

Investigating the Strategic Reading Processes of Readers in Different Cultural Contexts

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In this study, we investigated to see whether any significant differences exist in the reported use of reading strategies of Iranian EFL and Indian ESL readers when they are performing a reading comprehension test. Participants were 190 college students (96 Iranian students and 93 Indian students, who completed a Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) designed for discerning the strategies readers report using when performing a reading comprehension task. The results of this study revealed that both Iranian EFL and Indian ESL students displayed awareness of almost all of the strategies included in the survey in a similar pattern while reading academic texts. With respect to the differences in strategy use among both groups, Indians reported more awareness of the use of cognitive, support and total reading strategies than Iranian students while no significant difference reported in using metacognitive reading strategies. These results can contribute to the clarification of some of the differences and similarities between EFL and ESL readers in employing some strategies and the necessity of reading strategies instruction in both contexts.

Key words: cognitive, metacognitive, and support reading strategies, EFL and ESL context, cognitive processes in reading, metacognition

INTRODUCTION

Interest in second language acquisition, particularly as it relates to reading in the second language has burgeoned in the past decade. This 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 including 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 (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, 2002). 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, 2002). 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, 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.

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, metacognitive 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, 2002).

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 the research on learning and memory, the success of research studies in cognitive/developmental psychology, especially Kreutzer, Leonard, Flavell, and Hagen's (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 them in a planned sequence, 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

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 (Garcia, Jimenez, & 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 (Jimenez, Garcia, & 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 were 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 draw this conclusion, 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 show 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 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 it is concerned with the types of strategies reported by the subjects, 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 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. Add to it, 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 on specific metacognitive knowledge, metalinguistic skills, and reading performance. In addition, with exception of a few researches, most of the research on the reading strategies of first and second language readers has been limited to students at lower level of proficiency or those studying at the 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 entering university education are unprepared for the reading demands placed on them (Dreyer & Nel, 2003). They show 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 this point that no research has been done in relation to metacognitive reading strategies among EFL and ESL college learners, namely Iran and India, 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 have 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 academic text in English?
2. What reading strategies do EFL and ESL learners use better when they are reading 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 freshmen and sophomores and were admitted to their respective universities for full-time academic study, were majoring 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

background information questionnaire, for the most parts, both groups 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). Though, the only difference which is obvious is the instructional context in which both groups are 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 with 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, Hindi, and English, to name a few. It should also be mentioned that English is being learned as their second language. However, Nayar (1997) characterized the English situation in today's India as ESL1 thanks to some factors 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 India, 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 accomplishments as it was described by Gupta (1995, p. 76) as follows: [Indians] secretly believe ,

if not openly say, that competence in English makes a considerable difference in their career prospects- politicians and bureaucrats denounce the elitism of [English-medium] students but surreptitiously send their children to them. Ultimately, as Kachru (1986) announced, English “has now become an integral part of 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, it is better to say, 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 ESL setting have two obvious advantages than Iranian counterparts studying it in 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 (Rajinders, 2008). The time allotted to this study was 60 minutes as it was 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, place of living, years of studying English, and medium of instruction (see Appendix A)

Survey of Reading Strategy (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 SORS questionnaire (see Appendix B) measures three broad categories of reading strategies including:

- (1) *Metacognitive strategies* (MET) are those intentional, carefully planned techniques by which learners monitor or manage their reading. Such strategies include having a purpose in mind, previewing the text as to its length and organization, or using typographical aids and tables and figures (10 items).
- (2) *Cognitive strategies* (COG) are the actions and procedures readers use while working directly with the text. These are localized, focused techniques used when problems develop in understanding textual information. Examples of cognitive strategies include adjusting one's speed of reading when the material becomes difficult or easy, guessing the meaning of unknown words, and re-reading the text for improved comprehension (12 items).
- (3) *Support strategies* (SUP) are basically support mechanisms intended to aid the reader in comprehending the text such as using a dictionary, taking notes, or underlining or highlighting the text to better comprehend it (8 items).

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 objectives 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 reading strategies questionnaire after completing the reading comprehension test. The Survey of Reading Strategy (SORS) questionnaire was administered to the subjects in a similar way in Iran and India as it 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 was presented to the subjects in both contexts by the researcher, the students were instructed to read each of the 30 statements in the SORS 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 are 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 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
Differences in Reported Reading Strategies Used by Iranian and Indian Students

