



## The Impact of Explicit Vs Implicit Training compensation strategy on Iranian EFL Students' Reading Comprehension Performance

Payman Rajabi<sup>1,\*</sup>, Keyvan Mahmoodi<sup>1</sup>, Nadia Rezaee<sup>2</sup> and Hossein Afshari<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Language Department, Malayer Branch, Islamic Azad University, Malayer, Iran.

<sup>2</sup>Education Department of Malayer, Malayer, Iran.

<sup>3</sup>Accounting Department, Malayer Branch, Islamic Azad University, Malayer, Iran.

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### ABSTRACT

Based on many studies and research conducted on learning a foreign language, it can be claimed that most of the students experience a great difficulty in reading and comprehending the texts in foreign language. It seems that reading and comprehending foreign language materials can be improved if teachers do research to find ways through which readers could be helped to get more information from the text. Therefore, compensation reading strategies can be considered as certain types of enabling activities because they equip the reader with a base knowledge necessary for dealing with the content of the structure of materials. So the present study was an attempt to answer the research questions considering the effects of teaching explicit vs implicit compensation strategies on the third grade high school students' reading comprehension performance. 110 students took part in this study. The researcher provided them with a language proficiency test taken from NELSON test. Then based on their scores, the mean and standard deviation were computed. The students whose scores fell in the range of "mean  $\pm$  1 standard deviation" were selected for the research study. Therefore, 36 students in one class and 35 students in the other participated as the subjects of the study. Then a standard pre-test (Master TOEFL and Arco TOFEL) was given to the subjects in both groups before any treatment. Finally, a standard post-test (Master TOEFL and Arco TOEFL) was given to the subjects in both groups to prove or disprove the Null hypothesis. Obtaining the needed data, the researcher ran the necessary statistical procedures. It was proved that the experimental group which being exposed to the explicit compensation reading strategies showed higher level of performance on post-test than the control group. Therefore the main null hypothesis, teaching explicit compensation reading strategies has no effect on the reading comprehension of the third- grade high school students was rejected.

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### Introduction

Reading is probably the most important skill that students need for success in their studies. As students rarely have opportunities to talk to native speakers, the reading skill can fulfill this gap.

Based on many studies and research conducted on learning a foreign language, it can be claimed that most of the students experience a great difficulty in reading and comprehending the texts in foreign language. And there is a consensus among language specialists that reading in a foreign language and obtaining the necessary and required information embedded in the text is one of the significant objectives sought in a foreign language curriculum.

It seems that reading and comprehending foreign language materials can be improved if teachers do research to find ways through which readers could be helped to get more information from the text. It is believed that reading and comprehending written materials can be greatly facilitated and promoted through giving directions to the learners' perception, ideas, and expectations developed with respect to the content of the texts involved.

Therefore, compensation reading strategies can be considered as certain types of enabling activities because they equip the reader with a base knowledge necessary for dealing with the content of the structure of materials. Therefore, teaching students to become more strategic when they read increases their understanding of important textual information, as well as their motivation (Nolan, 1991).

During the past decade scholars in the field of second or foreign language teaching have directed an increasing amount of attention to the role of strategies and the extent they are used in reading comprehension processes. Regarding reading strategy use, Chastain (1988) found the following: Students do not need to know all the vocabulary and grammar

To comprehend the major portion of the text to recreate the Author's meaning. They can learn to read at a higher level of proficiency than in the past when the preoccupation with grammar deprived them of opportunity to read for meaning.

They can learn reading strategies that enable them to read at much higher level of proficiency (p. 224). The role of reading strategies in reading comprehension is well recognized, and strategic efficiency in reading can distinguish good readers from poor readers (Brown, et al., 1996).

According to Grabe (1991) reading strategies may be applicable at many levels of comprehension processing and the idea that fluent readers are strategic readers is well established.

The present study was an attempt to show that teaching compensation reading strategies to language learners can help them in their learning process. By teaching compensation reading strategies, especially at the third- grade of high school, the students will be familiar with the techniques for reading and their familiarity would probably increase their success in learning the materials. There are various types of reading strategies assumed to be facilitative in for foreign language reading, but those which were developed into present study are 1) Identifying inferences in statements, 2) Identifying what referents are referring to in paragraphs, 3) Inferring unknown vocabulary from context. Through using these strategies readers would be provided with a clear and overall picture of what they were supposed to deal with.

Surprisingly, empirical researches indicate that in most classrooms students receive inadequate instruction of reading skills and strategies (Eslami, 1996). The teacher's emphasis is often put on the production of comprehension rather than the processing skill. The present study attempted to find a solution to the problem. It attempted to maximize the teacher's assistance by incorporating compensation reading strategies into reading instruction.

