

**In The Name of God  
The Compassionate,  
The Merciful**

**Yazd University**  
**Faculty of Languages and Literature**  
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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**  
**Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

**The Effects of Raising Strategy Awareness on**  
**Reading Comprehension and Reading Self-efficacy of**  
**Iranian EFL Learners**

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*To My lovely Mother*

*For her endless love and support*

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the present study is to explore the impact of the cognitive reading strategy instruction on learners' reading self-efficacy and their reading achievement. In order to fulfill this purpose, from 120 participants, 90 intermediate EFL learners as an experimental group were chosen from three different educational settings namely, Yazd University, Yazd Science and Art University and Farzanegan Pre-University School and a control group of 30 learners also participated in this study. Another attempt was also made to study the effect of different educational settings on the raising awareness of EFL learners' reading strategies, their sense of self-efficacy and their reading achievement. To do so, some treatments on strategy awareness were defined and intervened. Data were collected by two piloted measuring instruments. The first one was a 20-item questionnaire which measured learners' reading self-efficacy and the other one was a reading proficiency test which measured the effectiveness of employing reading strategies on their reading performances. The results illustrated that the learners in the experimental groups showed statistically significant gains on reading achievement and sense of self-efficacy as compared with the control group. In addition, the results indicated that among the three educational settings, Yazd University and Farzanegan Pre-University had a significant effect on the reading comprehension and reading self-efficacy of the learners. The implications of the study for reading instructions among EFL learners across different educational contexts have been discussed.

Key words: Reading self-efficacy, EFL reading achievement, Strategy awareness, Educational setting.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**RSEQ:** Reading Self-Efficacy Questionnaire

**ISRT:** Intermediate Select Reading Test

**OQPT:** Oxford Quick Placement Test

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**SLTP:** Supporting Learning and Teaching Programme

**COBUILD:** Collins Birmingham University International Language Database

**SCAT:** Self-Concept of Academic Test

**SILL:** Strategy Inventory for Language Learning

**MJSES:** Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale

**CTRS:** Critical Thinking Reading Strategy

**ETR:** Experience-Text-Relationship

**TOEFL (PBT):** Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (Paper-Based Test)

**TOEFL (IBT):** Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (Internet-Based Test)

**RSQ:** Reading Strategies Questionnaire

**IELTS:** International English Language Testing System

**GCRCT:** Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test

**BALL:** Beliefs about Language Learning

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

## **1.1 Preliminaries**

Reading is considered as one of the most important skills for second language learners to master in academic contexts (Grabe, 1991). Reading is an active and interactive cognitive process in which readers guess, predict and find information given in the written form. Cognitive reading strategy refers to those mental activities which lead language learners into using their language and world knowledge in order to accomplish a task (Oxford, 1990b). In other words, cognitive strategy entails conscious ways of handling the target language and also involves interacting with the text, manipulating the text mentally, physically or applying a specific technique to access information from the text. Through making cognitive connections and using cognitive strategies, readers are able to fill in the meaning gaps and comprehend the text. Moreover, cognitive reading strategy is influenced by linguistic and cognitive, social and cultural, affective and motivational factors (Lu, 1989; Xu ,1997, 1998).

Over the last 15 years, some affective factors were the focus of research such as one's attitude and motivation toward reading, and one's reading self-efficacy along with the cognitive skills (Guthrie, Perncevich, Tonks & Wigfield, 2004). These factors are very essential in determining whether the learners are able to accomplish the task. The learners' efficacy beliefs about their success in reading comprehension would impact their comprehension levels (Peyman, 2008).

Self-efficacy was considered as one of the fundamental factors in comprehending a text. According to Pajares (2000), self-efficacy is the learners' judgments of their academic competence, which has a great effect on their achievement and performance. In an educational setting, this sense of efficacy is

played a fundamental role in all areas of language learning particularly in a reading skill (Shellberg, 2009).

Some studies (e.g., Iravani & Atighia-ee, 2013; Khosravi, 2000; Motallebzadeh & Mamdoohi, 2011; Salataci & Akyel, 2002) highlighted the positive impact of reading strategy instruction on both reading comprehension of learners and also on their awareness of reading strategy use. Moreover, some other studies (Gahungu, 2007; Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2011; Magogwe & Oliver, 2007; Naseri & Zaferanieh, 2012) focused on the positive significant correlation between reading self-efficacy and reading strategy use, and also illustrated that those high self-efficacious learners are more successful in using reading strategies than low self-efficacious ones.

However, Wang (2004) declared that a few studies were done on the area of self-efficacy and strategy use. As far as the review of related literature is concerned, so many studies (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000; Staw, 1976) have been conducted on the areas of motivation (i.e. intrinsic and extrinsic), but a limited amount of research has examined the efficacy belief of learners in Iranian context specifically in Pre-University. However there is a great focus on the pivotal effect of reading strategy use on the better reading performances, the instructions of reading strategies were less emphasized by Iranian educational system (Fotovatian & Shokrpour, 2007).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Comprehension and getting meaning through the text are one of the basic and important components of reading. As the role of reading comprehension is outlined,

most of the students who enter the higher education faced problems in catching up with comprehending the given reading texts. In other words, one of the most serious problems in education is the problem of reading (Dreyer & Nel, 2003), and many students' scores are unsatisfied because of their misinterpretation of the texts (Cakir, 2008).

