



## The Impact of Reading Comprehension Strategies on the Iranian Language Teaching Sophomores' Reading Comprehension Ability

Milad Chegini<sup>1</sup>

1. MA Alumnus of South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

### Abstract

This study investigates the impact of three sorts of reading comprehension strategies on the Iranian language teaching sophomores' reading comprehension ability. In phase one the participants were divided into three groups. Each group was taught differently according to each one of the strategies. Afterwards, they were given a final test. The results were analyzed through the one way ANOVA along with the post hoc analysis. According to the observed F it was unraveled that reflective strategies helped the subjects in reading comprehension more than the other two. In phase two the subjects were divided into six subgroups-three 30 male groups and three 30 female groups. Comprehension was assessed by reading comprehension questions (10 items) and a twenty-item M/C test for each test. The results unraveled that reflective reading strategies was the most effective in this respect. On the other hand, it was also proved that female learners did a better job than the male ones while using the reflective strategies. Accordingly, the educational practitioners and teachers are considerably recommended to take this issue into consideration which may count as the ultimate objective of EFL reading instruction.

**Key words:** “Analysis of Variance”, “M/C Test”, “Post Hoc Analyses”, “Sophomore”.



## Introduction

Richards (2002) postulates that reading receives a special focus in many second or foreign language teaching situations. There are a number of reasons for this issue. First, many foreign language students often have reading as one of their most important goals. They want to be able to read for information and pleasure, for their career, and for study purposes. In fact, in most EFL situations, the ability to read in a foreign language is all that students ever want to acquire. Second, written texts serve various pedagogical purposes. Extensive exposure to linguistically comprehensible written texts can enhance the process of language acquisition. Good reading texts also provide to introduce new topics, to stimulate discussion. Reading, then, is a skill which is highly valued by students and teachers alike (p.45).

## Literature review

A central issue in the theory of language acquisition is how learners' experience of a target language contributes to their language learning. All the strategic techniques that learners are exposed to in reading passages and from which they learn are called reading strategies. Reading strategies are apparently a necessary condition for both first and second foreign language reading comprehension, so considerable attention has been paid to the role of reading strategies in second or foreign language learning (e.g. Carrol, 1999; Chaudron, 1983; Ellis, 1981, 1995; Hatch, 1999). Reading strategies are usually divided into the traditional, reflective, and socioaffective ones. These strategies are believed to have various effects on the learners overall reading comprehension. On the other hand, educational practitioners, i.e. instructors and teachers are expected to differentiate the male and female's amount of reading comprehension when they are exposed to the three aforementioned reading strategies. In order to gain access to more or less convincing findings to remove the pertinent ambiguities in this respect the following research hypotheses are suggested.

1. There is significant difference between the amount of reading comprehension of the second/foreign language learners when they are exposed to the traditional, reflective, and socioaffective strategies of reading comprehension.
2. There is no interaction between sex and reading comprehension strategies.

## Method

This study, conducted in September 2022 involved 280 Iranian university students, sophomores. Among them, 100 sophomores who participated in pilot studies were excluded from the main study. All were EFL students enrolled in the Islamic Azad University (South Tehran Branch). On the basis of their scores on the nationwide TEOFL test those who got more than fifty percent of the scores were selected as the subjects of this study, 180 male and female students. A levene's test was also conducted and their homogeneity was confirmed. This study involved two phases. In the first phase the 180 participants were categorized into three groups. Group A was assigned to get the traditional strategies of reading comprehension. Group B was assigned to get the reflective strategies of reading comprehension and group C was assigned to get the socioaffective strategies of reading comprehension. An ANOVA test was determined to compare the difference among the means. In phase two, the participants were divided into six sub-groups-three 30 male groups and three 30 female groups. A factorial design employing a 2x3 table was assigned to illuminate the interaction between sex and methods. For the first phase the following instruments were employed.

1. TOEFL Reading Test (Barron's, 1989). 2. Six intermediate piloted reading passages selected from Fluency in English and Developing Skills (Alexander; 1967a) with the level of difficulty determined through the Fog index model. For the second phase the hereunder instruments were utilized.

