

# Investigating EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards the Effectiveness of Reading Metacognitive Strategies Regarding Their Academic Degrees

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Received: January 4, 2016    Accepted: January 10, 2016    Published: February 21, 2016

doi:10.5296/ijl.v8i1.9069    URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v8i1.9069>

## Abstract

Xu (2012) stated that teachers' beliefs are more influential than teachers' knowledge on determining their teaching activities, so effective teacher beliefs about learners are of importance, and are considered as integral components of effective teaching. In other words, teachers' beliefs influence teacher consciousness, teaching attitude, teaching methods, teaching policy, and also strongly influence teaching behavior and learner development (Xu, 2012). With such an importance in teachers' beliefs and attitudes, this study tried to explore the teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of reading metacognitive strategies which are used by high school students. To do so, 91 teachers holding BA and MA degrees were chosen as the participants of study. They all had an experience of teaching English at different high

schools of three Cities in Iran. These participants were asked to complete 34 item thesis questionnaire which investigated the teachers' attitudes toward the effectiveness of reading metacognitive strategy use. The results of statistical analysis indicated that although teachers holding MA and BA degrees had the same attitudes about pre-reading metacognitive strategies, they had significantly different attitudes about reading and post-reading metacognitive strategies.

**Keywords:** Metacognitive strategy, Attitude

## 1. Introduction

Teachers as reflective practitioners are expected to be effective in whatever approach they decide to take, and act consistently in accordance with their expressed beliefs. There is growing evidence to indicate that teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs, which in turn are closely linked to their values, to their views of the world, and to their understanding of their place within it. Teachers' beliefs are important for understanding and improving educational process. They closely guide language teachers to adopt their teaching strategies for coping with their daily language teaching challenges, influence their general well-being, and in turn, shape language learners' learning environment, their motivation and their language achievement and ability. Furthermore they can be expected to mediate the effects of job-related policies – such as changes in curricula for teachers' initial education or professional development – on student learning. A teacher's beliefs are more influential than a teacher's knowledge on determining his or her teaching activities. They result from the teacher's self-instruction, which is accumulated from social history and culture, personal experience and education, the teacher's teaching ability and students, etc (Xu, 2012).

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### 2.1 *Metacognition and Metacognitive Strategies*

In 1970 the notion of metacognition came into existence in the context of information processing studies. One of the important topics of discussion among educational practitioners is the students' ability to direct their own learning. The students' ability to self-regulate has crucial role in learning, decision making, and problem solving in education. Students' self-regulation can be enhanced by metacognitive strategies use in an educational context. So, metacognitive strategies can help students to tackle their own learning (Cubukcu, 2009).

Metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation are one type of learning strategies (Takallou, 2011). They are strategies which require students to think about their own thinking (Cubukcu, 2008). The use of metacognitive strategies would improve the students' academic achievement, metacognitive awareness, and satisfaction (Weaver, 2012).

To put it in more details, metacognitive strategies are strategies which require students to think about their own thinking in a similar vein, Cubukcu (2008) conducted a research to determine the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies on reading comprehension. To reach the aims of study, 130 students divided into experimental and control groups, each one 65 students. The participant in the first group took metacognitive instruction, but students in the second group did not take any training at all. Before implementing the treatment, both groups performed the same in reading comprehension test, but at the end of treatment, participants in experimental group outperformed control one. It can be inferred from this study that reading comprehension can be improved through instruction of metacognitive strategies. The training program of metacognitive learning strategies applied strategies such as inferring meaning using background knowledge, evaluating, distinguishing, revising, and guessing. This study provided some evidence for teachers to help learners use different kinds of metacognitive strategies for facilitating their learning. Furthermore, through such instructions, students can

start to think metacognitively and it enables them to know how, when and why use metacognitive strategies.

