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### Measuring Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies in A TEFL Context Second Semester at Abu-Issa Faculty of Education

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الفصل الدراسي الثاني بكلية التربية أبو عيسى

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## Measuring Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies in A TEFL Context: Second Semester at Abu-Issa Faculty of Education

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### Abstract

This study investigated the reading strategy use of an EFL reading class at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education. A total of 25 university students responded to a survey questionnaire with a five point Likert scale. The questionnaire had 30 items of reading strategies which were adopted from Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) to measure non-native English speakers' metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies. The collected data were analysed with Microsoft Excel and revealed that students' strategy use was of high level to a large extent (mean= 3.76), with the highest preference being given to the supportive strategies (mean= 3.91), followed by the cognitive strategies (mean= 3.88), and the metacognitive strategies (mean= 3.49). These findings elucidated a general high level of students' strategies awareness, and at the same time; in terms of strategy use, the findings were fore felt by the researchers considering the students' proficiency level (beginner to lower-intermediate), on the basis of Mokhtari and Reichard's (2002) argument that beginner and less skilful learners tended to use supportive strategies more than metacognitive and cognitive strategies, on the contrary of the skilful learners who tended to use the opposite.

Key words: Awareness, cognitive and metacognitive strategies,

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### ملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة استخدام إستراتيجية القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في كلية التربية أبو عيسى. أجاب ما مجموعه 25 طالبًا جامعيًا على استبيان بمقياس Likert scale. احتوى الاستبيان على 30 عنصرًا من استراتيجيات القراءة التي تم تبنيها من Mokhtari and Sheorey's (2002) (SORS) لقياس الوعي فيما وراء الإدراك المعرفي لاستراتيجيات القراءة لغير الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها باستخدام Microsoft Excel وكشفت أن استخدام الطلاب لاستراتيجيات القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية عالي المستوى إلى حد كبير (المتوسط = 3.76)، مع إعطاء تفضيل أعلى للاستراتيجيات الداعمة (المتوسط = 3.91)، تليها الاستراتيجيات المعرفية (المتوسط = 3.88)، والاستراتيجيات وراء المعرفية (المتوسط = 3.49). توضح هذه النتائج المستوى العام العالي من وعي الطلاب باستراتيجياتهم، وفي نفس الوقت؛ من حيث استخدام الاستراتيجيات، استشرع الباحثان بالنتائج مقدمًا بالنظر إلى مستوى إتقان الطلاب (مبتدئًا إلى متوسط أدنى)، على أساس حجة Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) القائلة بأن المتعلمين المبتدئين والأقل مهارة يميلون إلى استخدام استراتيجيات داعمة أكثر من استراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفية والمعرفية، على عكس المتعلمين المهرة الذين يميلون إلى استخدام العكس.

## Introduction

Reading is a complex and demanding process that is crucial to the success of individuals and to academic success in learning a second/foreign language. As EFL/ ESL students progress through school and college, they are asked to read increasingly complex information. Skilful learners are active and strategic readers (Duke & Pearson, 2002) who have a repertoire of strategies to draw upon and know how to use them in different contexts. They usually use these strategies unconsciously during reading. However, when they encounter difficulty or confusion, they consciously draw on their knowledge, selecting from a range of strategies in an integrated way to assist and build their comprehension (Afflerbach, et al. 2008). In other words, good readers know how to employ cognitive and metacognitive strategies together to develop deeper understanding of texts. Reading comprehension requires efficient application of all these processes, along with the development of strategies to understand sentences, paragraphs and whole texts. A meta-analysis summarizing instructional research supported the fact that instruction in reading strategies contributed to the improved reading comprehension (Duke & Pearson, 2002). As a result, it is imperative to provide an explicit teaching of reading strategies to struggling readers to become better ones. However, one step before; it is a prime consideration to assess strategies to find clues about what the learners are not doing, or what they are doing incorrectly (Afflerbach, et al. 2008) to provide an efficient instruction. More to the point, assessing students' reading strategy use allows instructors to increase awareness of their comprehension process while reading, as it is an important first step for creating constructively responsive, strategic, and thoughtful readers (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002) and thus, become autonomous learners. Since the personal belief of the importance of such matter, it was chosen for the current study to shed the light on the subject-matter and to present a clear picture of the following research problem.