| Name | Strategy | Iranian | | Indian | | T | p-value |
|-------|------------------------------------------|---------|------|--------|------|-------|---------|
| | | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| MET1 | Setting purpose for reading | 3.26 | 1.29 | 3.71 | .92 | 2.751 | .007 |
| MET2 | Previewing text before reading | 3.13 | 1.32 | 3.65 | 1.20 | 2.824 | .005 |
| MET3 | Checking how text content fits purpose | 2.56 | 1.18 | 2.60 | 1.42 | .209 | .835 |
| MET4 | Skimming to note text | 3.18 | 1.34 | 2.89 | 1.31 | 1.479 | .141 |
| MET5 | Determining what to read | 3.06 | 1.08 | 3.44 | 1.32 | 2.154 | .033 |
| MET6 | Using text feature (e.g., tables) | 2.84 | 1.35 | 2.78 | 1.21 | .316 | .753 |
| MET7 | Using context clues | 3.22 | 1.30 | 3.27 | 1.14 | .281 | .779 |
| MET8 | Using typographical aids (e.g., italics) | 3.55 | 1.12 | 2.89 | 1.22 | 3.870 | .000 |
| MET9 | Predicting or guessing text meaning | 3.63 | 1.10 | 3.65 | 1.13 | .124 | .901 |
| MET10 | Confirming prediction | 2.94 | 1.32 | 3.73 | 1.26 | 4.224 | .000 |
| COG1 | Using prior knowledge | 3.45 | 1.26 | 3.48 | 1.17 | .203 | .839 |
| COG2 | Reading aloud when text becomes hard | 2.83 | 1.29 | 3.34 | 1.38 | 2.633 | .009 |
| COG3 | Reading slowly and carefully | 3.77 | 1.20 | 4.23 | .99 | 2.837 | .005 |
| COG4 | Trying to stay focused on reading | 3.73 | 1.01 | 3.51 | 1.27 | 1.340 | .182 |
| COG5 | Adjusting reading rate | 3.10 | 1.21 | 3.63 | 1.23 | 2.873 | .005 |
| COG6 | Paying close attention to reading | 3.68 | 1.35 | 3.81 | 1.19 | .698 | .486 |
| COG7 | Pausing and thinking about reading | 3.48 | 1.18 | 3.01 | 1.28 | 2.617 | .010 |
| COG8 | Visualizing information read | 3.20 | 1.24 | 3.66 | 1.20 | 2.571 | .011 |
| COG9 | Critically evaluating what is read | 2.90 | 1.05 | 3.56 | 1.17 | 4.112 | .000 |
| COG10 | Resolving conflicting information | 3.19 | 1.10 | 3.82 | 1.05 | 4.022 | .000 |

TABLE 2
Reported Reading Strategies Used MOST and LEAST by Iranian and Indian Students

| Iranian (n=96) | | Indian (n=93) | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------|
| Name | Strategy | Name | Strategy |
| SUP5 | Using reference materials | COG3 | Reading slowly and carefully |
| COG11 | Re-reading for better understanding | COG11 | Re-reading for better understanding |
| COG3 | Reading slowly and carefully | SUP4 | Underlining information in text |
| COG4 | Trying to stay focused on reading | COG10 | Resolving conflicting information |
| COG6 | Paying closer attention to reading | COG6 | Paying closer attention to reading |
| MET9 | Predicting or guessing text meaning | SUP1 | Taking notes while reading |
| MET8 | Using typological aids (e.g. italics) | MET10 | Confirming predictions |
| COG7 | Pausing and thinking about reading | MET1 | Setting purpose for reading |
| COG1 | Using prior knowledge | COG8 | Visualizing information read |
| COG12 | Guessing meaning of unknown words | MET9 | Predicting or guessing text meaning |
| SUP4 | Underlining information in the text | MET2 | Previewing text before reading |
| SUP7 | Going back and forth in text | COG5 | Adjusting reading rate |
| MET1 | Setting purpose for reading | SUP5 | Using reference materials |
| MET7 | Using context clues | SUP8 | Asking oneself questions |
| COG8 | Visualizing information read | COG9 | Critically evaluating what is read |
| COG10 | Resolving conflicting information | COG4 | Trying to stay focused on reading |
| MET4 | Skimming to note text characteristics | SUP2 | Summarizing text information |
| MET2 | Previewing text before reading | COG1 | Using prior knowledge |
| COG5 | Adjusting reading rate | SUP7 | Going back and forth in text |
| MET5 | Determining what to read | MET5 | Determining what to read |
| SUP6 | Paraphrasing for better understanding | SUP6 | Paraphrasing for better understanding |
| MET10 | Confirming predictions | COG2 | Reading aloud when text becomes hard |
| COG9 | Critically evaluating what is read | SUP3 | Discussing reading with others |
| MET6 | Using text features (e.g. tables) | MET7 | Using context clues |
| COG2 | Reading aloud when text becomes difficult | COG12 | Guessing meaning of unknown words |
| SUP3 | Discussing reading with others | COG7 | Pausing and thinking about reading |
| SUP2 | Summarizing text information | MET8 | Using typological aids (e.g. italics) |
| MET3 | Checking how text content fits purpose | MET4 | Skimming to note text characteristics |
| SUP8 | Asking oneself questions | MET6 | Using text features (e.g. tables) |
| SUP1 | Taking notes while reading | MET3 | Checking how text content fits purpose |

