

## **The Relationship between Two Different Text Types and Reading Comprehension Strategy Use of Advanced EFL Learners**

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### **Abstract**

Reading is a basic and complementary skill in language learning. Second language students need to learn how to read for communication and to read greater quantities of authentic materials. The present study investigated the effect of two kinds of texts (expository and narrative) on reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. Participants in this study were consisted of 80 students studying English in Kish Air English institute at advanced level in Sirjan as an EFL context. They received two types of texts categorized into narrative, expository. A general English proficiency test, cognitive and metacognitive questionnaire were administered to them. Two classes were randomly selected as a control and experimental group in this study. To comprehend every kind of written texts; experimental group applied some specific strategies. After training and practicing sessions, the researcher distributed metacognitive reading questionnaire to both groups. To analyze the result, Levene's test and descriptive statistics were used. The result showed that some cognitive and metacognitive strategies were used more frequently than others in the experimental and control group.

**Key words:** Reading Comprehension, Narrative and Expository Contexts, Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies

### **1. Introduction**

In Reading comprehension, readers get information from written texts and need to decode these data into meaningful messages so that they can understand the reading materials and achieve the purposes of reading. According to Wade, S. E., Trathen, W. (1990) reading comprehension contains four key concepts: transmission translation, interaction, and transaction. It is a psycholinguistic process which starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs. There is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought (Carrell, 2000). Existing research has shown that professional readers make choices as to what to read. When readers encounter comprehension problems, they use strategies to overcome their difficulties. Different learners seem to approach reading tasks in different ways and some of these ways appear to lead to better comprehension. It has been noted that the paths to success are numerous and that some routes seldom lead to success. Pressley et al. (1998) expressed that students can increase their comprehension if they utilize one of the strategies like

summarization or description. The current study is mainly composed to answer this question whether there are any differences in the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategy use between using two different reading text types?

## 2. Review of the related literature

Metacognitive knowledge is all the mental processes involved in different types of learning. Anderson (2002) defines metacognition as "thinking about thinking and the use of metacognitive strategies can lead to better understanding. Furthermore, learning and controlling cognitive and metacognitive processes may be one of the most important strategies all teachers can use them and help second language learners development. Metacognition has two basic aspects: the first one is knowledge about cognition and the second one is self-directed thinking. Self-directed thinking has been controlled by planning, regulation and evaluation activities (Ellis, 2005). Metacognition challenges active monitoring and the resulted regulation and complicated plan of cognitive processes to achieve to cognitive aims. According to Flavell (1971), metacognitive strategies are mental processing which can be used to achieve cognitive tasks. In other words, learners are able to be aware of their own mental processes. Therefore, concerning this point of view, different kinds of learning tasks cause difficulty and learners can remember information better or solving different types of problems can be constructive. Metacognitive knowledge is affected the types of learning strategies learners select (Pressley, M., 1995). Anderson (2002) has proposed five main components for metacognition. They can be classified: 1) preparing and planning for learning, 2) selecting and using learning strategies, 3) monitoring strategy use, 4) orchestrating various strategies, and 5) evaluating strategy use and learning. By *preparation and planning* in relation to their learning goal, learners think about what their goals are and how they can accomplish them. Obvious goals will be helpful for students to see their own progress. Actually, they become consciously aware of their own progress; therefore, the students' motivation for learning would be increased.

The next important element of metacognition is monitoring strategy use. Learners should be explicitly taught that they need to check periodically whether or not the strategies are being used as intended once they have selected to use the specific strategies. For example, when reading a text, they can use the meaning of whole context to guess the meaning of some unknown vocabulary parts. In order to control the use of this kind of strategy, the learners should pause and check to see if the meaning they guessed makes sense in the reading and if not, go back and modify or change some strategies. At this stage, the whole cycle of planning, selecting, using, monitoring and matching of strategies is evaluated (Braun, C. 1985). According to Anderson (2002), more than one metacognitive process along with cognitive ones may be working during a learning task. This article focuses on the effect of two different kinds of text, the ability to monitor thinking (metacognitive monitoring, or comprehension monitoring) and to modify one's thoughts and thinking strategies (metacognitive control).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

Participants in this study were consisted of 80 students were chosen from 140 English students learning English in Iran mehr language institutes, Tehran branch in advanced level in Iranian EFL context. Then, they were divided randomly into two groups, experimental group and control group, and 40 subjects in each one. Their age range is between 19 and 31. One of the classes was randomly selected as the control group and expository texts were practiced and

another class as experimental group that narrative texts were practiced. In order to determine the level of proficiency of the subjects and homogenize them Levene's test was used.