Reading is one of the four necessary important language skills for those learning English as a second/foreign language, for academic success, and for professional development. Abu-Isa Faculty of Education EFL students need to read textbooks, articles, or magazines written in English to acquire knowledge and gather information for both their careers and their academic studies. It was noticed that many learners confront a variety of difficulties while reading. These difficulties comprise, limited background knowledge related to the topic of the target language, lack of motivation to read, absence of the reading culture in general, and lack of appropriate reading strategies or the independence of only few ones (such as relying heavily on prediction/guessing strategies). This study aimed to assess students' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, as it is one key to effective instruction, which enables teachers to find clues about what the students are not doing or what is being done incorrectly, so they can introduce strategies that are on the "leading edge" of each learner's reading proficiency (Arrastia, et al., 2016; Afflerbach, et al., 2008).

This study was designed to examine the awareness and the perceived use of reading strategies among EFL university students at Abu-Issa college with special reference to the second semester, and to determine the types of the strategies they use to accomplish their reading assignments and activities.

## Research Question

What are the reading strategies used by EFL students at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education in their academic context?

## Significance of the Study

The implications of the research in hand is to offer better understanding of the participants'

metacognitive ability, that is knowledge about their own cognitive resources, and their control of that knowledge in the learning situation. That knowledge will help them meet the demands of a learning situation more effectively and take preventive actions to anticipate or recover from problems. Oxford (2003:16) recommends the assessment of students' strategy use as it "leads to greater understanding of strategies". It is also believed that reading comprehension can be improved if teachers learn about their students' beliefs and expectations about language learning in general and about strategies for reading in a foreign language in particular (Lahuerta, 2006).

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study was allocated to exploring reading strategies (cognitive, metacognitive and support strategies) used by the students undertaking Reading Comprehension II Semester, at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education.

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Importance of Reading Skill**

As it was said, reading to the mind is what food and exercise to the body. Reading is the best and the fastest way for human beings to acquire new knowledge, absorb new information, expand vocabulary, and improve one's spelling and writing style. Also, reading can give us insights into different cultures and ways of living, and puts our critical thinking skill into action, as that skill is important in all walks of life from being able to solve personal problems to finishing work-related projects. Most amazingly, reading is proved to prevent mental diseases such as Alzheimer, improves memory, boosts concentration and reduces stress. It offers a form of relaxing and learning at the same time (See Benefits of Reading, 2013). As Mark Twain, quoted "The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read". And the famous linguist Stephen Krashen is probably the most proponent of the need for reading as he said in his own words:

Reading is good for you. The research supports a stronger conclusion, however. Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers (Krashen, 1993, as cited in Waring and Nation, 2003:20).

#### **The Process of Reading**

To help students derive meaning from text, teachers have to understand the process of reading. Reading can easily be defined as the process in which a person receives and interprets a message from printed materials. A more operational definition of reading is provided by Konza (2010: 45) when stated that "reading is a complex process that builds on oral facility, and encompasses both specific skill development (phonemic and decoding strategies) and the use of comprehension strategies". It is not hidden for the eyes, that reading is tremendously a complex and sophisticated process, described as a "conscious and unconscious thinking process" (Milkulecky, 2008) in which the reader applies many strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended, by comparing information in the text to his or her background knowledge and prior experience (ibid). This complex process of constructing meaning from text is called "comprehension", as it is the main goal of reading, and it is neither a simple nor an easy process that requires engagement with the text at a deep level, and an array of skills that go far beyond simple word recognition (Konza, 2010). Reading is a continual and recurring process that is built up as students engage with a range of texts, simultaneously and actively accessing and constructing meaning (Davis, 2011).

To sum up, reading is the act of constructing meaning while transacting with the text. Just as

we use the information in our background knowledge to understand and react with the world around us, so do we use this knowledge to make sense of print.

### Reading Strategies

Reading strategies which is defined varies from researcher to researcher. Mokhtari and Reichard (2002: 60) defined reading strategies as "deliberate actions taken by readers before, during and after reading". While Brown (2007, as cited in Karami, 2008:15) viewed reading strategies as " specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information". Reading strategies were also described by Davis (2011:9) as " learning tools or behaviours that make learning more effective and efficient, selected and used by readers to achieve a specific cognitive goal".

