

*In the Name of  
Allah*



**University of Isfahan**  
**Faculty of Foreign Languages**  
**Department of English Language**

**M.A. Thesis**

**The Influence of Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction and  
Strategy Instruction on Reading Comprehension and Motivation  
of Persian EFL Learners**

**Supervisor:**

**Dr. Mansoor Tavakoli**

**Advisor:**

**Dr. Zahra Amirian**

**By:**

**Masumeh Sokhangoo**

**September 2012**

کلیه حقوق مادی مترتب بر نتایج مطالعات،  
ابتکارات و نوآوری های ناشی از تحقیق موضوع  
این پایان نامه متعلق به دانشگاه اصفهان است.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

From the depth of my heart, I thank the Lord for being my anchor. This thesis was completed with God's amazing grace and love.

I am grateful to several people who supported me and I would like to acknowledge their efforts. First of all I wish to express my deepest sense of indebtedness and appreciation to Dr. Tavakoli, my thesis supervisor, whose profound knowledge and encouragement helped me throughout the completion of this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Amirian, my thesis advisor, for her generous and sincere support.

Furthermore, my gratitude is owed to the students of Shokouh English Language Institute of Tehran and their instructors who cooperated with me all over the demanding process of data collection.

Finally, my most grateful thanks go to my dear spouse and my parents whose patience and generous support has always served as a source of inspiration in my academic life.

## **Abstract**

Based on an engagement perspective of reading development, this study investigated to what extent an instructional framework of combining motivation support and strategy instruction (Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction- CORI) would develop reading comprehension for Persian EFL learners. In CORI, five motivational practices were integrated with six cognitive strategies for reading comprehension. In addition, this study compared this framework to an instructional framework emphasizing Strategy Instruction (SI), but not including motivation support. Afterwards, CORI was compared to SI and to a comparison group that received traditional methods of teaching reading. The analysis of the results showed that students in CORI classroom performed better than SI and TI students on measures of reading comprehension and motivation. The pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed.

**Key Words:** Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction- CORI, Strategy Instruction- SI, Reading Comprehension, Motivation, EFL Learners.

## Table of Contents

Title	Page
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1. Overview .....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem .....	1
1.3. Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	4
1.4. Significance of the Study .....	5
1.5. Definition of Key Terms .....	7
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
2.1. Introduction .....	10
2.2. Reading .....	10
2.2.1. The Importance of Reading .....	10
2.2.2. Reading Purpose, Types, & Strategies .....	11
2.2.3. Reading in a Second Language .....	13
2.2.4. L2 Reading Research .....	14
2.3. Definition of Language Learning Strategies .....	16
2.3.1. Theoretical Systems for Classifying Strategies .....	19
2.3.2. History of Language-Learning Strategies .....	21
2.4. Motivation .....	23
2.4.2. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation .....	25
2.5. Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction(CORI) .....	28
2.5.1. The Theoretical Framework .....	30
2.5.2. Explicit Strategy Instruction in CORI .....	31
2.5.3. Attributes of Strategic Reading .....	32
2.5.4. Strategies Taught in the CORI Model .....	33
2.5.5. Creating a Motivating Context in Reading .....	35
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	

3.1. Introduction .....	40
3.2. Research Design .....	40
3.3. Participants .....	40
3.4. Instrumentation.....	41
3.4.1. Texts.....	42
3.4.2. Videotapes.....	42
3.4.3. Posters .....	42
3.4.4. Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery .....	42
3.4.5. Reading Comprehension Test.....	43
3.5. Data Collection Procedure.....	43
3.5.1. The Pilot Study .....	44
3.5.2. The Main Study .....	46
3.6. Treatment.....	46
3.6.1. Observe and personalize .....	46
3.6.2. Search and Retrieve .....	47
3.6.3. Comprehend and Integrate.....	48
3.6.4. Communicate to others .....	48
3.7. Instructional Frameworks.....	49
3.7.1. TI.....	49
3.7.2. CORI.....	49
3.7.3. SI.....	49
3.8. Data Analysis.....	50
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS</b>	
4.1. Introduction .....	52
4.2. Analysis of the Results .....	53
4.2.2. The First Question: The effect of CORI and SI on Reading Comprehension .....	58
4.2.3. The Second Question: The effect of CORI and SI on raising motivation .....	61
4.3. Summary of the Findings .....	63