### **3.2. Instruments**

Taking the hypotheses of this study into account, the following instruments were implemented:

*Nelson proficiency test:* The Nelson proficiency test was used to assess the subjects' level of proficiency in English. The researcher did a pilot test with 8 students with the same level and similar characteristics to those of the subjects of this study. An item analysis was done to calculate the level of difficulty of all items. Then, based on the results of this analysis, some items were modified, deleted, or replaced by some new ones.

*Expository and Narrative reading contexts:* There are two types of reading texts: Expository and Narrative. In fact, texts that describe an object or give an instruction are expository, those that tell a story or recount an incident are narrative texts. Another factor to consider is that no two students learn in the same manner. In order to expose our students to many different learning strategies, different contexts should be presented for them. In other words, to understand each part, they are supposed to challenge some special strategies for reading comprehension.

*Cognitive and Metacognitive questionnaire:* The structured questionnaire attempted to determine learners' reading comprehension strategies and their learning styles in two different kinds of text types (Expository and Narrative). The strategy survey contained 27 statements, each rated with Likert scale. Accordingly, those 24 questions were designed to include metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and three phases of reading comprehension. The questionnaire was adapted from another study and some adjustment was made according to the specific needs. The questions in 80 valid samples were scored on a five-point Likert scale with 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'neutral', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree' accordingly. Actually, different strategies used generally by advanced students were investigated, and the strategies were divided into two parts. Statements 1 to 16 were explored for metacognitive strategies, which consisted (pre-reading planning strategies, while-reading monitoring strategies, and post-reading evaluation strategies). Statements 17 to 27 were designed to evaluate students' cognitive strategies (cognitive formal practicing strategies, bottom-up strategies and top-down strategies). In the metacognitive processing category, statements demonstrated how the readers in two groups develop a series of conscious steps to perform a different reading tasks in expository and narrative texts. In the cognitive processing category, the strategies demonstrated how a reader manipulates information to aid comprehension.

### **3.3. Reliability and validity of the instruments**

In order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, researcher used coefficient Alpha reliability analysis to compute the reliability. According to KR-21 formulae, the reliability was .72, which is highly significant. However, some of the items were modified after the results of the tests were analyzed. In order to determine the validity of the tools utilized in the study, the researcher asked two teachers teaching in institutes to express their comments and suggestions with regard to the questionnaire which had been considered as the main instruments of this study.

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

Both qualitative and quantitative data analyses were performed. In order to establish the homogeneity of the two groups in terms of vocabulary knowledge an independent-samples Levene's statistics was conducted to examine the difference among the performance of the two groups on the reading test before the experiment. The result indicated that there was not any significant difference (Sig. (51) = 1.00  $a < .05$ ) between the mean scores of the subjects in the control group with the

participants in the experimental group. Besides, the qualitative method was also added in this study to prove the role of using narrative and expository texts among Iranian EFL learners. Metacognitive and cognitive questionnaire was used to evaluate cognitive and metacognitive strategies. This questionnaire was arranged according to "Likert-scaled" which had an ordinal scale of one to five was used. The ordinal scores were transformed into intervalvariable category. A high interval score indicated frequent use the specific strategy or increased perception of difficulty. The results are presented in the following tables.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

**Table 1. Test of Homogeneity of Variances.**

Leven Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.966	3	86	.413

As table 1 indicates, the homogeneity of variances of different groups was evaluated before giving narrative and expository reading text types. To analyze this hypothesis, the researcher used "Levene" statistic. According to Levene statistic, if the significant is more than 0.05, the homogeneity of variances will be accepted. Therefore, according to table 1, the significance = .413 > 0.05. Therefore, the homogeneity of variances in two groups was accepted as well.

**Table 2. Test of Homogeneity of Variances**

Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.451	3	86	.806

To prove the homogeneity of variances after taking exam in both groups the Leven's statistic was used. As the table showed the significance = .806 > 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis of homogeneity between groups is accepted and proved.

It is stated that previewing the questions before the text was helpful to the learner's comprehension. From statement 1 to 3, we can conclude that least students in experimental group could clarify the objectives of reading task (1.58) and think about the reading topic (2.60) and searching for the clue words and phrases that might help figure out what text structure requested (3.11). On the other hand, control group could think about the reading topic (M=4.05) and searching for the clue words and phrases that might help figure out what text structure requested (M=3.88) rather than clarify the objectives and propose strategies (M=2.13). Therefore, the researcher conclude that the control group prefer to use more reading planning strategies than experimental group. However, for learners, their lack of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary would definitely affect their reading comprehension, and thus reduced their confidence (Yang, 2006). Weinstein (2005) suggested teachers list the new vocabulary on the board and offered the pictures to help the students

predict the listing questions. Nevertheless, Chang and Read (2006) considered that pre-teaching vocabulary before listening might negatively influenced the student's strategy using because the students might focus on clues and not pay attention to understand the whole content.