However, the terms *skills* and *strategies* are used interchangeably and inconsistently with each other, but, there is still a difference that can be made between the two terms. Strategies have been used to describe aspects of reading that involve intentional control and deliberate direction of behaviour (Afflerbach, et al. 2008). While reading skills are automatic actions that result in decoding and comprehension with speed, efficiency, and fluency, and usually occur without awareness of the components of control involved (ibid). In other words, skills are strategies that became automatic. It is even better described in the argument of (Afflerbach, et al. 2008) when stated that:

It is important that the terms *skill* and *strategy* be used to distinguish automatic processes from deliberately controlled processes. At the heart of accomplished reading is a balance of both—automatic application and use of reading skills, and intentional, effortful employment of reading strategies—accompanied by the ability to shift seamlessly between the two when the situation calls for it. The difficulty of the reading, influenced by text, task, reader, and contextual variables, will determine the shifting balance."Strategies and skills share the common characteristics of goal-directedness" (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012: 91). That is to say, the active use of strategies and skills is triggered by comprehension goals, which include achieving a purpose for reading on a particular text, establishing a coherent meaning of the text or discourse, and utilising information and knowledge gained from reading (ibid). To sum up, skills and strategies may serve the same goal, and may result in the same behaviour.

### Categories of Reading Strategies

There are many classifications of reading strategies provided in literature; but the most famous and well known classification is the one presented by Oxford (1990, as cited in Oxford, 2003: 12) in which six major groups of L2 learning strategies have been identified as Cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective and social.

1- Cognitive strategies enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note-taking, summarizing and synthesizing.

2- Metacognitive strategies, for example, identifying one's own learning style preferences and needs, planning for an L2 task and gathering and organizing materials.

3- Memory-related strategies help learners link one L2 item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding, e.g., acronyms, rhyming and images.

4- Compensatory strategies that help learners make up for missing knowledge. (e.g., guessing from the context in reading).

5- Affective strategies, such as identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself for good performance, and using deep breathing or positive self-



talk.

6- Social strategies that help learners work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language (e.g., asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, and exploring cultural and social norms).

It is important to notice, however, that reading strategies have much in common with learning strategies, but readers deliberately use them to better understand and remember what they read.

Also, in this regard, Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) defined three broad categories of reading strategies in terms of metacognition in particular: metacognitive (global) reading strategies, cognitive (problem-solving) reading strategies and support strategies; and that is the adopted classification in this study. The first factor (Global/Metacognitive Reading Strategies) contained 13 items and represented a set of reading strategies oriented toward a global analysis of text. They are generalized, intentional reading strategies aimed at setting the stage for the reading act. Such strategies include, having a purpose in mind when reading, checking the length and the structure of the text and using figures and tables. The second factor (Problem-Solving /Cognitive Strategies) contained 8 items that appeared to be oriented around strategies for solving problems when text becomes difficult to read. To exemplify, changing the reading speed as the text becomes easy or difficult; predicting the meaning of unknown words. The third factor (Support Reading Strategies) contained 9 items. These strategies provide the support mechanisms aimed at sustaining responses to reading such as note taking and using dictionaries. These three types of strategies (i.e., Global, Problem-Solving, and Support Strategies) interact with each other and have an important influence on text comprehension (ibid). In addition to the point, other researchers chose to work on the classification of reading strategies according to their occurrence as: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading strategies (Ahmad, 2012; Saricoban, 2002). For instance, Ahmad's (2012) model of this classification included the following:

1- Pre-reading strategies: The aim of pre-reading stage is to prepare students for the reading task and activate their prior knowledge (schemata) which in turn help them be able to predict or anticipate the content of the reading text, and then identify the appropriate reading strategies to be used. Pre-reading stage include: preparation strategies, and brainstorming strategies.

2- While-reading strategies: The purpose of these strategies is to improve the learner's ability to deal with the reading text smoothly, overcome any difficulties and achieve comprehension. They include: comprehension, interaction, problem-solving, remembering, and interpretation strategies.

3- Post-reading strategies: The post-reading stage items focus on what learners do to evaluate their understanding and overcome any failure of comprehension. This stage includes: classification, evaluation, and social and motivational strategies.