#### Literature review

For some researchers, identifying reading strategies is not an end. They argued that reading strategies should be integrated into classroom instruction (Oxford, 1990; Davies, 1995). Many of these studies are theory-based but application-oriented. The purpose is to equip readers' with necessary reading skills.

Goodman (1973) proposed a model on reading strategy training. The target audiences in this study were middle school students and the strategy taught was compensation strategy. The reading materials used were either student's textbooks or books of their own choice. Having given examples of how to infer a word's meaning from the context, the teacher would give students sentences with some unknown words and ask them to use context clues to infer their meaning. Cooperative learning was stressed as the students worked in groups, then each group shared their thinking and inferences with the whole class. Goodman claimed that this model was an answer to the challenge to middle school teachers who had to deal with students to divers to reading competence and interests. Another advantage of this model was that it integrated reading instruction with cooperative learning techniques.

In another study, Kern (1989) evaluated the effects of strategy training on intermediate-level French students' reading comprehension and inferential ability, and determined what type of learners derive greatest benefit from the instruction. He found that explicit instruction in comprehension strategies could improve intermediate level student's ability to comprehend French texts and to infer the meaning of the unfamiliar words from context.

In another study, for predicting unfamiliar vocabulary based on context clues, Blaton (1984) suggested a comprehension framework for the use of context clues. The framework has two major dimensions: syntactic clues & semantic clues. The syntactic clues were related to grammatical structure whereas semantic clues involved intra- & inter sentence meaning relationship. Blaton argued that, by understanding how the writer used grammar, the reader would have a direct key to unlocking a word meaning. The reader should also use semantic

clues such as restatement, use of examples & summary clues when guessing the meaning of a new word.

#### Compensation strategies

One problem encountered by many readers is unfamiliar vocabulary and unknown concepts. This is where the reader needs to use compensation strategies to arrive at comprehension. Block (1986) discovered that readers unconsciously used such compensation strategies as accepting ambiguity, and establishing intra sentential and inter sentential ties. Using context clues are a more familiar term recommended by many researchers for the same purpose.

In their research paper, O'mllay & Chamot (1990) suggested a comprehension framework for the use of context clues. The syntactic clues were related to grammatical structures whereas semantic clues involved intra and inter sentence meaning relationships. They argued that, by understanding how the writer used grammar, the reader would have a direct key to unlocking a word's meaning. The reader should also use semantic clues such as restatement, use of example and summary clues when guessing the meaning of new words.

When talking about compensation strategies, Oxford (1990) distinguished between linguistic clues and other clues. Suffixes, prefixes, and word order are useful linguistic clues for guessing meanings. Other clues include using text structure such as introductions, summaries, conclusions, titles, and using background knowledge.

With these clues not only readers overcome a limited of a paragraph, the position of the writer, and the theme of an article, in addition, these strategies may significantly raise reading efficiently (Blaton, 1984).

#### This study

This study aimed at minimizing reading difficulties and maximizing comprehension ability, helping students to develop a sense of relying on their own capacities and strategies to make meaning out of text they were supposed to read and understand and, finally help them become independent readers. So the purpose of the present study was to investigate whether teaching compensation reading strategies would improve the reading comprehension ability of the Iranian third-grade high school students.

#### Research questions

1. Is there any statistically significant difference between explicit and implicit compensation strategy training on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners?
2. Does explicit compensation strategy training have any effect on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners?
3. Does implicit compensation strategy training have an effect on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners?

#### Research hypothesis

1. There is no statistically significant difference between explicit and implicit compensation strategy training on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners.
2. Explicit compensation strategy training does not have any effect on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners.
3. Implicit compensation strategy training does not have any effect on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners.

#### Participants

110 students took part in this study. The age range of students was 17 to 19. They were studying in academic year 2012-2013 in the third grade of Enghelab and Farhikhtegan high

school in Malayer. The students whose scores fell in the range of “mean  $\pm$  standard deviation” were selected for the research study and The heterogeneous subjects excluded from the statistical analysis.

Then these students randomly assigned into experimental and control groups.

#### Instrumentation

The instruments of this study are as follows:

1. The Nelson test: The Nelson test, which had 50 items, was given to the subjects (see Appendix A) . The homogeneity of the subjects was controlled through their scores on the Nelson test. The subjects, who were almost homogeneous were selected and the heterogeneous subjects excluded from the statistical analysis.

2. A standard reading comprehension test (Master TOEFL and Arco TOEFL) as a pretest which had seven passages with 25 items was administered to check the extent of their knowledge of intended reading strategies and their reading comprehension ability. This test was administered prior to teaching reading strategies.

3. At the end of the study, the subjects were given a standard post-test (Master TOEFL and Arco TOEFL) which had six passages with 25 items including reading comprehension questions similar to pre-test.