1. Six intermediate piloted reading passages selected from Fluency in English and Developing Skills (Alexander; 1967b) with the level of difficulty determined through the Fog index model. As a preliminary step, two pilot



studies were conducted 4 weeks before the main study. The purpose of the first pilot study was to choose 6 out of 10 passages that were appropriate in difficulty and content for use in the main study. After constructing the M/C comprehension questions test on the 6 reading passages thus chosen, it was pilot tested in order to identify and modify items that were too easy or too difficult. For instance, items that almost all the subjects had answered correctly or incorrectly were revised to make them more discriminating. The main study was administered in two separate phases. In phase one 180 participants were divided into three 60 male and female subject groups (A, B, and C). Each group was supposed to have six classes during regular, 50-minute English class sessions. Group A was taught the six piloted passages through traditional strategies. Likewise, group B and C were taught the six piloted passages through the reflective and the socioaffective strategies, respectively. Ultimately, all the subjects were given a final test involving a reading comprehension passage followed reading comprehension questions (10 items) and 20 multiple-choice questions. In phase two the same 180 subjects took part, but this time they were divided into six subgroups-three 30 female and three 30 male subjects. In this phase other different piloted passages with the same level of difficulty-six passages for each vertical groups-were assigned. These subjects had also six classes during regular, 50-minute English class sessions. Group A was taught the six piloted passages through traditional strategies. Likewise, group B and C were taught the six piloted passages through the reflective and the socioaffective strategies, respectively. Ultimately, all the subjects were given a final test involving a reading comprehension passage followed reading comprehension questions (10 items) and 20 multiple-choice questions.

### Results Discussion

The data obtained through the procedure described above were analyzed by the analysis of variance (ANOVA). LSD tests were also used in post hoc analyses to examine which of the mean differences among the three subject groups were statistically significant. Statistically, it was unraveled that the participants who availed themselves of the reflective strategies of reading comprehension did a better job on the test and excelled the other two. The results acquired through the procedure described above in phase two were analyzed by the two-way ANOVA (2x3 Factorial Design) on the total comprehension scores. The F-observed value for the interaction between the sex of the subjects and the amount of reading comprehension of the subjects on the post-test revealed that the reflective strategies used in reading comprehension had significant effect on the performance of the female subjects only. The two other reading strategies decreased the female subjects' performance, while the reflective strategies significantly increased their overall performance. However, the three reading strategies were of almost equal importance for the male subjects. Thus, the null-hypothesis as no significant interaction between the gender of the subjects and the reading strategies on their performance on the post-test was rejected, and it could be claimed that there was a significant interaction between the two variables. The results of the post hoc LSD tests on the differences among the six groups' means indicated that the reflective strategies bound group did a better job than the other two groups, whereas the female subjects belonging to the reflective strategies bound sub-group outperformed the other subgroups. The findings of this research were consistent with Ahmadi and Pourhossein's (2012) study which indicated that reading strategies have a significant positive impact on the English reading comprehension proficiency since they assist learners in reading process.





## Conclusions

The major findings of the present study can be summarized as follows:

1. Learners perceive their comprehension to be higher when they receive reflective reading strategies than when they receive the traditional or socioaffective reading strategies.
2. Socioaffective strategies are more effective than the traditional ones in the overall reading comprehension of all the subjects disregarding the sex of the subjects.
3. Reflective strategies significantly enhance the reading comprehension of learners.
4. Female subjects benefit more than male subjects when they are exposed to the reflective strategies of reading comprehension.
5. The sex of the learners and the type of reading strategies enjoy positive interaction.

Accordingly the findings of the present study suggest that the application of reflective strategies enhances the reading comprehension. Although socioaffective strategies are more effective than the traditional ones but they are both less productive than the reflective strategies.

This study also unravels that female readers are cognitively and metacognitively different from male readers and females are more sensitive and adoptive to the reflective activities than the males. This lack of equality should also take into consideration in educational arenas. On the other hand, it is widely accepted that assessment is an essential part of the educational system. In recent years, how-ever, its importance has increased; not only is there more assessment in schools, but it is also of more significance for pupils and educational system as a whole. Because of this, it is crucially important that assessment is considered in terms of its fairness for all –males and females -as a measure of achievement. Put simply, the problem of equality and equity among male and female learners should also be considered by test developers.



## References

- [1] Alexander, L. G. (1967a). *Developing skills*. Essex, England: Longman.
- [2] Alexander, L. G. (1967b). *Fluency in English*. Essex, England: Longman.
- [3] Ahmadi, M. R., & Pourhossein, A. G. (2012). Reciprocal teaching strategies and their impacts on English reading comprehension. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(10), 2053-2060.
- [4] Carrol, S. E. (1999). Putting input in its proper place. *Second Language Research*, 15, 337- 388.
- [5] Chaudron, C. (1983). *Say it again Sam*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- [6] Ellis, R. (1981) The role of input in language acquisition: Some implications for second language teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, 2, 70-80
- [7] Hatch, E. (1999). *Simplified input and second language acquisition*. New York: Newbury House.
- [8] Krashen, S. (1997). The compensation hypothesis: Recent evidence. *English Teachers' Journal*, 51, 17-29
- [9] Long, M. (1985). To simplify or not simplify: A look at intake. *Studies in Second Language Acquisitions*, 15, 333-355.
- [10] Richards, Jack, C. (2002). *Methodology in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.