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 reading strategies ($t= 2.877$; $p=000$) and two of the subscales (Cognitive and Support reading strategies) and 19 individual strategies. Regarding the total reading strategies, Indians as ESL learners reported better use of these strategies ($M= 104.18$; $SD= 11.90$) than Iranians as EFL learners ($M= 95.814$ $SD= 18.32$). As far as it is concerned with cognitive reading strategies, Indians were also reported to be better users of these strategies ($M= 43.09$; $SD= 3.76$) than Iranians ($M= 40.69$; $SD= 5.34$). Further, with respect to support reading strategies, Indians reported to use these strategies better ($M= 28.48$; $SD= 4.36$) in comparison to Iranian counterparts ($M= 23.78$; $SD= 5.39$). However, both groups of subjects reported almost the same use of metacognitive reading strategies. Concerning the significant difference among individual strategies use on the part of both groups, in all except four strategies, Indian students stated greater strategy use than Iranian students. Among the metacognitive reading strategies, Indians reported to be better in using the strategies like *setting purpose for reading*, *previewing text*, and *determining what to read* while Iranians stated better use of two strategies including *using typographical aids*, and *confirming prediction*. With regard to cognitive reading strategies, Indians as ESL learners reported to use three strategies better including *reading aloud when text becomes hard*, *reading slowly and carefully*, *adjusting reading rate*, and *visualizing information read, critically evaluating what is read*, and *resolving conflicting information* whereas Iranian as EFL learners reported to use better only the strategy, *pausing and thinking about reading*. Regarding support reading strategies, Indians reported to be better users of almost all strategies including *taking notes while reading*, *summarizing text information*, *discussing reading with others*, *underlining information in text*, *paraphrasing for better understanding*, and *asking oneself 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 overall reported strategy usage mean of 104.18 (SD= 11.90). 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 95.84 (SD=18.32).

Furthermore, a closer look at Table 1 indicates this fact that, for Indian college students, 16 (48%) of the 30 strategies reported fell in the high usage category (3.5 or 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 EFL and ESL learners use better when they are reading in English?), as Table 2 indicates, the strategies used by Iranian and Indian students have been arranged from most to least used. For more clarification, the top five and bottom five for each group have been highlighted. Among the most-used strategies, *re-reading for better understanding* (Cog11), *reading slowly and carefully* (Cog3), and *paying closer attention to reading* (Cog6) were reported to be used by both groups although Iranians preferred to use the strategy of *using reference materials* (Sup5) at the top and Indians favored the use of *reading slowly and carefully* (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* (Met6), *using context clues* (Met7), and *checking how text content fits purpose* (Met3). Besides, Indians reported to make 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 metacognitive, cognitive, and support reading strategies.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the researchers wanted to explore whether there were any significant differences in the reported 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 environments (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 it was mentioned before, Indians reported to use almost all the strategies included in “support reading strategies” better than Iranians such as summarizing, paraphrasing, note-taking, and etc. This means that Indians are more interested in using top-down strategies for better comprehension during reading while Iranians are more hooked on using bottom-up strategies such as using reference materials like dictionary to find the meaning of unknown words during reading which causes interference in comprehension. Another justification for these results is that Indians are good in writing which can be regarded as the main reason for better use of the above-mentioned strategies on the part of this group.

In addition, both Iranian and Indian college students reported to use some cognitive strategies as the most-used strategies such as *reading slowly and carefully* or *re-reading for better understanding*. It can refer to this point that both groups are not well aware of employing some useful and effective strategies for better comprehension such as summarizing, underlining, and note-taking, etc.

As a result, the findings reported in this study are related to the importance of the awareness of reading strategies among EFL and ESL college readers. we believe 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, we believe that the integration of reading strategies instruction within the overall reading curriculum has a vital role in enriching students' awareness of the mental processes involved in reading and the development of thoughtful and constructively 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.

IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

An area of future research which should be taken into account is 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 reading strategies and learning styles on 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.

All this information can shed some light on gaining a clearer perspective of what individual readers are doing as they are involved in reading activities on the part of teachers and researchers.

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APPENDIX A

Students Pro forma

Attention: Please answer the questions honestly. They will be 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. Your 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 students e. others (please write)
11. My attitude toward English is.....
 - a. positive b. negative c. no comment

APPENDIX B

Survey of Reading Strategies

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 are followed by 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.”

1. I have a purpose in mind when I read. **(MET)**
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. **(MET)**
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. **(MET)**
8. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading. **(MET)**
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. **(COG)**
11. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read. **(COG)**
12. I preview the text to see what it is about before reading it. **(MET)**
13. When the text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand the text. **(COG)**
14. I think on whether the content of the text matches with my reading purpose. **(COG)**
15. I read slowly but carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading. **(COG)**
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. **(MET)**
18. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading. **(COG)**
19. I decide what to read closely and what to ignore. **(MET)**
20. When the text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading. **(COG)**
21. I stop from time to time and reflect on what I am reading. **(COG)**
22. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.

(COG)

23. I use typological aids like boldface and italics to identify key information.

(MET)

24. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.

(COG)

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.

(COG)

27. I try to guess what the material is about when I read it. **(MET)**

28. When the text becomes difficult, I reread to increase my understanding.

(COG)

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

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