#### Procedures

The procedures of this study include the choosing of a homogenous group among the third – grade high school students in Enghelab and Farhikhtegan High School “ in Malayer. Then, this group was divided into two experimental and control groups. The control group was taught the compensation strategies implicitly, but the experimental group was taught the compensation strategies explicitly.

To obtain the necessary data to answer the research questions 110 students from Enghelab and Farhikhtegan High School were selected. The students were at the third grade of high school. The Nelson test which had 50 items was assigned to the subjects. Then based on the scores, the mean and standard deviation were computed. The students whose scores fell in the range of “mean  $\pm$  1 standard deviation” were selected for the research study. Therefore 35 students in one class and 36 students in the other participated as the subjects of the study.

Six reading passages from “book 3” was selected. Then, these six passages were taught in two different ways to the two experimental and control group. The control group was taught the compensation strategies implicitly. While the experimental group was taught the compensation reading strategies explicitly. First, in two separate sessions the researcher taught how to use context clues to understand the passage. The researcher taught the students the grammatical structure and they argued that, by understanding how the writer used grammar, the reader would have a direct key to unlocking a word’s meaning.

Next, in other session students practiced inferences. Students are taught that while reading English passages some details are not stated explicitly, it can be understood from the other details that are stated. Then, they were given instruction and examples for making inferences based on the information given in the statement.

Then in the next two sessions students practiced with referents (Identifying what the referents are referring to). Students were given different examples to locate.

Afterward in the next two sessions students were taught how to use semantic clues such as restatement, use of example and summary clues in order to guess the meaning of a new word.

Then in the next two sessions students were taught how to use linguistic clues such as suffixes, prefixes, and word order for guessing meanings.

Next, in two other sessions students practiced with other clues. Other clues include using text structure such as introductions, summaries, conclusions, titles, and using background knowledge.

Finally, in one session students in both groups sat for the post- test. The purpose was to determine whether there was a significance difference between these two groups regarding their reading comprehension performance.

#### Results and data analysis

##### Process of homogeneity

The statistical process of this study was related to the calculations done to select students to have two homogeneous groups. To do so, 110 students were required to take the Nelson proficiency test. Then the mean and the standard deviation of their scores were calculated.

The following Table shows the descriptive statistics of the students

N Valid	110
Missing	0
Mean	28.90
Std. Deviation	6.076
Range	43
Minimum	7
Maximum	50

Later on those students whose scores fell between one standard deviation above and below the mean were chosen as the subjects of this study. Then the researcher randomly divided them into experimental and control group. So 36 students in experimental group and 35 students in control group were selected as the subject of the study.

##### Calculations related to the pre- test of two groups

We have two groups which are randomly assigned to the experimental (with 36 students) and control (with 35 students) groups. Before teaching compensation reading strategies to both groups in two different ways, a pre- test was given to these groups to check their reading comprehension ability and their knowledge of the subject matter to be sure of the groups’ homogeneity. Because these two groups were assigned randomly, the mean performance of the two groups in reading comprehension ability should not significantly differ prior to the treatment.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics for pre-test**

Group	N	Mean	Var	S.D
Experimental	36	13.8889	2.236	1.49547
Control	35	13.9657	2.686	1.63886

As the table shows, the difference between these two means is very little.

So it can be concluded that the two groups are homogeneous in terms of their reading performance. However, more statistical computations were done to show the differences between these two means scores was not statistically significant.

**Table 3: Independent t- test**

T-observed	Tcritical	D.F	Sig.(2-tailed)
-0.206 (a)	2	69	0.837 (b)

By looking at the above table, one can find that the value of t- observed is -0.206 at 69 degrees of freedom which is lower than the value of t- critical at 0.05 level of significance. Meanwhile the two-tailed significance level shows the amount

of 0.837 which is larger than 0.05. So, there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups in pre-test. It can be concluded that the two groups are homogenous in terms of reading comprehension performance and their knowledge of subject matter.

#### Calculations related to the post-test of two groups

Six reading passages were chosen from "High School English Book 3" and taught differently to the two groups. The control group was taught compensation reading strategies implicitly, while the experimental group was taught compensation reading strategies explicitly. Then the students in both groups sat for the post-test.

Finally, based on the average score of each student, the mean score of each group was calculated and compare with each other. Here the researcher mentions three hypotheses and their results.

H0 1. There is no statistically significant difference between explicit and implicit compensation strategy training on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners.

H02. Explicit compensation strategy training does not have any effect on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners?

H03. Implicit compensation strategy training does not have any effect on reading comprehension performance of Iranian EFL learners?