The learners' level of reading strategy knowledge, their lack of cognitive strategy use and also their sense of interest, motivation and attitude about their abilities to understand the text are the problems they would face in comprehending the written texts. It is supposed by many instructors that low achievement of EFL learners is because of their low sense of general aptitude and also inadequate instruction of reading strategies. As Pajares (2000) asserts the beliefs the learners possess about their abilities and about the outcome of their efforts would particularly impact their accomplishment of activities.

Unfortunately, few intervention programs instruct explicitly cognitive reading strategy to develop reading comprehension. Furthermore, the effect of the cognitive reading strategy instruction on reading self-efficacy has not been fully examined especially among different educational settings in Iranian English learners. However, some studies have been conducted in other countries on these cases.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

The present study is intended to investigate the effect of cognitive reading strategy instruction on reading achievement and reading self-efficacy of intermediate EFL learners in three various educational settings namely, Yazd University, Pre-



University and Yazd Science and Art University, and further attempt is also made to study the effect of three different educational settings on the raising awareness of EFL learners' cognitive reading strategies, their sense of self-efficacy and their reading achievement. To do so, some treatments on strategy awareness were defined and intervened. More specifically, the following questions were addressed.

#### **1.4 Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The present study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. Does EFL reading instruction have any effect on intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension?
2. Does EFL reading instruction have any effect on intermediate EFL learners' reading self-efficacy?
3. Do three educational settings have any significant impact on learners' reading self-efficacy and their reading achievement?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Farhady, Jafarpour, and Birjandi (1994) highlighted the importance of reading for most language learners, especially for EFL learners. Reading in a foreign language is a relatively useful way to improve the command on the target language. Accordingly, reading strategies are of great interest in the field of reading research. Recently an Iranian EFL context, especially the English course of all High School and Pre-University, has outlined the major importance of reading comprehension. In learning

a reading skill, the role of learners' belief in their capabilities is crucial, as this belief is the foundation of all other academic areas.

This sense of efficacy belief, having knowledge of cognitive reading strategies and also making a better use of them play important roles in all areas of education. Not only reading strategy use has a beneficial effect on learners' improvement in the area of reading skill and reading efficacy belief but also the context of settings in which learners learn these reading strategies would have beneficial effect on their language learning strategy and their affective factors. In the related literature the author examines cognitive strategies which are considered as better approaches in the EFL classroom.

From a pedagogical perspective, especially in an EFL context, instructors would be more aware of the importance of drawing the attention of learners to cognitive reading strategies by making them more salient and taking into account learners' beliefs about their abilities in comprehending a reading text which, in turn, can help the instructors and instructional designers in their development and implementation of learning materials, and also instructors tried hard to enhance learners' efficacy beliefs in their capabilities in a reading skill.

## **1.6 Definition of the Key Terms**

The following terms that might be reiterated through the present study need to be defined.

**Self-Efficacy (SE).** Refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize the courses of action in order to be successful in managing the situations (Bandura, 1994).

**Reading Self-Efficacy (RSE).** Refers to individuals' sense of efficacy and belief in their ability in terms of reading (McMurray, 2006).

**Cognitive Reading Strategies (CRS).** Refers to mental procedures that language learners use in order to employ their world knowledge for accomplishing a reading text and also for understanding what is being read (Oxford, 1990b).

## **1.7 Outline of the Study**

The present thesis is organized as follows:

Chapter One: section 1.1 concerned with a preliminary part of the study, followed by section 1.2 which dealt with the problem under the study, the purpose of the study was presented in section 1.3, and section 1.4 dealt with the research questions and hypotheses, and the significance of the study and the definitions of some key words were proposed in sections 1.5 and 1.6, respectively.

Chapter Two: The Literature Review begins with the definition of the concept of reading strategy, reading comprehension and also the importance of comprehending and employing cognitive reading strategies as well as a review of the related literature in section 2.1. Section 2.2 begins with the definition of self-efficacy, its social cognitive theory, and also some ways of cultivating efficacy beliefs. Furthermore, the role of efficacy beliefs in the academic domain and in a reading skill, the empirical studies on the area of self-efficacy and reading achievement, and

also on the area of reading strategy use and reading development are presented in this section. Section 2.3 deals with the educational contexts in the language learning. This chapter ends with the impetus to the present study in section 2.4.

Chapter Three: regarding the methodology part, section 3.1 provides some information about the participants of the current study, followed by the instruments employed in the process of data collection in section 3.2. The procedure of the study is presented in section 3.3. The last section 3.4 deals with the data analysis method.

Chapter Four: section 4.1 concerns with the reliability of the two instruments used in the present study. Sections 4.2 and 4.3 mainly focus on the results obtained in the pretest and posttest in terms of reading achievement and reading self-efficacy and also the results and findings of the analyses were discussed and interpreted. Summary of all these analyses are presented in section 4.4.

Chapter Five: sections 5.1 and 5.2 concern with the obtained results of the study, discuss the conclusion, and also compare and contrast these current findings with the previous ones. Finally, implications, limitations of the study, and also some suggestions for further research are presented in sections 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5, respectively.