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS	
5.1. Introduction .....	65
5.2. Restatement of the Problem .....	65
5.3. Discussion of the Results .....	67
5.4. Conclusion.....	71
5.5. Implications .....	72
5.6. Limitations.....	72
5.7. Suggestions for Further Research.....	73
APPENDIXES.....	
APPENDIXE A (Reading Comprehension Test).....	74
APPENDIXE B (AMTB Questionnaire) .....	80
References .....	84



## List of Figures

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
Figure 2.1: Three views of motivation.....	25
Figure 2.2: Motivational dichotomies.....	27
Figure 2.3: Engagement model of reading development.....	31
Figure 4.1: The histograms of reading pretest and posttest scores in CORI group.....	55
Figure 4.2: The histograms of reading pretest and posttest scores in SI group.....	55
Figure 4.3: The histograms of reading pretest and posttest scores in TI group.....	56
Figure 4.4: The histograms of AMTB pretest and posttest scores in CORI group. ....	57
Figure 4.5: The histograms of AMTB pretest and posttest scores in SI group. ....	57
Figure 4.6: The histograms of AMTB pretest and posttest scores in TI group. ....	58

## List of Tables

<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 4.1: Mean & Standard deviation of reading test scores .....	53
Table 4.2: Mean & Standard deviation of AMTB questionnaire scores.....	53
Table 4.3: The Kolmogrov-Smirnov test results for reading comprehension test scores	54
Table 4.4: The Kolmogrov-Smirnov test results for AMTB questionnaire scores .....	56
Table 4.5: The Kruskal-Wallis result for the mean of reading pretest scores .....	59
Table 4.6: The Wilcoxon Signed-ranks Test results for the means of reading scores (pretest & posttest). .....	59
Table 4.7: The Mann-Whithney U- Test results for the means of reading posttest scores .....	60
Table 4.8: The Kruskal-wallis results for the mean of AMTB pretest scores.....	61
Table 4.9: The Wilcoxon Signed-ranks Test results for the means of AMTB scores ..	62
Table 4.10: The Mann-Whithney U-Test results for the means of AMTB posttest scores .....	62

## **List of Abbreviations**

AMTB	Attitudes motivation Test Battery
CORI	Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction
SI	Strategy Instruction
TI	Traditional Instruction

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1. Overview**

This chapter presents an introduction to a method in teaching reading called Concept- Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). It begins with statement of the problem, followed by research questions and hypotheses. Finally, the chapter closes with the significance of the study and the definitions of the key terms.

#### **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Most of the ELT learners, including Persian speakers, have comprehension difficulties which arise from many causes: Difficulties with oral language, difficulties with written language, lack or poor use of strategies, difficulties related to prior knowledge such as lack of relevant prior knowledge, failure to apply relevant prior knowledge, application of irrelevant prior knowledge, lack of reading engagement, and other factors such as eye movement problems and self-regulatory or metacognitive issues (Duke, 2003). In most cases more than one of these causes is at work. There is not necessarily a one-to-one mapping between causes of reading comprehension difficulties and most effective approaches to addressing them. For example, the best way to improve reading

comprehension for a child with weak short-term memory may be to improve reading comprehension strategy use (Duke, 2003). To address reading comprehension difficulties, Duke recommended building rich content knowledge, to develop strategic readers and inspire reading engagement.

One of the approaches that has been shown to be effective at improving comprehension of informational text is Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). This framework centers around a conceptual theme, engages students in real-world interactions, and uses interesting often student-selected texts. In addition, it focuses on goals, involves collaboration, student autonomy, and includes strategy instruction (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Because reading is a purposeful activity, educational researchers have devoted a lot of time and energy to examine what increases children's interest and motivation to read. One approach that has been used in the field of science education to increase reading motivation and comprehension is Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction. Hands-on science activities are used to spark student interest and teachers use a multitude of interesting texts related to the topics being studied to connect conceptual science information and the application of this knowledge in a purposeful setting. Teachers use CORI reading comprehension strategies and allow students to communicate and collaborate with each other to deepen their comprehension of the text and science knowledge (Grant, Bennet, Rice & McGough, 1993).