Phakiti (2003) hold the idea that cognitive and metacognitive strategies are conscious processes; also, for explaining the nature of language performance; both of them should be taken into account. But, Cognitive and metacognitive strategies contribute to language test performance differently. According to this view he has been carried out a study in order to find that whether there is a relationship between the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies and reading performance. To do so, the researcher examined 384 university students through a Reading comprehension test and cognitive and Metacognitive questionnaire. Evidence from data collection and analysis of this study showed that cognitive and metacognitive strategy use have a positive relationship to the reading performance. In other words, variation on language test performance can be traced back to different cognitive and metacognitive strategy use; those who use these kinds of strategies more outperformed the ones using less in different language tests. Also, findings of study suggested that different groups of students in the study (highly successful, moderately successful and unsuccessful groups) use cognitive and metacognitive strategies differently both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Flavell (1979) explained that Metacognitive knowledge consists primarily of knowledge or beliefs about what factors or variables act and interact in what ways to affect the course and outcome of cognitive enterprises. On the other hand, metacognitive experiences are best described as items of metacognitive knowledge that have entered consciousness. Metacognitive experiences can be brief or lengthy in duration, simple or complex in content. Metacognitive experiences are especially likely to occur in situations that stimulate a lot of careful, highly conscious thinking: in a job or school task that expressly demands that kind of thinking. Metacognitive experiences can have very important effects on cognitive goals or tasks, metacognitive, knowledge, and cognitive actions or strategies. First, they can lead to establish new goals and to revise or abandon old ones. Second, metacognitive experiences can affect your metacognitive knowledge base by adding to it, deleting from it, or revising it. Finally, metacognitive experiences can activate strategies aimed at either of two types of goals: cognitive or metacognitive.

## *2.2 Metacognitive Strategies and Reading Comprehension*

Today, in the global village, most of the students need English reading for a variety of purposes like studying, traveling, or surfing on the net, reading different news, or using supplementary materials related to their pedagogical purposes (Raissi & roustaei, 2013). Although most of the language learners find English reading difficult and lack motivation in doing it, reading is the only most important skill that a person should acquire (Phantharakphong & Potitha, 2014).

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill developing within life and has a crucial role in educational success .reading comprehension involves developing cognitive skills like vocabulary, grammar, decoding knowledge and metacognitive skills like thinking, controlling, processing strategies. So, there is a need to guide and encourage learning of these skills in

educational context (Blanch, Duran, Flores, &Valdebonito, 2012).

Providing more insights about metacognition, Strassman (1997) investigated the link between metacognition and reading ability in children who were deaf. There were some implications from this unique research. First of all, current instructional programs of teaching reading comprehension to deaf learners hinder their progress of metacognitive knowledge. Then , it was deduced from the collected data that low level reading don't provide any opportunity for deaf learners to use or improve their metacognitive strategy knowledge. The most striking result of this study showed that deaf learners can benefit from metacognitive strategy instruction.

There is a clear relationship between metacognition and reading comprehension in the hearing population. Although it's a fact that deaf people have some difficulties in reading comprehension skills, there have been very few attempts to come up with some possible solutions for such a problem or to assess metacognition in the deaf. The present study done by Alvarado, Puente, Jimenez, and Jimenez (2012) compared 23 deaf students with 289 hearing students. After analyzing data collected by ESCOLA metacognition test for assessing the participants' knowledge and mastery of metacognition strategies, the results indicated that because of poorer knowledge of metacognitive knowledge and use, the deaf learners showed lower reading level compared with the hearing ones, furthermore, the study mentioned the need to improve meta comprehension for better learning and mastery of planning, monitoring, and evaluation in deaf children.

In a similar way, the purpose of study by Tajalli andSatari (2013) was investigating the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies for developing reading skills of students with hearing disorders. To this end, 10 students with hearing disorders randomly assigned to experimental and control group. After taking part in an intervention program for training metacognitive strategies, experimental group's reading skills was assessed. The participants of control group had no such a program, but they also were taken the same reading test. According to the result of study, experimental group had significantly higher reading skills than control one, which was due to the administration of metacognition program for the first group. Also, the findings of this study highlighted the importance of learning metacognitive strategies like self-monitoring and recipe vocal teaching for improving the reading skills of students with hearing disorders.

The study done by Maasum and Maarof (2012) indicated a satisfactory level of the EFL learners' awareness and use of learning strategies. Using a quantitative research design, Maasum and Maarof (2012) investigate the matacognitive reading strategies used by a group of 41EFL undergraduates while reading academic texts. Through a questionnaire (metacognitive awareness of reading strategies inventory), the subject awareness and use of reading strategies were measured. According to the study's results, the learners were able to monitor their reading process, check their own comprehension, utilize strategies of reading, and evaluate them. Also it was revealed that students were aware of cognitive process and uses a wide range of metacognitive reading strategies. Over all, findings showed that there was a moderate to high level of metacognitive strategy use among the participants.

Yuksel and Yuksel (2011) stated that metacognitive awareness is one of the key factors for proficient strategic reading. To give more information related to this, they have conducted a study to determine students' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies. Through a survey of reading strategies which was conducted for 16 EFL students, data indicated that the students were aware and used reading strategies while reading and academic text. To put in more details, problem-solving strategy was mostly used and supporting strategies was at least used in academic reading.

