

In the name of God



Razi University

**Faculty of Literature & Humanities
Department of English Language & Literature**

M.A. Thesis

**TEFL MA students' reading strategies use and awareness for reading
academic research articles in English.**

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Abstract

This study explored reading strategy use of TEFL MA students when they read academic research articles in English. The purpose of this study was to investigate how this group of readers typically approaches reading academic research articles related to their field of study, and also what they do in reading such research articles. The aim of the present study was bilateral. First, the researcher tries to identify the main types of reading strategies such MA students use, how they use those strategies, and at what stages of reading they use them through interviews and thinking-alouds protocol. The results suggest that the students participated in this study used the three major strategies of cognitive, metacognitive, and compensatory obviously at different stages of reading an academic research article. The stages the readers went through were pre-readings, while-readings, and post-readings. Second, twenty TEFL MA students participated to fill out a Survey of Reading Strategy (SORS), used to measure the usage of the three reading strategies of cognitive, metacognitive, and compensatory. The results indicated that the TEFL MA students reported using such reading strategies with high frequency for reading academic research articles.

Keywords: Reading, reading strategies, cognitive reading strategies, metacognitive reading strategies, compensatory reading strategies, and Survey of Reading Strategy (SORS).

چکیده

همان طور که همه می دانیم برای فهمیدن و به کار بستن مقالات علمی، تحقیقی، از چندین استراتژی شناختی و فرا شناختی برای به خاطر آوردن و یاد سپاری اطلاعات جدید در مقالات مختلف استفاده می کنیم. ماهمچنین می بایستی در یافتن این که از چه رویکردهایی و نیز اینکه چه روش هایی را موثر تر می یابیم کوشا باشیم. حال مساله این جاست که، چگونه افراد، در این مورد دانشجویان دوره کارشناسی ارشد رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی، در فهمیدن و کد گشایی کردن مقالات داده شده توسط اساتید خود تلاش می کنند. به عبارت دیگر (چگونه این دانشجویان پروژه های تحقیقی را می خوانند؟) این نکته اصلی ترین نکته ی قابل توجه در این تحقیق می باشد. فهمیدن و تبیین این مسئله که دانش جویان مقطع کارشناسی ارشد در رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی چگونه لُپ مطالب و مباحث مقالات داده شده توسط اساتید خود را مورد مطالعه قرار می دهند تا در کلاس های خود به بحث و گفتگو در مورد مقالات ذکر شده بپردازند می باشد. توانایی درک مقالات علمی مهارتی مهم برای هر دوی دانشجویان و اساتید این رشته تلقی می شود. هدف این تحقیق، اول یافتن نوع استراتژی هایی است که برای خواندن يك مقاله به کار می روند (استراتژی هایی مانند راهبردهای شناختی فرا شناختی و جبرانی). دومین هدف این تحقیق علاوه بر نوع استراتژی های خواندن مقالات بررسی و تعیین میزان به کار برده شدن آنها می باشد.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Reading and reading strategies

Human beings communicate in different ways. Reading is one of the main and important ways through which men exchange information, share experience and at the long run learn from each other. When reading is discussed in academic circles, it turns into an acute and inevitable task almost for all academic people as if they know about its significant role.

Reading is a door for other language skills and it can be defined as the process in which a person receives and interprets a message from printed materials. Goodman (1995) defines reading as the receptive process of written communication. However, much more vital details, which are hidden in the reading process, have to be explained in such a definition. On the other hand, Grabe (1991) states (in AlMajdi et al, 2009) that reading is not merely a receptive process of picking up information from the page in a verbatim manner but it is a selective process which is characterized as an active process of comprehending. According to Grabe, effective reading is purposeful, rapid, flexible, gradually developing and comprehending.

One important aspect of reading process deals with reading strategies. In order to read different texts one must apply several reading strategies to capture the contents' meanings. Reading is for reconstructing meaning of the texts, and in order to reconstruct the meanings, strategies are needed to facilitate comprehension. Reading strategies facilitate remembering and retrieving information while reading various texts. The aim of *learning strategies* is to develop communicative competence (Oxford, 1990). It might be assumed that reading strategies which are included in the learning strategies taxonomies can develop communicative competence.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Over the past few decades, the increasing interest in teaching and learning reading and reading strategies in English as a second or foreign language contexts (i.e., ESL/EFL) has become an international trend. There are many researchers interested in understanding what skilled readers typically do while they read and in identifying the types of strategies they use, how they use those strategies, and under what conditions they use them (Block, 1992; Brantmeier, 2000, 2002; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996; Kern, 1989; Lee, 2007; Wu, 2005; Zhang, 2001; Zhicheng, 1992). However, there are still a limited number of researches identifying MA TEFL students' use of reading strategies in Iranian universities. In the current situation, in which the importance of academic reading proficiency is really critical for such students to achieve their academic success, it is necessary to do research about these students' use of reading strategies in reading academic research articles.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how MA TEFL students read academic research articles. Since MA students have classroom discussions, seminars, lectures and presentations, they have to read specific research articles relevant to their field of studies. This study is interested in finding out what this group of readers typically do while they read academic research articles. The researcher tries to identify the main types of reading strategies MA students use, how they use those strategies, and at what stages they use them. In addition, the researcher will also investigate the extent to which research participants use reading strategies.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What reading strategies do MA TEFL students apply for reading an academic research article?
2. At what stage in the reading process do the students employ these strategies?
3. To what extent do MA TEFL students use cognitive, metacognitive, and compensatory reading strategies?

