# INVESTIGATING READING STRATEGY USE IN EFL ENVIRONMENT - MONGOLIAN AND TAIWANESE ADULT LEARNERS' COMPARATIVE STUDY

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**Abstract** - This study aimed to investigate the types of cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies used by Mongolian and Taiwanese adult learners to find out EFL learners reading strategy use. The study employed a quantitative method which involves the instrument of an online questionnaire. This study was investigated among Mongolian and Taiwanese EFL adult learners, involving 61 students. Based on the findings, the students had used various reading strategies. The use of reading strategies boosts the learning process and overcome difficulties as their autonomous learning efforts to become more proficient readers. Overall, cognitive reading strategies use is higher than metacognitive reading strategies use by Mongolian and Taiwanese students. According to the frequency scales of strategies used, the findings from the questionnaire indicate that most of the reported cognitive reading strategies have a mean between 3.41 and 4.06 as the students often use these reading strategies. Therefore, instructors who play a vital role in training students should pay more attention to the metacognitive reading strategy use, which involves more advanced reading strategies to enhance the effectiveness of learners' reading proficiency for the reason that reading is not naturally developed like speaking.

**Keywords** - EFL Environment, Adult Learners, Cognitive and Metacognitive Reading Strategies

## I. INTRODUCTION

One-fifth of the world's population speak English nowadays even though most of them are not native English speakers (Wang, 2015). English is spreading out all over the world in higher education, its causes and effects are complex and myriad (Mercer & Swann, 1996). Use of English in academic life has increased rapidly since the past few decades. English, which functions as the second language in Mongolia and Taiwan, has been widely utilized in curriculums and instruction programs. In both countries, English is a compulsory subject in secondary schools. It is an integral part of tertiary education as well.

It has been long admitted that reading is one of the fundamental skills in both L1 and L2 acquisition. Reading is not a natural process. Unlike oral communication, reading does not develop naturally from the interaction between children and parents or other adults. It is the same for EFL reading. Many studies convey the importance of reading in English. Given the excessive position of reading for EFL learners, having a notion of what compose reading skills and how to overcome difficulties in reading class while reading a text is vital (Nassaji, 2003).

However, many English learners encounter reading difficulties during their English learning journey. Related studies classify and categorize reading difficulties and explain the causes in different ways. Most L2 learners have reading difficulties when they read which can include lack of vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and reading strategies (Nation, 2008). In dealing with reading difficulties, from the last few decades, many ESL researchers have begun to recognize the importance of the reading strategies ESL students use. It has been found that effective readers are more aware of strategy use than less effective readers (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Reading strategies are vital in the learners' reading process and guiding them in their interpretation of a written text in the second language learning context.

Numerous studies have listed that reading strategies and its classification and have explored how reading strategies can influence on students, strategies to help students' better performance with reading comprehension skill (Carrell, 1985; Brown & Palincsar, 1989; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Pearson & Fielding, 1991). Thus, this study would like to shed some light on knowing EFL adult learners' reading strategies by investigating Mongolian and Taiwanese students to help teachers identify the students' preferences of particular reading strategies and utilize appropriate reading strategies. This study aims to investigate the most frequent use of reading strategies by Mongolian and Taiwanese EFL adult learners.

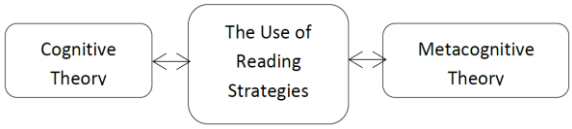



**Figure 1 A Simple Theoretical an Conceptual Framework for This Study**

In the framework, the use of reading strategies is closely related to two theories: cognition and metacognition. To clear up language learning problems, it is common for EFL learners to use reading strategies. Cognitive strategies are effective to assist students to deal with reading difficulties. In the cognitive learning theory, reading is not only

considered to be the indicator of how students perceive a task, but also involve cognitive processes. A previous study stated the definition of cognitive strategies as conscious "mental steps or operations that learners use to process both linguistic and sociolinguistic content" (Wenden & Rubin, 1987). Simply, "cognitive strategies" are an awareness of the cognition to solve problems and complete tasks. This study investigated EFL adult learners' use of cognitive strategies including skimming, predicting, analyzing, inferring, translation, summarizing, elaborating, repeating, guessing, and note-taking.