Researches show that there is few empirical studies investigating teachers' attitudes towards students' learning strategies (Ellis, Denton, & Bond, 2014). Hence, our study investigated teachers' attitudes towards metacognitive strategies to see the differences between teachers' attitudes regarding their academic degrees through the following questions.

**Q1:** Is there any significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about pre reading metacognitive strategies?

**Q2:** Is there any significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about reading metacognitive strategies?

**Q3:** Is there any significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about post reading metacognitive strategies?

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Participants*

The participants of this study were 91 teachers who had an experience of teaching English at different high schools of three Cities of Iran (Neyshabur, Mashhad, and Torbate Heidarie). Out of 91 teachers, 33 have master's degree and 58 have bachelor's degree. For both groups of the participants, no distinction was made between males and females. All teachers, who had between 4 and 15 years of teaching experience, voluntarily filled out the thesis questionnaire. Moreover, the participants' mother tongue was Persian, and their age was ranged between 35 and 58.

#### *3.2 Instrumentation*

##### *3.2.1 Questionnaire*

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire developed by Mokhtari and Reichard's (2002) questionnaire called Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSI). The first part of questionnaire required the demographic information about the participants in terms of gender, degree, age, and teaching experience. The second part included 30 items investigated the teachers' attitude toward the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy use while reading a text. The items were categorized to three main categories: pre-reading metacognitive strategies, reading metacognitive strategies, and post-reading metacognitive strategies. Each item was followed by a 5-point Likert Scale which rang from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The participants of this study were asked to tick based on their own attitudes.

The results of reliability analysis exhibited that the reliability of each part of the questionnaire is very high (Cronbach' alpha for post reading is .83, for reading is .69, and for pre reading is .59).

### *3.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure*

The process of data collection started in December (2014) and continued until May (2015). Data gathered through thesis questionnaire to determine the participants' attitudes toward the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies while reading a text. It was given to high school teachers who taught English, and required them to determine their own views about the effectiveness of metacognitive strategies used by learners while reading a text.

This study employed a quantitative approach to analysis data. For this end, first the items in the thesis questionnaire were categorized into three parts of Pre-reading, Reading, and Post-reading strategies. Then, the mean of each part based on two groups of participants was computed. SPSS (version 19) was utilized in order to run the Mann-Whitney U test and Leven's test to find out whether the differences among the three kinds of metacognitive strategies chosen by different participants (BA vs. MA teachers) were significant. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the three dimensions of the study questionnaire (Pre reading and Reading and Post reading strategies).

## **4. Results**

### *4.1 Introduction*

In this chapter, research questions followed by the descriptive and inferential results are presented.

*4.2 Research Question 1:* Is there any significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about pre reading strategies?

#### *4.2.1 Descriptive Results*

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of MA and BA teachers' attitude about Pre reading strategies

	Academic degree	N	Mean	St.deviation
pre reading	Bachelors degree	58	49.49	2.82
	Masters degree	33	39.86	1.91
	Total	91		

The above Table showed that out of 91 teachers who participated in this study, 58 teachers hold Bachelor degree and 33 teachers hold Master degree. Comparing the mean scores of MA and BA teachers shows that mean score of BA teachers' attitude about pre reading strategy is 49.49, and mean score of MA teachers' attitude is 39.86.

#### 4.2.2 Inferential Results

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test

	pre reading
Mann-Whitney U	754.500
Wilcoxon W	1315.500
Z	-1.710
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.087

##### a. Grouping Variable: Academic degree

From data revealed in this table ( $Z = -1.710$  and  $\text{Sig} = .087$ ), it can be deduced that MA and BA teachers' attitude about Pre reading strategies is the same, and no significant difference between them can be seen.

*4.3 Research Question6:* Is there any significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about reading strategies?

#### 4.3.1 Descriptive Results

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of MA and BA teachers' attitude about Reading strategies

	Academic degree	N	Mean	St.deviation
Reading	Bachelors degree	58	39.19	2.23
	Masters degree	33	57.97	2.77
	Total	91		

The above Table showed that out of 91 teachers who participated in this study, 58 teachers hold Bachelor degree and 33 teachers hold Master degree. Comparing the mean scores of MA and BA teachers indicates that mean score of BA teachers' attitude about Reading strategy is 39.19, and mean score of MA teachers' attitude is 57.97.