CORI classrooms are designed to meet students' needs. Becoming a comprehender in the higher grades is based on two needs; the first is mental or cognitive. Students must be able to use cognitive strategies easily. They need to tap into background knowledge, ask questions, and summarize frequently and appropriately. A second need is motivational, or affective. Engaged readers possess these qualities (cognitive and motivational) woven together. Students who are motivated are often competent in using strategies. Yet, teaching that supports the mental (or cognitive) and the motivational (or affective) sides of reading are often segregated. For example, many teachers promote self-selected

reading as an opportunity to read for enjoyment, but cognitive strategies are rarely taught during this time. Likewise, many teachers believe that strategy instruction is hard, and they do not expect it to be enjoyable. The suggestion is that the challenge for educators is to support the cognitive and motivational sides of reading simultaneously. Possessing strategies for reading would help students increase their enjoyment in reading books for pleasure. Likewise, gaining motivation for reading would fuel strategy development. Therefore, it is recommended that the twin aspects of reading (the cognitive and the motivational) must be supported simultaneously in the classroom context (Guthrie et al, 1993).

In spite of the increasing popularity of research on learning strategies since the mid 70s, the notion of learning strategies and their frequencies, on the one hand, and their relationship with such variables as motivation and conceptual learning, on the other hand, is still a new research area in Iran. There have been a few studies (Lachini, 1997; Tahmasebi, 1999; Akbari, R., 2001; Soleimani, M., 2004) on the use of learning strategies of the individual Iranian EFL University students.

It is clear that students can be helped to use better strategies and research suggests that better strategies improve language performance. Just how language-learning strategies should be taught is to be questioned, but so far it has been confirmed that strategy awareness is generally more effective when woven into regular classroom activities, especially reading comprehension, than when presented as a separate strategy course (Rubin, 1981; Stern, 1975).

In this respect, the name of "Concept- Oriented Reading Instruction" was selected to reflect the central position of conceptual knowledge in teaching reading comprehension. Following the experienced judgment of teachers and findings from empirical research on reading (Cox, 2001), the framework has two main aspects ;( a) support for the cognitive strategies for knowledge construction, and (b) support for the motivational development of learners. These aspects are both served by teaching the contents or concepts in a discipline. When students

are trying to gain conceptual knowledge, the difficult strategies of reading, such as summarizing are more readily acquired. Simultaneously, interest and motivation for reading are immediately aroused by concepts, such as animals. Important, interesting conceptual themes are a valuable context for teaching comprehension strategies and for sustaining the motivation required for long-term reading development (Perencevich, 2004).

However, these strategies are not enough for creating a fascinating atmosphere in the class. In CORI, reading strategies are taught in a context of inquiry, which affords teachers the opportunity to support motivation by (a) having knowledge goals for reading instruction, (b) providing hands-on activities related to reading, (c) giving students realistic choices, (d) using interesting texts for instruction, and (e) weaving collaboration into children's classroom lives.

Wigfield and Barbosa (2004) by assessing the impact of CORI have shown that this instructional framework increased reading comprehension and motivation to read in comparison to an instructional program focused on teaching reading strategies, or a traditional reading instruction program that relied primarily on basal texts.

Comparative research has shown that students who receive CORI surpass students who receive traditional instruction in reading comprehension, reading motivation, and science concepts (Guthrie et al, 1993).

Therefore the present study was an attempt to know whether implementing CORI framework on Iranian EFL learners would influence their level of reading comprehension and that of motivation in comparison with learners practicing SI framework.

### **1.3. Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Based on the purpose and the problem stated above, the present study addresses the following research questions:

- 1- Does Concept - Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) differ significantly

from Strategy Instruction (SI) in developing reading comprehension of EFL students?

To investigate this question, three null hypotheses were proposed: 1) The mean differences of pretest scores for the reading comprehension test in the three groups (TI, SI & CORI) are not statistically significant. 2) The mean differences of pretest and posttest scores of reading comprehension test in the three groups are not statistically significant. 3) The mean differences of posttest scores of reading comprehension test in TI-CORI; TI-SI; and SI-CORI are not statistically significant.

2- Does CORI differ from SI in raising motivation of EFL students?

To investigate this question, three other null hypotheses were proposed: 1) The mean differences of pretest scores of the AMTB questionnaire in the three groups (TI, SI & CORI) is not statistically significant. 2) The mean difference of pretest and posttest scores of the AMTB is not statistically significant. 3) The mean difference of posttest scores of the AMTB in TI-CORI; TI-SI; and SI-CORI is not statistically significant.

#### **1.4. Significance of the study**

A widespread goal of education for most of the learners is reading comprehension, which provides the basis for a substantial amount of learning in higher levels of education. Without the skill of reading comprehension and the motivation for reading to learn, students' academic progress is limited (Snow, 2002).

Oxford & Ehramn (1989) refer to four reasons why research on the use of language-learning strategies is a worthwhile process: first, appropriate language strategies are related to successful performance in language learning... Second,



using appropriate learning strategies enable students to take responsibility for their own learning by actively assimilating new information into their mental structures. Third, learning strategies can be taught through well-planned training. Finally, addressing learning strategies in their programs give teachers an expanded rather than a reduced value.