### **The Importance of Reading Strategies**

According to Oxford (2003), the two main factors that determine the performance of second language learners are their learning styles, and the used strategies. Strategy use is the "deployment of specific procedures or actions to make learning easier" (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012: 89). Strategies facilitate reading comprehension (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Yet students are not always aware of the power of consciously using L2 learning strategies for making learning quicker and more effective (Nyikos & Oxford, 1993, as cited in Oxford, 2003: 9). Strategies make learning faster, easier, more enjoyable, more self-regulated, more effective, or more transferable to new situations (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). On the whole,

learners who have good strategic knowledge are also more likely to use strategies. Learners use strategies to achieve comprehension goals, particularly when they have limited ability to understand the input. In general, strategies help learners improve comprehension, retention, and recall of information (ibid). It was also found, that strategy use is significantly related to L2 learning motivation, and the nature of L2 tasks, among other factors as well, (Oxford, 2003). No wonder, the students who show careful orchestration of strategies, targeted in a relevant, systematic way at specific L2 tasks are the most effective learners (ibid).

### **Strategic Readers**

According to Janzen and Stoller (1998), good readers are the ones with a high decoding skill, automatic word recognition, knowledge of vocabulary and grammar and familiarity with the topic being read. In addition, they pointed out that good readers are also strategic readers able to use variable strategies flexibly and consistently with one another. Expert readers are highly competent strategy users (Pearson & Cervetti, 2013), who use a range of strategies to make meaning from text and are able to select, employ, monitor and evaluate their independent use of these strategies (Davis, 2011). More to the point, when students understand what skilled reading involves, they learn to monitor their own reading comprehension and development (Davis, 2011). In fact, strategy instruction emerged from the understanding that good readers are thoughtful about their own understanding (or lack of understanding) and skilled in developing plans for fixing comprehension when it goes awry (Pearson & Cervetti, 2013). Needless to say, that comprehension is the main objective of reading. We read the print to understand it, to acquire knowledge and to gather information. If we could not understand a text, then consequently, we will not be able to interact with its content. Nevertheless, comprehension is a consuming, continues, and complex activity, but one that, for good readers, is both satisfying and productive (Duke & Pearson, 2002). In general, good readers are strategic and high achievers in the second language (Alkailbi, 2015). As a result, teachers who understand what skilled readers know and control, and what skilled reading involves are able to provide explicit instruction of strategies to develop students' knowledge about the reading process, introduce students to specific strategies, and provide them with opportunities to discuss and practice strategies while reading. Most importantly, to help them monitor their own comprehension and to become more self-aware readers (Afflerbach et al., 2008; Davis, 2011; Janzen & Stoller, 1998; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Milkulecky, 2008).

### **Metacognition**

Metacognition is cognition about cognition, commonly referred to as thinking about thinking (Ahmad, 2012). The term metacognition was founded by the linguist Flavel back in the late seventies. In the context of reading, it can be thought of as the knowledge of the readers' cognition about reading and the self-control mechanisms they exercise when monitoring and regulating text comprehension (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). It is basically having an awareness of and an understanding about one's own cognition. Metacognition enables students to become aware of how they think and the strategies they use to help them think. It is given great importance because it leads to autonomy and self-awareness which are two crucial aspects in the learning process. In fact, many studies showed how that metacognitive strategy use is a strong predictor of L2 proficiency (Dryer & Oxford 1996; Oxford, Jude & Giesen, 1998; as cited in Oxford, 2003: 12). Metacognitive readers understand, control and manipulate their own cognitive processes. In addition, they have an awareness and understanding of how they think and learn and they control a range of strategies that they know they can use to scaffold their understanding of texts (Davis, 2011). To conclude, metacognition underpins all effective learning and as such is a critical element in teaching

and instruction.

### **Metacognitive Strategy Instruction**

Metacognitive strategy instruction is an approach to teaching and learning that focuses on providing explicit instruction and feedback about how and when to use strategies to support learning. It was found that early and developing readers benefit from explicit instruction in how to make the learning strategies conscious (Davis, 2011). It is also worth noting, that this type of instruction differs from the instruction that occurs in the traditional classrooms. In a traditional reading class, students are asked to activate their background knowledge about a text topic, review relevant vocabulary, read the text and answer comprehension questions with no kind of explicit metacognitive strategy usage. However, the recommended strategy instruction develops students' knowledge about the reading process, introduces students to specific strategies, and provides them with opportunities to discuss and practise strategies while reading (Janzen & Stoller, 1998). Being on the same track, Duke and Pearson (2002) stated that good comprehension instruction should be balanced between explicit instruction in specific comprehension strategies, and a great deal of time and opportunity for actual reading, writing and discussion of text. Not only this helps students acquire the strategies and processes used by good readers, but also, it improves their overall comprehension of text used to teach the strategies, and texts they read on their own in the future (ibid). As a conclusion, it is best summarized in the words of Oxford (2003: 17) when she stated that, "strategies based instruction is not so much as a separate instructional method as it is sound strategy instruction interwoven with the general communicative approach."