**Table 3. Reading Planning Strategies for experimental and control group.**

<b>Planning Strategies (Metacognitive strategies)</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
1--Before reading, I see lots of graphics and charts. I'll need to use those to help me understand what I'm reading.	E	1.58	0.82
	C	2.13	1.26
2-Before reading, I already know something about this topic.	E	2.60	2.45
	C	4.05	0.68
3-Before reading, I think about this question are there any clue words and phrases that might help figure out what text structure I'm reading?	E	3.11	3.03
	C	3.88	0.73

While reading, the experimental group checked what part of content they don't understand (M=3.43). But control group checked what part of the texts they don't understand more for this strategy (M=3.90). For strategy No.5 the experimental group reread this part again and looked for specific information less (M=2.18) than control group (M=2.45). It is shown that the experimental group showed low interests if they were willing to check the parts they didn't understand. Most of the students in experimental group are aware of their inattention and correct it while reading; however least students in control group do such this task. While reading, the students in control group double check again for their answers more (3.25) than experimental group (2.44). While reading the experimental group asked themselves how the graphic on this page help does me understand the text less (1.77) than control group did (3.65). The students in control group use the dictionary since they didn't understand some words more (3.24) than the students in experimental group (1.53). While reading, the subjects in experimental group ask themselves more about the gist of the whole text (2.22) than control group (1.76) that what was this page about.

As the statement 1 shows the mean of subjects in experimental group who reflects on their problems, such as the key words that they don't understand is (M=2.90), however the mean of subjects in control group is (3.30). After reading, students in experimental group evaluated how much they could understand with the mean score of (M=2.87) but control group with the mean score of (M=2.80). For strategy No.3 the subjects in experimental group (M=2.74) ask themselves how well did they read and understand more than control group (M=2.63). After reading, the students in experimental group (M=2.85) ask themselves what strategies worked well for me? What strategies

did not work for me? Less than control group (3.12). For strategy N0.5 the subjects in experimental group ask themselves less than control group about what should they do next time? As tables showed here the mean score of students in control group is (M=3.31) but the mean score of subjects in experimental group is (M=1.78). For the last strategy after reading the subjects in experimental group ask themselves more than subjects in control group how will they remember what they read. The statistical calculation reveal this claim clearly with the mean score of (M=3.40) for experimental group and mean score of (1.75) for control group.

**Table 4. Monitoring strategies for experimental and control group.**

Monitoring strategies (Metacognitive strategies)	Mean		SD
	E	C	
1- While reading, I will check what part of content I don't understand.	E	3.78	1.13
	C	3.90	1.22
2- While reading, Maybe I should reread this part again and look for specific information.	E	2.18	1.06
	C	2.45	1.06
3- While reading, I am aware of my inattention and correct it while reading test.	E	2.65	1.18
	C	2.05	1.00
4-While reading , I will double check again for my answer.	E	2.44	1.13
	C	3.25	1.25
5- While reading, I ask myself how does the graphic on this page help me understand the text?	E	1.77	0.91
	C	3.65	1.12
6-Since I don't understand this word, I may need to dictionary.	E	1.53	0.86
	C	3.24	1.05
7-While reading, I ask myself that what was this page about?	E	2.22	1.01
	C	1.76	0.91

**Table 5. Evaluation Strategies for experimental and control group.**

Evaluation strategies(Metacognitive Strategies)		Mean	SD
1- After reading, I reflect on my problems, such as the key words that I don't understand.	E	2.86	0.98
	C	2.91	0.99
2- After reading, I evaluate how much I could understand.	E	2.87	0.98
	C	2.80	0.94
3- After reading ,I ask myself how well did I read and understand?	E	2.74	1.04
	C	2.63	0.81
4- After reading, what strategies worked well for me? What strategies did not work for me?	E	2.85	0.92
	C	3.12	1.13
5- After reading, what should I do next time? Do I need some help for next time?	E	1.78	0.99
	C	3.31	1.19
6- After reading, how will I remember what I read?	E	3.40	1.23
	C	1.75	0.96

In this category of evaluating learners' cognitive translation, most learners can utilize the new words, phrases, or grammar to comprehend the content in the article in control group (M=3.32) and they like to translate words or sentences into Persian in order to understand (M=3.16). However, while asking students if they will practice actively in daily lives, so many persons showed their strong motivation in learning reading comprehension in experimental(expository) group (M=3.35) and less students show their interest in control (narrative ) group (1.73).