#### 4.3.2 Inferential Results

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U test

	Reading
Mann-Whitney U	562.000
Wilcoxon W	2273.000
Z	-3.268
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

##### a. Grouping Variable: Academic degree

From data shown in this table ( $Z = -3.26$  and  $\text{Sig} = .001$ ), it can be deduced that BA and MA teachers' attitude about Reading strategies are not the same, but significantly different.

*4.4 Research Question6:* Is there any significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about post reading strategies?



#### 4.4.1 Descriptive Results

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of MA and BA teachers' attitude about Post reading strategies

	Academic degree	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post reading	Bachelor's degree	58	33.9828	8.02297	1.05347
	Master's degree	33	36.9394	4.22004	.73461

This table shows that the sample was composed of 58 BA and 33 MA teachers. Comparing the mean score of MA and BA teachers indicates that the mean score of BA teachers' attitude about post reading is 33.98, and the mean score of MA teachers' attitude is 36.93. In other words, the difference between the mean score of MA and BA teachers' attitude about Post reading strategy is about 3; such a difference can be seen in the standard error of the mean and standard deviation, too.

#### 4.4.2 Inferential Results

Table 6. Comparison between MA and BA teachers' attitude about Post reading strategies

Post reading	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper	
Equal variances assumed	15.98	.000	-1.96	89	.053	-2.95	1.50	-5.94	.033
Equal variances not assumed			-2.30	88.59	.024	-2.95	1.28	-5.50	-.404

Results obtained from Leven' s Test showed that there is few difference between MA and BA teachers' attitude about Post reading strategy which can be generalized to the population (T = -2.302, sig = .024). Therefore, it can be stated that MA and BA teachers do not have the same attitude about Post reading strategies.

### 5. Conclusion and Discussion

As Phakiti (2006) pointed out that the role of cognitive and metacognitive strategy in reading comprehension has been a conservative issue in language learning (Phakiti, 2006), this study explored the teachers' attitudes towards the effectiveness of Metacognitive strategies with regard to three parts: pre-reading, reading, and post-reading. Teachers' attitudes towards the use of reading metacognitive strategies were compared with each other in terms of their

academic degrees. After analyzing data, it was concluded that there was no significant difference between MA and BA teachers' attitudes towards using pre-reading metacognitive strategies though MA and BA teachers have significantly different attitudes towards reading and post-reading metacognitive strategies. So, the first hypothesis that is *There is no significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about pre reading strategies* is accepted, but the second hypothesis that is *There is no significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about reading strategies* and the third hypothesis that is *There is no significant difference between BA and MA teachers' attitude about post- reading strategies* are rejected.

The major factor contributing to the differences between MA and BA teachers can be attributed to their knowledge and awareness of metacognitive strategies. In this line, Akkaya (2009) claimed that teachers' metacognitive awareness did not differ regarding to their gender, but it differed with regard to their class level. He suggested that there is a significant increase in metacognitive awareness for teachers from first grade to upper grades. This pointed out that the more education and more experience of teaching influence the development of metacognitive awareness. Therefore, it can be inferred that teachers who have master degree compared to those who have bachelor degree with more educational experiences have more metacognitive strategies awareness, and as a result they definitely have different attitude towards using these strategies in different classes. The findings of this study affirmed this fact by showing that MA and BA teachers hold different attitudes towards metacognitive strategies. More specifically, teachers who hold MA degrees have more positive attitude toward using metacognitive strategies in reading skill compared to teachers having BA degrees.

## **6. Pedagogical Implications and Limitations of Study**

The findings of this study will be highly invaluable for teachers to reflect on their current method of teaching, look for the main causes of their success and failure, and reconsider their teaching practices through self-reflection. As Akkaya (2009) stated, metacognitive assessment is not only an extra for teaching and learning, but also it is a complementary aspect of teaching and learning. Hence, teachers should become aware of the roles of metacognitive strategies in their teaching, also help learners to benefit from these strategies and use them appropriately. Also the results are helpful for teacher training courses because students as new comers into school are not aware of metacognitive strategies or effective use of these strategies, so there is a need for training such strategies for studiers, and consequently prospective teachers should be trained to provide students with metacognitive strategies. In other words, training metacognitive strategies should be included in any educational programs (Okoro & Chukwudi, 2011).

The main limitation refers to the sample size of the study which was selected from some a few cities of Iran, so it is a little difficult to generalize the findings. In other terms, the size of sample can be increased to produce more valid generalizations based on the results of the study. The next limitation is that the data gathered through a questionnaire, yet it is suggested that another kind of instruments such as interview should have been employed.

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