### **Metacognitive Reading Strategies Instruction Research**

Reading is regarded as a complex process and the prime objective of reading is comprehension. A lot of studies have proved that reading strategies are effective in promoting comprehension (Dorkchandra, 2010; Obeid, 2010; Oyetunji, 2011; Arrastia, et al. 2016). Therefore, teaching readers how to use specific reading strategies should be a prime consideration in the reading classroom (Afflerbach et al., 2008; Ahmad, 2012; Davis, 2011; Janzen & Stoller, 1998; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Milkulecky, 2008; Oxford, 2003). Much research indicates that all students can benefit from strategy instruction. For instance, Dorkchandra (2010) investigation of the effect of text structure reading strategy CALL program on university students, found that students who learned with the program had significantly higher post-tests scores than the students who did not learn with the program. Also, the students had very positive opinions towards the program and its usefulness. Moreover, several studies have found strong correlation between strategy use and reading proficiency (Alkailbi, 2015; Sheorey and Mokhtari, 2001, as cited in Kim, 2012). For example, Alkailbi (2015) investigated the role of ESL reading ability in acquiring English as a second language on 92 college students (foundation year students, and freshmen year students), and found that students who perform well on the reading sub-skills as well as the reading comprehension tests (good readers) tend to attain higher levels of proficiency in the target language. Other studies investigated the awareness of reading strategies, with respect to the use of strategies (Solak and Atlay, 2014; Tefara, 2013) and found that students with high awareness in all categories of strategies, are better readers.

### **Research Methodology**

As it was highlighted by Leedy (1997:3), "Everywhere, our knowledge is incomplete and problems are waiting to be solved ... the role of the research is to provide a method for obtaining those answers by inquiringly studying the evidence within the parameters of the



scientific method". This study was based upon quantitative method of data collection and analysis. The study design is a survey research design which is very valuable tool to be used when "inquiring about a general trend in people's opinions, experiences, and behaviour" (Driscoll, 2011: 1). Surveys are particularly useful to find small amounts of information from a wider selection of people in the hopes of making a general claim (Driscoll, 2011). Moreover, even on a small scale, judging opinion with carefully designed surveys can dramatically improve strategies (Dorney, 2007 as cited in Tefara, 2013).

### **Research Site and Participants**

The study was conducted at the Department of English, Abu-Isa Faculty of Education, located in Abu-Isa, Al Zawia city. The faculty is staffed entirely by trained instructors with Master's degrees in English language teaching, and two with a doctorate. Students enrolled in the faculty are non-native English speakers who need to learn sufficient English language teaching methods and techniques to become well-qualified English language teachers over an academic journey of four years (8 semesters). The reading program in consisted of 5 levels of difficulty, namely: Reading Comprehension I, II, III, IV and Advanced Reading. The instructional time for each class is 120 minutes per week. The research sample consisted of 25 students taken as participants in this study. Their first language is (Arabic), and they had similar characteristics with respect to age and educational background. The group was drawn from Reading Comprehension II class, and they were specifically selected due to class accessibility.

### **Data Collection**

In this study, a questionnaire was used as a data collection tool in order to collect data about the readers' awareness and use of reading strategies while reading academic materials. Using a questionnaire for this study is exceedingly adequate and beneficial, as it helpful for obtaining a large amount of data from a wide sample with economy in time, effort and expense. In addition, it can be utilised to exploring the types of reading strategies and frequencies used by the sample (Ahmad, 2012). On the other hand, the questionnaire can be limiting in terms of the students' emerged understanding difficulties of the strategies described in the questionnaire, students' memory-failure to remember their own strategy use, and as a result, they may give unreal answers (ibid). Besides, students' lack of interest or boredom may lead to a random selection of answers, languishing the accuracy of the questionnaire. Despite these limitations, questionnaires are still the most commonly used method of data collection in the social sciences (Dorney, 2003; Robson, 2002, as cited in Ahmad, 2012: 101).

