught in the classrooms.

Implications for students (readers)

The findings of this study may help the students in gaining more insights in improving and understanding an academic text. . The readers and students enhancing this knowledge can increase their comprehension level and enjoy their reading. That is by using the useful and practical strategies in reading L2 texts the readers can enjoy and understand the reading materials better. The findings may also help the students and readers gain more insights in the process of reading they mostly use. Therefore, they can observe consciously, evaluate and decide on the proper strategies that can help them while reading texts.

Suggestions for further research

Considering the findings of the study the following areas are worthy to consider.

1. A similar study can be carried out by using more texts for think-aloud task, in order to gain more insights toward reading.
2. The text conducted for think-aloud practice session was on politics, which seems not to be appropriate for the academic purpose. The further researcher can make use of other topics for this session related to academic purposes.
3. The advance student make use of underlying as well which the further researcher can test this issue as well with adding this item to the questionnaire provided.

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