Metacognitive strategies are self-regulatory strategies in which learners are aware of their thinking and learning, and plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning endeavors. Metacognitive strategies require planning for learning, thinking about the learning process that takes place, monitoring of one's comprehension, and evaluating learning after the completion of a task. Flavell (1976), indicated that metacognition comprised of learning aspects such as monitoring and regulation, as these aspects reflect on the learner's ability to organize the input, storage, search, and retrieval of the contents of his memory. That is, metacognition includes selecting, evaluating, revising or deleting cognitive tasks, goals, and strategies. Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) have conducted a study regarding metacognitive awareness and use of reading strategies among L2 readers and they define metacognitive strategies for reading as "intentional, carefully planned techniques by which learners monitor or manage their reading" (p. 436). For example, a learner who previews a text makes predictions and tests his or her hypotheses while reading is employing metacognitive strategies. According to Semtin and Maniam (2015), metacognitive reading strategies include more advanced strategies which are advanced organization, selective attention, self-management, directed attention, monitoring, and self-evaluation.

This study is concerned with an investigation of the reading strategies based on the classification of learning strategies by O'Malley and Chamot, (2001). The researchers divided learning strategies into three categories which are cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies. As this study is aimed to explore the reading strategies that are closely related to reading comprehension and used mainly by the EFL learners, it will consider the investigation of two reading strategies: cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies. These two types of reading strategies were proposed and categorized the same by Naeini & Rezaei, (2015).

## II. METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study, conducted with an online questionnaire. Therefore, quantitative data will be collected for answering the research questions. The investigation will cover the use of cognitive reading strategies and metacognitive reading strategies from Mongolian and Taiwanese EFL adult learners' perspectives.

### 2.1. Participants and Sampling

A sampling of 61 Mongolian and Taiwanese students was enrolled in this study. All the participants were Mongolian and Taiwanese college students who learn English as a foreign language. There were 43 Mongolian (70.5%) and 18 Taiwanese (29.5%) students in the pilot study. Majority of the participants were female (n=47) and rest were male (n=14). For the program of the study, there were 10 students (16.4%) diploma/certificate, 28 students (45.9%) bachelor's degree, 22 (36.1%) master's degree, and 1 (1.6%) doctoral degree. Of the 61 EFL learners who participated in this pilot study, 3 were from arts-related major, 3 were from science and math-related, 1 was from environment-related, 22 were from business-related major, 4 were engineering and technology major, and 28 were literature, language, and social science major. 55.7% (n=34) of the participants had taken English proficiency tests. There were 5 types of English proficiency tests that had been taken by 34 participants, namely TOEFL ITP, TOEFL iBT, TOEIC, IELTS, and GEPT.

### 2.2. Instruments

This study uses an online questionnaire. The questionnaire is adapted from the questionnaire on reading strategies (Semtin & Maniam, 2015) to gather information about Mongolian and Taiwanese adult learners' use frequency of reading strategies in English. It employs the 5-point Likert scale: (1) "I never or almost never do this.", (2) "I do this only occasionally.", (3) "I sometimes do this." (About 50% of the time.), (4) "I usually do this.", and (5) "I always or almost always do this".

An Online Questionnaire in Reading Strategy

A questionnaire is adopted from the questionnaire on reading strategies (Semtin & Maniam, 2015) and will be distributed via Google form to Mongolian and Taiwanese adult learners. The questionnaire includes 28 questions, divided into 3 parts. The first part includes demographical information, the second part is for the cognitive reading strategies, and the third part is for themetacognitive reading strategies. The data was collected from May 14 to July 02 by online.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The analysis of collected data from the questionnaire encompasses the types and frequency of reading strategies employed by sixty-one Mongolian and Taiwanese adult learners. Their responses were used for research purposes only and they did not need to reveal their identity. After the data was collected from the 61 participants, each questionnaire was examined individually, and incomplete questionnaires were discarded. SPSS is utilized for the statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics including frequencies,

percentages, means, the standard deviation will be used to present demographic information and strategy use items.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 3.1 shows the EFL adult learners' use of cognitive strategies. The more often used cognitive strategies are Repeating (3.721), Skimming (3.651), and Inferring (3.628) by Mongolian learners and Repeating (4.056), Guessing (3.944), and Elaborating (3.778) by Taiwanese learners.