The data for this study were collected through students' questionnaire adopted from the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) by Mokhtari and Shoery (2002) which was developed to measure the metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies of adolescent and adult learners of English as a second language (ESL) while reading academic texts. This instrument was adapted from another instrument which is the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARS) Questionnaire. This was produced by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) to measure native English speaking students' awareness of reading strategies. It was adapted for the reason of making it suitable for non-native speakers of English. SORS is used as a standard instrument because it was field- tested extensively using large and diverse sample population representing students of two US universities.

The internal consistency reliability coefficient for its three subscales (metacognitive, cognitive and support strategies) ranged from 0.89 to 0.93 and was found to have well-established validity and reliability data ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ), Mokhtari and Reichard (2002). The (SORS) was

adopted for this study as a main instrument because it emphasizes the importance of cognitive strategies and metacognitive awareness in L2 reading, which fits the theoretical framework of this study.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

After collecting the data, the Excel software program is used to analyse the raw data. Descriptive statistics were used in the data analysis. Individual scores were added up to gain a total score for each strategy (metacognitive, cognitive and support strategies). The scores were then interpreted by using the 3 levels of the reading strategy's usage, provided by Oxford (1990, as cited in Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002: 254), for the usage of general learning strategies. "High" means 3.5 or higher, "moderate" means 2.5 to 3.4 and "low" means 2.4 or less.

A summary of the results from the overall use of the strategies used by the participants, which was obtained from the descriptive statistical procedure analysis of the results (each dimension of the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) was further analysed), is given in Table 1. The support strategies ranked highest in use (M=3.91). The least preferred strategies were the metacognitive strategies (M=3.49), and the mean of the mean of the SORS was 3.76.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the variables of the 3 reading strategiescategories.**

Variable	Number of questions	Mean	Rank
Support	8	3.91	1
Cognitive	9	3.88	2
Metacognitive	13	3.49	3
Average total	30	3.76	

N=25

Table (2) below shows the results of the 30 individual reading strategies (support, cognitive, metacognitive) presented in order of use frequency from high (3.5 and above) and moderate (2.5-3.4) to low (2.4 and under). The participants reported 21 high-frequency strategies and 8 moderate-frequency strategies, with only one low-frequency strategy. The most frequently used strategy was the support strategy, "*when reading, I translate from English into my native language.*" (M=4.4). The lowest used strategy for the participants was the metacognitive strategy, "*I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.*" (M=2.36).

**Table 2: Preference of reading strategies by the participants.**

Support Strategies	Mean	SD	Rank
When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	4.4	1.41	High
I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	4.32	1.26	High
I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	4.12	1	High

When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	4.12	1.23	High
I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	3.84	1.28	High
I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	3.80	1.32	High
I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	3.56	1.47	High
When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	3.4	1.57	Medium
<b>Cognitive Strategies</b>			
When text becomes difficult, I re-read to increase my understanding.	4.24	1.26	High
I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	4.20	1.04	High
I stop from time to time and think about what I'm reading.	4.16	0.89	High
I try to picture or visualize information to help me remember what I read.	4.12	1.16	High
When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I'm reading.	4.04	1.36	High
When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	3.76	1.18	High
I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I'm reading.	3.64	1.35	High
I adjust my reading speed according to what I'm reading.	2.88	1.30	Medium
<b>Metacognitive Strategies</b>			
I have a purpose in mind when I read.	4.32	0.94	High
I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information.	4.16	0.98	High
I think about what I know to help understand what I read.	4.04	1.17	High
I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	3.72	1.40	High
I use context clues to help me better understand what I'm reading.	3.72	1.42	High
I use tables, figures and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	3.68	1.46	High
I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.36	1.15	Medium
I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.32	1.38	Medium
When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	3.32	1.44	Medium
I try to guess what the context is about when I read.	3.24	1.45	Medium
I use typographical aids like bold face and italics to identify key information.	3.12	1.61	Medium

I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.	2.96	1.59	Medium
I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.	2.36	1.43	Low

SORS was 3.76.

### Discussion of the Findings Obtained

The survey of reading strategies was primarily used to answer the research question. What are the reading strategies used by the students of Abu-Isa Faculty of Education?

