



**Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman**

**Faculty of Letters and Humanities**

**English Language Department**

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**Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies and  
Reading Comprehension among Externalisers and  
Internalisers Locus of Control: A Study in Iranian EFL  
Students**

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**Prepared by:**

**Hamide Ghasemi**

**Supervisor:**

**Dr. Mina Rastegar**

**Advisor:**

**Dr. Jahanbakhsh Langroudi**

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*Dedicated to*

*My Parents*

*For their endless love, support,*

*and encouragement*

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of present study was to analyze the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and reading comprehension among internalisers and externalisers EFL students. It aimed at investigating the relationship of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies (global, problem solving, and support) and reading comprehension and making inquiries about the differences in the reported use of reading strategies and reading comprehension among internalisers and externalisers. A sample of eighty- four of first and second year junior EFL students majoring in English Translation and English Literature at Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman, participated in this study. In order to gather required data, two questionnaires were used: Awareness of Reading Strategy Inventory (MARSI) by Mokhtari and Richard (2002) and Locus of Control Scale by Shrink (2000). The participant's scores on reading comprehension exams were also used as a measure of their reading comprehension. As the results showed; first, overall metacognitive, problem solving, and support strategies had a low positive correlation with reading comprehension. Second, no significant correlation was found between global strategies and reading comprehension. Third, differences between internaliser and externaliser participants in terms of overall metacognitive and support strategies were significant. Fourth, no significant differences were found between these two groups in global and problem solving strategies. Finally, regarding the difference in internaliser and externaliser participants regarding the reading comprehension, a significant difference was found.

**Keywords:** metacognitive reading strategy, global strategies, problem solving strategies, support strategies, reading comprehension. internalisers, externalisers

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## LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL.....	English as a Foreign Language
ELOC.....	External Locus of Control
ESL.....	English as a Second Language
FL.....	Foreign Language
GLOB.....	Global Reading Strategy
ILOC.....	Internal Locus of Control
L1.....	First Language
L2.....	Second Language
LOC.....	Locus of Control
MARS.....	Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategy
MARSI.....	Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategy Scale
MRS.....	Metacognitive Reading Strategy
PROB.....	Problem Solving Reading Strategy
RC.....	Reading Comprehension
RS.....	Reading Strategy
SPSS.....	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SUP.....	Support Reading Strategy

# **Chapter 1:**

# **Introduction**

## **1.1. Introduction**

This initial chapter includes an overview of the present study to provide a background of the study. The statement of the problem, objectives of the study together with significance the study, and the theoretical framework of the current investigation are the subsequent parts of this chapter. In addition, it is in this chapter that the research questions and definitions of key terms are identified.

## **1.2. Overview**

The importance of reading in academic contexts had led to considerable research in a second language. Reading is considered as a paramount skill since students can learn to read more easily than they can acquire any other skills and reading material is the main source of input for language learning. Bernhardt (2005) claimed that reading is one of the most frequently cited purposes for learning a second language. The ability to read academic text is considered as one of the most important skill that university students need to acquire.

Various studies indicated that the ability to read and make sense of a text is essential for students' comprehension progress. The extraction and creation of meaning from the texts is the primary purpose of reading (Chastain, 1988; Sweet & Snow, 2002). With regard to importance of reading comprehension, Chastain (1988) stated that “when readers are not comprehending, they are not reading” (p. 217). According to Tierney (2005), the basic goal for ESL/EFL students is to gain an understanding

of the world and of themselves, enabling them to think about and react to what they read.

Concerning the importance of reading comprehension, it should be pointed out that if learners are able to comprehend what they are reading, they become more interested in academic achievement. Although it is generally clear that reading plays a significant role in language acquisition, reading comprehension remains a young field that merits greater research attention. 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 (Karbalaeei, 2010). Use of reading strategies is regarded as being conducive to successful reading comprehension despite the complex nature of reading process (Alderson, 1984). Research shows that the strategies that readers use when interacting with written text play a fundamental role in reading comprehension (Alsheikh, 2011; Block, 1992; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Lau & Chan, 2003; Mokhtari, 2008).

During the last decades considerable attention has been paid to understanding what proficient skilled reader do while reading. With the emergence of psycholinguistics models of second language reading, readers' use of appropriate strategies has been emphasized for reading comprehension (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001). Reading strategies include readers' conception of task, what they do to extract meaning from texts and what they do when comprehension breaks down (Block, 1986, Macaro, 2001, Macaro & Erler, 2008). Such strategies are considered to

show how readers manage their interaction with written text to make reading more effective and to improve comprehension (Singhal, 2001).

Successful readers use more reading strategies than less ones and also appear to use them more frequently (Alsheikh, 2011; Block, 1992; Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999; Lau & Chan, 2003; Mokhtari, 2008; Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2008). These reading strategies actually assist learners in reading process and give them a clear direction while reading (Aziz, et al., 2011). So far, a wide collection of reading strategies has been identified. These range from the more traditionally well-known strategies like skimming, scanning, and inferring to the more recently recognized ones such as organizing information, using linguistic knowledge of first language, activating schemata, recognizing text structure, using mental imagery, visualizing, generating questions, monitoring comprehension, evaluating strategy use, etc. (Anderson, 1992; Block, 1986; Carrell, 1989; Cohen, 1990; Pressley, 2002; Zhang, 2008).