**Table 6. Cognitive Strategies for experimental and control group.**

Cognitive reading strategies		Mean	SD
1-I will practice English reading actively in daily lives, such as reading English newspapers and story books	E	3.35	1.20
	C	1.73	0.99
2-While reading, I try to translate words or sentences inpersian.	E	2.87	0.98
	C	3.16	3.14
3-While reading, I can apply the new vocabulary, phrases, or grammar I have learned to understand the content.	E	1.78	0.96
	C	3.32	1.02

**Table 7. Top-down cognitive strategy for Experimental and control group.**

Cognitive reading strategies		Mean	SD
1- I read for main ideas first and then details.	E	4.01	1.09
	C	1.36	0.82
2- I predict or make hypotheses on texts by titles	E	2.25	1.05
	C	1.26	0.83
3- I can guess the meaning based on the context.	E	3.8	1.14
	C	2.01	0.98
4-I collect the contents of reading to my personal experiences.	E	2.37	1.03
	C	2.22	10.6



Top-down skills are also essential strategies in reading comprehension. The results indicated that most students in experimental group(narrative) were good at read for main idea (M=4.01).Another top-down skills was applied by students in improving their reading comprehension, for example, predicting or making hypotheses on texts by titles (M=2.25), reading for main ideas first and then details (M=4.01) and collecting the contents of reading to my personal experiences (M=2.37).On the other hand, least of the students in control group were good at applying listening for main ideas(M=1.36), predict or make hypotheses on texts by title(M=1.26) , guess the meaning based on the context(M=2.01), ,and collecting the contents of reading to personal experiences(M=2.22). It is concluded that students still need more guidance in developing top-down strategies. As top-down processing went from meaning to language, the background knowledge required for top-down processing might be previous knowledge about the topic of discourse, situational or contextual knowledge, or knowledge in the form of “schemata” or “scripts”- plans about the overall structure of events and relationships between them (Richard, 2008).

**Table 8. Bottom-up cognitive strategy for experimental and control group.**

Cognitive reading strategies	Mean		SD
	E	C	
1- While reading, I try to understand each word.	E	1.89	0.27
	C	1.71	0.93
2- While reading, I piece things together from the details	E	2.86	0.95
	C	3.11	3.19
3- While reading, I will take note.	E	1.70	0.93
	C	3.32	1.07
4-While reading, I will notice the information questions with who, how, when, where and what in the content.	E	1.95	0.85
	C	2.22	0.29

The bottom-up strategies tend to understand the details such as words or phrases of the content. Control (expository) group like to put details together to understand what the sentences (M=3.11), and notice the information of who, how, when, where, and what (M=2.22), piece things together from the details, try to understand each word (M=1.71). On the other hand, in experimental group (narrative), students notice the information of who ,how ,when ,where ,and what (M= 1.95), try to understand each word (M=1.89). In this part, the students in Control group(expository) use more bottom-up strategies than the students in experimental group(narrative).

## 5. Conclusion

The current study investigated the effect of two kinds of texts on reading comprehension strategy use of Iranian EFL students. In fact, there was difference between students use of cognitive and metacognitive in reading comprehension between experimental and control groups. The findings implied that for the metacognitive strategies, there still left lots of space for students to improve among their application of pre-reading planning, while-reading monitoring, and post-reading evaluating strategies. In addition, making progressing in basic skills such as vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure, it is more essential to promote students' learning reading variety and build up their learning autonomy. The findings of this study support the foreign language research literature on strategy training of other components and skills of the language such as listening comprehension. Moreover, it can be asserted that the model used to teach metacognitive.

## 6. Implication and Limitation of the study

In fact, the present study has implications for learners, teachers, and teacher educators in the realm of TEFL in particular and education in general. It helps teachers in accomplishing their challenging task of teaching English in EFL contexts where learners have less exposure to language compared to ESL contexts. Teachers can help learners use different metacognitive strategies to facilitate their reading. Textbook writers, especially in the context of EFL, do not include a sufficient amount of information on learning strategies. A need for the inclusion of emphasis on learning strategies is obvious. There is a need for more comprehensive research on a wide range of variables affecting language learning strategies use. Variables such as cultural background, beliefs, learning style, motivation, and attitude that may have a bearing on language learning strategy use should be studied with students of different language backgrounds and proficiency levels. Moreover, research on the frequency of use of the social and affective strategies and choice of given strategies is recommended since it is helpful for both learners and teachers.