According to Oxford (1990), language-learning strategies are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed involvement. There has been an awareness that language-learning strategies have the potential to be an extremely powerful learning tool (O' Malley & Chamot, 1987).

However, learning cognitive strategies is a challenging enterprise. To children, the strategies are abstract and difficult. Because the persistent and sustained attention required to learn them are demanding for young learners, building the right context is crucial. In CORI, reading strategies are taught in a context of inquiry, which affords teachers the opportunity to support motivation by (a) having knowledge goals for reading instruction, (b) providing hands-on activities related to reading, (c) giving students realistic choices, (d) using interesting texts for instruction, and (e) weaving collaboration into children's classroom lives.

Anyway, central to the rationale for this investigation is the finding that motivation and engagement contribute to reading comprehension. It is evident that the acquisition of reading strategies and reading comprehension skills demands a large amount of effort and motivation (stipek, 2002), and that outstanding teachers invest substantial time and energy in supporting students' motivation and engagement in reading (Dolezal et al., 2003).

The present study attempted to investigate 1) whether SI differs from CORI in terms of its influences on reading comprehension level of Iranian EFL learners, 2) whether CORI differs from SI in raising motivation level of Iranian EFL learners. Providing answers to these questions can pave the way for an introduction of CORI as a beneficial instructional framework. The results of this

study can help the teachers improve the quality of their curriculum by incorporating some principals of CORI into their curriculum such as the cognitive strategies taught in CORI model, which include: activating background knowledge, questioning, searching for information, summarizing, and organizing graphically. In addition, the teachers can incorporate some of the motivational principals of CORI like knowledge goals, hands-on activities, student choices, interesting texts, and collaboration support.

### 1.5. Definition of key terms

**Autonomy Support:** Encapsulates the idea that the student shares in the responsibility of decision-making in the classroom milieu, but is not the sole decision maker. When students perceive ownership of the goals, they report high intrinsic motivation and reading engagement. Furthermore, ownership also contributes to reading comprehension and amount of reading (Morrow, 1996).

**Cognitive Strategies** refer to processes and behaviors which learners use to help them improve their ability to learn or remember something, particularly those which learners use with specific classroom tasks and activities (Richards & Platt, 1992).

**Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI):** An instructional framework for teaching reading which combines motivation support and strategy instruction. It increases motivation by using plenty of interesting texts, giving choices to students about their texts and suggesting collaboration among students (Guthrie, et al, 2004).

**Engagement:** Engagement in reading refers to the joint functioning of motivation and strategies as students construct conceptual knowledge during reading. (Anderson, Alao, Rinehart, 1999)

**Knowledge Goals or Conceptual Themes:** A conceptual theme can be a motivational support for reading because it can support students' curiosity, desire

for understanding, and goals to master material. Examples of conceptual themes include survival in ecology, weather patterns in earth science and simple machines in physics (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

**Learning Strategies (LSs):** Learning strategies have been broadly defined as specific actions or techniques that students use, often intentionally, to improve their progress in developing L2 skills” (Green and Oxford, 1995).

**Reading Comprehension Strategies:** "Conscious and flexible plans that readers apply and adapt to a variety of texts and tasks” (Pearson et al. 1992). Reading strategies have much in common with learning strategies, but readers deliberately use them to better understand and remember what they read. By using reading strategies, all students, including L1 and L2 students and those with special needs, can learn to read independently and well (Graves 1998).

**Reading Efficacy:** Reading efficacy refers to individuals’ assessments of their ability to read well. When individuals believe they can successfully complete activities, like reading a story or book, they will persist at the activity, attempt to read difficult books or stories and choose to return to the activity when they have the opportunity (Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

**Reading Engagement:** Reading engagement is defined as the” simultaneous functioning of motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interactions during literacy activities” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

**Reading Motivation:** Reading motivation is the individual’s personal goals, values, and beliefs with regard to the topics, processes and outcomes of reading.” (Guthrie & Wigfield , 2000).

**Self-efficacy:** Self-efficacy is defined as individual’s assessments of their ability at different activities and sense that they can accomplish the activity (Schunk & Pajares, 2002).

**Strategy Awareness:** "Strategy awareness means knowing how to use cognitive strategies such as activating background knowledge, questioning, searching for information, summarizing, organizing graphically and identifying

story structure (Guthrie, 2001).