Recent trends within the domain of reading comprehension have emphasized increasingly on the role of metacognitive awareness of readers 'cognitive and motivational processes (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Pressley, 2002; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Researchers believe that awareness and monitoring of reading process are crucial aspects of skilled reading. Such awareness and monitoring processes are often referred to in the literature as metacognition. The “metacognition” which was first introduced by Flavell in 1970s is defined as “knowledge and cognition about cognitive phenomena” (Flavell, 1979, p. 906). With



regard to importance of metacognition, Flavell (1979) stated that it affects efficiency of learning, problem solving, and critical thinking.

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 (Karbalaei, 2010). Although the theory of metacognition originated from the research on learning and memory, the success of research studies in cognitive and developmental psychology, has an undoubtedly significant effect on reading research in domain of education. Over the years, metacognition had given rise to several frameworks for comprehension and reading in research literature.

As far as it is concerned with reading, metacognition talks about knowledge of the readers' cognition about reading and the self-control mechanism they exercise when monitoring and regulating text comprehension (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Pressley, 2002; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). So, two dimensions of metacognition can be classified as metacognitive awareness and metacognitive regulation or control (Baker & Brown, 1984).

With regard to relationship of metacognitive awareness and reading strategies Alexander and Jetton (2000) state that metacognitive processing was expressed through strategies which are procedural, purposeful, effortful, willful, essential, and facilitative in nature during reading and readers should intentionally and purposefully use strategies. As a matter of fact successful reading strategy use is dependent on

whether a strategy is used metacognitively or not (Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996).

Additionally, studies show that successful reading comprehension is depended on the degree of metacognitive awareness which enable readers to use reading strategies more effectively and efficiently (Carrell, 1991; Hudson, 1998). According to Sheorey and Moktari (2001), the combination of the conscious awareness of the strategic reading process and the actual use of reading strategies distinguish the skilled readers from unskilled. So, it is essential for second language learners to be aware of their reading strategies to enhance their reading comprehension (Aziz et al., 2011).

In recent years, the concept of locus of control has been favoured by numerous studies. The locus of control concept shows a distribution on dimensions of internal-external locus of control in a way individuals accept their own responsibilities for events (Rotter, 1954). Literature reviews suggest the relationship between locus of control and academic achievement. Previous studies show that individuals with internal locus of control have a higher academic achievement than the ones with external locus of control. It seems that greater personal control leads to internals' success and as a result, learning with success improve in students a greater awareness of themselves as being the controlling agents of their environment (Chak & Leung, 2004).

With regard to the relationship between metacognition and individual differences, it should be noted that metacognition which is

concerned with awareness and control of the thinking includes not only the knowledge of strategies, but also knowledge of personal learner characteristics such as abilities, attitudes, feelings, and attributional beliefs (Schneider, Borkowski, Kurtz, & Kerwin, 1986). As self-knowledge involves aspects of both cognitive and affective knowledge, the theories of metacognition and causal attributions are linked. In this regard, Borkowsk and Krause (1985) have argued that motivational factors such as attributional beliefs should be incorporated in metacognition theory. As some researchers indicated, it appears that metacognition is related to locus of control primarily because of the element of internal control or self-regulation (Schneider, Borkowski, Kurtz, & Kerwin, 1986).

### **1.3. Statement of Problem**

Reading is regarded as one of the essential skills for learners since learners can use reading materials as a basic source of input as they learn the second or foreign language. Numerous research studies have already been done to shed light on the hidden dimensions of the reading process; however it is one of the most favoured areas in education. In this way, reading comprehension which is considered to be the ultimate goal of reading and success in this process is fundamental to the academic success of foreign language learners, has been the subjects of many studies. In spite of this assumption that sometimes reading is regarded as the most easily skills, there is much evidence suggesting that most students have difficulties in coping with understanding texts in foreign

language. In this way, an important issue recently discussed in reading research literature is the issue of reading strategy (Carrell, 1989).

The significance of reading strategies has been stressed in literature given their positive contribution to the performance of readers. Shanahan et al. (2010) noted that reading comprehension strategies help readers enhance their understanding, overcome difficulties in comprehending text, and compensate for weak or incomplete knowledge related to a text. Students who use reading strategies to cope with comprehension challenges become more motivated to read (Lapp, Fisher, & Grant, 2008).

Researchers found out that reading strategies usage not only develop students' reading comprehension level but also increase their academic success. As a result of this, it is critical for an EFL student to use reading comprehension strategies while reading academic materials for an effective learning. Indeed, finding ways to help students learn effective reading strategies is critically important, and resorting to reading metacognitive strategies makes learners more active and autonomous over their own learning (Camahalan, 2006).

As a matter of fact, when the sources upon reading comprehension are examined, it is noticed that concept such as metacognitive awareness remain at the forefront of reading comprehension. It is assumed that metacognitive awareness would affect the readers' comprehension of the text (Jacob & Paris, 1987). According to Jacob and Paris (1988), those