According to the data analysed above, it is seen that the students have an overall awareness of reading strategies. It has been shown, also, that the support strategies were the most preferred by the participants, followed by the cognitive strategies and then the metacognitive strategies. Saricoban (2002) examined the strategies effective readers employ in pre-reading, while reading and post-reading stages of instruction in classroom language learning at a Turkish state-run university ELT Department. The results proved that successful readers preferred global reading strategies (metacognitive strategies) first, then moved to smaller units such as words, sentences and paragraphs. Being on the same track, in a study conducted by Solak and Atlay (2014) investigating the reading strategies used by prospective English teachers at a state-run university in Turkey, found that participants had an overall high awareness of strategies- which is in line with this study-but, mostly preferred to use problem solving strategies (cognitive strategies), while support strategies were the least preferred and used. These findings are not in consistent with the results of the present study. However, when Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001, as cited in Kim, 2012) conducted a study on 152 ESL and 150 native English college students revealed that skilled readers used more cognitive and metacognitive strategies than less skilled readers. It also indicated that both native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English at advanced levels used more cognitive and metacognitive strategies than their counterparts of lower levels. This leads to a conclusion that, while high-proficient readers use more cognitive and metacognitive strategies than low-proficient readers do, less proficient readers reported using more support strategies than proficient did. It can be said therefore; these facts interpret the findings of the current study in the light of the students' perceived strategies use correlated with their proficiency level mentioned earlier.

Through the examination of the results seen above, it could be assumed that these learners are strategic ones to some extent, although that cannot be assured, as they were aware of the reading strategies, and their goals of reading. However, unless there were other data that can go deep in detecting the actual application of reading strategies (e.g., observations, interviews, or think-aloud protocols), to prove that these learners are "trouble-shooters", or are able to cognitively monitor and repair when they detect comprehension problems, and flexibly orchestrate their actions during reading (Afflerbach, et al. 2008), only then, these learners can be labelled as expert and strategic readers.

To sum up this discussion, the findings obtained revealed that students at Abu-Isa Faculty of Education are aware of a wide range of reading strategies when they read academic materials.

### Conclusion

This study aimed to provide an overall understanding of the use of EFL reading strategies among the students of Abu-Isa Faculty of Education by investigating their uses of EFL reading strategies when reading English texts. The main data instrument was the SORS Questionnaire. The SORS enables students to increase awareness of their own reading strategies, as that is the first step of becoming autonomous learners. The research findings

revealed that students used reading strategies frequently, and of the 3 strategy sub-categories, support reading strategies were used by the students the most, followed by cognitive strategies and then metacognitive strategies.

The reading demands of university study are not easy. Unfortunately, however, it is all too common for students to pay little attention to their own approaches to reading, that is, how they read, and how they can improve the effectiveness and speed of their reading. The study findings can help EFL teachers better understand the current use of EFL reading strategies among their students and actions they can take to help their students improve their reading ability. This information is especially important in the attempt to help students in their learning, so that they become autonomous learners who are able to identify needs and set objectives in accordance with their goals, and able to evaluate and monitor their progress overtime. The results of this study may help teachers also to determine the appropriate reading strategies to incorporate into English reading comprehension instruction. However, awareness of reading strategies does not guarantee that the students actually use them (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Because one cannot tell from this instrument alone whether students actually engage in the strategies they reported using. In other words, invoking certain strategies through the SORS may indicate that students only know about or are aware of those strategies (ibid). As it is not enough to simply know appropriate reading strategies, students must also be able to regulate or monitor the use of such strategies to ensure success in reading comprehension (Baker & Brown, 1984, as cited in Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). That is to say, knowing which strategy to use and how to use them. In addition to using these strategies with high frequency, students need to learn how to use them effectively through explicit reading strategy instruction.

The evidence from this study suggests that a number of the students do not have a very strong metacognitive strategies knowledge, as the least strategy they reported using " *I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.*" was among this category of strategies. This indicates that this strategy in particular, and the other strategies in this category in general students might want to learn about and consider using while reading, as it is recommended by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002).

It is suggested that future studies might focus on the following: Firstly, using larger sample to generalize the results, also, observations and interviews can be used and employed to develop a better understanding of the use of reading strategies by the faculty students, and to explore the most effective reading strategies at improving the students' English reading ability. Secondly, it would be worthwhile to compare the use of reading strategies by proficiency level to help students better regulate the use of strategies while reading. Thirdly, as recommended by Oxford (2003), it is also necessary to assess teachers' styles and strategies, so that they will be aware of their preferences and of possible biases while strategy instruction.

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