1.5 Significance of the study

There are significant studies conducted on strategies in reading for native English speakers, however; there are smaller numbers of studies focusing on reading strategies for non-native English readers. Research on reading strategy use has been reported in L1 and L2 contexts, but research on these issues in the Iranian EFL context, particularly at MA level, has not been sufficiently performed in spite of the need. The current trend of MA TEFL students' reading strategies requires more research to perceive the effective reading strategies. Thus, this study was designed to shed light on those issues and provide profiles of MA TEFL students' reading strategy use.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1 Reading

Richards and Schmidt (2003, p. 443) have defined reading as perceiving a written text in order to understand its contents. This can be done silently. The understanding that results is called reading comprehension. They distinguish different types of reading comprehension. Four kinds of them are listed below:

A. *literal comprehension*: reading to understand, remember, or recall the information explicitly from the text.

B. *inferential comprehension*: reading in order to find information which is not explicitly stated in a text, here the reader's experience and intuition is required.

C. *critical or evaluative comprehension*: reading for comparing information in a text with readers own knowledge and values.

D. *appreciative comprehension*: reading to gain an emotional or other kind of valued response from passage.

To read critically, the reader should first be able to get what is explicitly there in the text (*literal comprehension*) and also be able to read between the lines, before they can criticize and evaluate the reading (*critical or evaluative comprehension*), so all of the above reading comprehension could play a role in the process of reading comprehension.

1.6.2 Reading strategies

Reading strategies are defined as ways of accessing the meaning of texts, which are employed flexibly and selectively in the course of reading (Richards and Schmidt, 2003, p 444). Garner defines reading strategies as an action or series of actions employed in order to construct meaning (1987). Oxford and Crookall (1989) define strategies as learning techniques, behaviors, problem-solving or study skills which make learning more effective and efficient.

Anderson (2003a) claims, to achieve success, readers should take the active role in reading via using different strategies and they should learn how to use a range of reading strategies that serve their purposes. In the Oxford model, strategies can be classified into two broad categories: (1) direct strategies, which can be further divided into memory strategies,

cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies; and (2) indirect strategies, which include metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

1.6.3 Cognitive strategies

In Oxford's (1990) Classification of Language Learning Strategies, cognitive strategies are defined as the mental strategies learners use to make sense of their learning. In O'Malley's (1985) Classification of Language Learning Strategies, cognitive strategies are more limited to specific learning tasks and they involve more direct manipulation of the learning material itself. Repetition, resourcing, translation, grouping, note taking, deduction, recombination, imagery, auditory representation, key word, contextualization, elaboration, transfer, and inferencing are among the most important cognitive strategies.

1.6.4 Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies are used to plan learning, think about the learning process as it is taking place, monitor of one's production or comprehension, and evaluate learning after an activity is completed. Some of the main metacognitive strategies are advance organizers, directed attention, selective attention in reading, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, delayed production, self-evaluation (Richards and Schmidt, 2003, p 329).

1.7 Chapter summary

This study consists of five chapters. This chapter presented an overview of the study. In chapter 2 a review of literature relating to reading and as well as the role of reading strategies in reading are provided. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology using a triangulation mixed methods design. Results of the quantitative and qualitative research designs are presented in chapter 4. Finally, discussion and conclusions of the study, including implications and recommendations for further studies, are addressed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2

Review of the literature

For the purposes of organization, the present review of related literature is presented in the following sections: first, definitions of reading and reading comprehension are elaborated. Second, contemporary theories of reading comprehension models are briefly summarized and discussed. Then, language learning and reading strategies categories are explained. After that, the role of reading strategies instruction along with related researches on reading strategies findings are presented and discussed.

2.1 Definitions of reading

Reading can be considered as a receptive skill but by no means might it be considered as a decoding skill as it was in the past. Chastain (1988) claims this terminology was used because of the idea of considering language as a code which one must decipher to arrive at the meaning. Definitions of reading have changed over time along with changes in different theoretical views. Like language acquisition, reading was strongly impacted by behaviorism until the 1950s (Thorndike, 1922). Reading was considered a conditioned behavior. After the domination of behaviorism faded, the innatist theory influenced the concept and instruction of reading (Alexander & Fox, 2004). The innatist theory was based on cognitive psychology. According to Goodman (1967, p. 127), reading is "a psycholinguistic guessing game" which requires interactions with thought and language". This idea was reshaped by the emergence of constructivism as no longer can we find anyone who believes in the dichotomy of being passive or active with respect to language skills. In the process of comprehension (recreating meaning) readers must activate both their linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge, so this is the feature of being actually active. The interactive model of reading was emphasized (Eskey, 2005) in this trend (the interactive model will be discussed in what follows in this chapter) and scholars stressed reading for constructing meanings from reading materials.