Regarding the limitations of this study, although this study sheds some light on the usefulness of metacognitive strategy training in reading classes, the findings cannot be generalized to all EFL contexts, as the number of participants, the duration of the strategy training and practicing program and different variables can easily change the results of such studies. In addition, more comprehensive research on different variables such as participants' cultural background and proficiency levels of English is necessary. Different strategy training models and test types should also be used in future research studies to come to the sound conclusion that metacognitive strategy training does actually matter as far as L2 listening comprehension is concerned. More research is needed on a possible cause and effect relationship between some other learning strategies (e.g. cognitive and socioaffective) and reading performance as well. As this study is only about the influence of cognitive and metacognitive strategy training on L2 reading, more research should be carried out to investigate the effect of certain metacognitive strategies on different language skills or sub-skills performance in order to claim that metacognitive strategy training is effective in learning English in general. English teachers in different local settings should take such studies as their starting point and engage in classroom research in order to come to more sound conclusions about the effectiveness of strategy training on students' performance in their classrooms. By reflecting upon their teaching experiences, they can even develop their own strategy training models suitable for their local context.

## 7. Suggestion for further research

1. Throughout the different phases of language learning teachers should bear in mind that a mixture of approaches will be the most beneficial for long-term reading skill development.

2. Teachers are more likely to be successful if they use a variety of approaches to developing reading comprehension.

3. Teachers need to advise learners about how to apply strategic knowledge – in our case, prior knowledge – flexibly and in combination with other listening strategies.

4. The complexity of the interrelationship between top-down and bottom-up processing strategies suggests a wide variety of reading texts and tasks for learners. Implications for choosing which texts to use when are probably the following:

5. Topic-specific texts with high prior knowledge (PK) – develop the ability to infer without knowing all words

6. Topic-specific texts with low PK – develop the ability to decode and gradually develop schema

7. Non-topic specific or multi-topic texts – ability to switch from PK reliance to non-PK reliance.

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## Appendix

### Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Questionnaire

**Directions:** Please respond to the following questions using the scale provided:

(1) *strongly disagree* (2) *disagree* (3) *neutral* (4) *agree* (5) *strongly agree*

Name	Strategies	Likert Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
PL	1-Before reading, I see lots of graphics and charts. I'll need to use those to help me understand what I'm reading.	1	2	3	4	5
PL	2-Before reading, I already know something about this topic.	1	2	3	4	5
PL	3-Before reading, I think about this question are there any clue words and phrases that might help figure out what text structure I'm reading?	1	2	3	4	5
MO	4- While reading, I will check what part of content I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5
MO	5- While reading, Maybe I should reread this part again and look for specific information.	1	2	3	4	5
MO	6 While reading, I am aware of my inattention and correct it while reading test.	1	2	3	4	5
MO	7- While reading , I will double check again for my answer.	1	2	3	4	5
MO	8-While reading, I ask myself how does the graphic on this page help me understand the text?	1	2	3	4	5
MO	9-Since I don't understand this word, I may need to dictionary.	1	2	3	4	5
MO	10-While reading, I ask myself that what was this page about?	1	2	3	4	5
EV	11-After reading, I reflect on my problems, such as the key words that I don't understand.	1	2	3	4	5
EV	12-After reading, I evaluate how much I could understand	1	2	3	4	5
EV	13-After reading ,I ask myself how well did I read and understand?	1	2	3	4	5
EV	14-After reading, what strategies worked well for me? What strategies did not work for me?	1	2	3	4	5

<b>EV</b>	15-After reading, what should I do next time? Do I need some help for next time?	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>EV</b>	16-After reading, How will I remember what I read.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CO</b>	17-I will practice English reading actively in daily lives, such as reading English newspapers and story books.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CO</b>	18-While reading, I try to translate words or sentences in Persian.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CO</b>	19-While reading, I can apply the new vocabulary, phrases, or grammar I have learned to understand the content.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>T-down</b>	20-I read for main ideas first and then details.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>T-down</b>	21-I predict or make hypotheses on texts by titles	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>T-down</b>	22-I can guess the meaning based on the context.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>T-down</b>	23-I collect the contents of reading to my personal experiences.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B-up</b>	24-While reading, I try to understand each word.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B-up</b>	25-While reading, I piece things together from the details	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B-up</b>	26-While reading, I will take note.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>B-up</b>	27-While reading, I will notice the information questions with who, how, when, where and what in the content.	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

PI= Planning strategy

Ev= Evaluation strategy

Mo= Monitoring strategy

Co= Cognitive strategy

T-down= Top down strategy

B-up= Bottom –up strategy