| | Mongolian EFL Adult Learners N=43 | | Taiwanese EFL Adult Learners N=18 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cognitive Strategy | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Skimming | 3.651 | 0.783 | 3.667 | 0.840 |
| Predicting | 3.395 | 0.821 | 3.556 | 0.984 |
| Analyzing | 3.581 | 0.932 | 3.667 | 0.970 |
| Inferring | 3.628 | 0.817 | 3.556 | 1.042 |
| Translating | 3.395 | 1.094 | 3.389 | 0.979 |
| Summarizing | 3.349 | 0.813 | 3.500 | 0.857 |
| Elaborating | 3.419 | 0.982 | 3.778 | 0.732 |
| Repeating | 3.721 | 0.734 | 4.056 | 0.998 |
| Guessing | 3.581 | 0.823 | 3.944 | 0.802 |
| Note-taking | 3.256 | 1.236 | 3.500 | 1.150 |

**Table 3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Cognitive Strategy Use**

Table 3.3 shows the EFL adult learners' use of metacognitive strategies. The more often used metacognitive strategies are Monitoring (3.686), Self-management (3.630), and Directed attention (3.630) by Mongolian learners and Self-management (3.830) and Selective attention (3.670) by Taiwanese learners.

| | Mongolian EFL Adult Learners N=43 | | Taiwanese EFL Adult Learners N=18 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Metacognitive Strategy | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| Advanced organization | 3.364 | 0.748 | 3.426 | 0.674 |
| Selective attention | 3.600 | 1.158 | 3.670 | 1.029 |
| Self-management | 3.630 | 0.926 | 3.830 | 1.043 |
| Directed attention | 3.630 | 0.900 | 3.330 | 0.970 |
| Monitoring | 3.686 | 0.690 | 3.528 | 0.717 |
| Self-evaluation | 3.558 | 0.854 | 3.583 | 0.943 |

**Table 3.3 Descriptive Statistics of Metacognitive Strategy Use**

Based on the findings from the online questionnaire, the students have used various reading strategies. The results show that the frequency of cognitive strategies use by both Mongolian and Taiwanese EFL adult learners is higher than that of metacognitive strategy use. Both groups of learners like to use Repeating Mongolia (M=3.72) and Taiwan (M=4.06). Whereas, the strategy Note-taking (M=3.26) and the strategy of Translating (M=3.39) are sometimes used by Mongolian and Taiwanese students.

In the metacognitive category, the Monitoring strategy involves observing and checking the progress or quality of something for a special purpose. It is frequently used by Mongolian participants (M=3.69). On the other hand, the strategy Self-management which involves taking responsibility for one's own actions and doing things as well as one such as being able to organize oneself and offer one's own ideas to any project has found the highest mean (3.83) in Taiwanese participants. The strategy Advanced organization which involves organizing a set of things in advance, arranging them in an ordered way or giving them a structure has the lowest mean of 3.36 by Mongolian students. For Taiwanese students, the strategy of directed attention which involves the allocation of attention in a "directed" manner to specific information or cognitive processes has the lowest mean of 3.33 and it is generally not used by the students.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this study, the students have used various reading strategies. The reason why Mongolian students tend to use monitoring because they focus on a specific task and prefer its quality. In other words, Mongolian students can give their attention to a special purpose entirely whereas Taiwanese students like to do Self-management rather than others. It might tell us that Taiwanese have more responsibility for their own actions and good at organizing oneself.

Furthermore, it is shown that students who have higher English proficiency level are good reading strategies user whereas those who have lower English proficiency may be utilize reading strategy rarely. As it is mentioned, the frequency of cognitive strategies is higher than that of metacognitive strategies used by Mongolian and Taiwanese EFL adult learners. Therefore, more instructions need to be given to enhance metacognitive strategy use by Mongolian and Taiwanese English teachers since reading in L2 requires lots of effort which is not developed like oral communication.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Professor Syou-rung Tsau, my research supervisor, for her patient guidance, enthusiastic encouragement and useful critiques of this research work. Besides, I would like to thank the 61students of Mongolian and Taiwanese for their participation in this study. It was

a great experience to complete this study with the support of my advisor and all the participants.

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