**Table 4 : Descriptive statistics for post-test**

Group	N	Mean	Var	S.D
Experimental	36	18.1111	1.505	1.22679
Control	35	15.9314	2.536	1.59259

As the table shows, the difference between these two means of performance is large enough to show that the difference is actually related to the explicit treatment. It means that teaching compensation reading strategies explicitly effect students' reading comprehension performance. However, more statistical computations were done to show whether the difference between these two mean scores was statistically significant.

**Table 5: Independent t-test**

T-observed	T-critical	D.F	Sig.(2-tailed)
6.742 (c)	2	69	0.000 (d)

Taking a look at the table five, you can see that the value of t- observed is 6.472. This amount of t at 69 degrees of freedom is much greater than the value of t-critical at 0.05 level of significance.

Meanwhile the two-tailed significance level shows the amount of 0.000 which is lower than 0.05. So, there is statistically significant difference between the performance of two groups in post-test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the difference is actually related to the explicit treatment. It means that teaching compensation reading strategies explicitly improves reading comprehension performance.

#### Pair t-test related to the experimental group in pre-test and post-test

**Table 6 : Paired sample statistic**

Group	N	Mean	S.D
Group1 before	36	13.8889	1.49547
Group1 after	36	18.1111	1.22679

**Table 7: Paired t-test**

T-observed	T-critical	D.F	Sig. (2-tailed)
-14.941 (e)	2	35	0.000 (f)

As table seven shows the mean scores of experimental group in the pre-test and post- test were compared with each other. The researcher used paired sample t- test to see whether there is any significant difference between the pre-test

performance and post-test performance of the experimental group. The very low amount of t (-14.941) in test (e) shows that not only the mean scores of experimental group are not equal in pre-test and post- test but also the difference between these two means of performance is large enough to show that the difference is actually related to the explicit treatment of compensation strategy.

It means that explicit compensation strategy training effect on students' reading comprehension performance.

Meanwhile the two – tailed significance level shows the amount of 0.000 in (f) which is lower than 0.05. So, there is statistically significant difference between pre-test performance and post-test performance in experimental group.

#### Pair t-test related to the control group in pre-test and post-test

**Table 8: Paired sample statistic**

Group	N	Mean	S.D
Group2 before	35	13.9657	1.63886
Group2 after	35	15.9314	1.59259

**Table 9: Paired t-test**

T-observed	T-critical	D.F	Sig. (2-tailed)
-8.206 (g)	2	34	0.000 (h)

As table nine shows, the mean scores of control group in the pre-test and post-test were compared with each other. Here the researcher used the paired sample t-test. The low amount of t (-8.206) in test (g) shows that not only the mean scores of control group are not equal in pre-test and post-test but also the amount of mean in the post-test is large enough. It shows that the difference is actually related to the treatment of implicit compensation strategy.

Meanwhile the two-tailed significance level shows the amount of 0 .000 in (h) which is lower than 0.05. This shows that there is statistically significant difference between pre-test performance and post-test performance in control group.

#### Discussions and pedagogical implications

This study dealt with the problem of the third- grade high school students in their reading their English book. The present study aimed at minimizing reading difficulties and maximizing comprehension ability, helping the students to develop a sense of relying on their own capacities and strategies to make meaning out of texts they were supposed to read and understand, and finally to help them become independent readers. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the impact of explicit vs implicit compensation reading strategies on reading comprehension performance of Iranian third- grade high school students.

A group of individuals being randomized from large groups, 110 students took part in this study. The age range of the students of the study was 17 to 19, all were female and enjoyed the same level of language proficiency. They were studying in the third grade of Enghelab and Farhikhtegan highschools in Malayer. They randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. Then, a standard pre-test was given to the subjects in both groups before any treatment. Next, six reading passages were chosen from " High School English book three " and taught differently to the two groups. The control group was taught compensation reading strategies implicitly, but the experimental group was taught and being exposed to the compensation strategies explicitly.

Finally, at the end of the study the subjects were given a post- test, very similar to the pre-test, including some reading comprehension questions that were chosen from the standard tests.

In this study the researcher suggests the people involved in teaching English as foreign language to provide the students with such activities explicitly.

Also it is suggested that language teachers should be familiar with such strategies and teach them to their students explicitly in order to help them to take the responsibility of their own learning.

Therefore the teachers should teach the students to become more strategic when they read and increase their understanding of important textual information, as well as their motivation .

### Conclusions

The result of this study revealed that the students' degree of learning increase when they are explicitly aware of compensation reading strategies.

Furthermore, the chance to practice such compensation reading strategies in the class, students became more confident in comprehending the reading passages. Consequently, they were highly motivated to continue reading the passages and answer the questions following them. On the contrary, the students of the control group lacked such motivation. Also it was seen that the students gradually went toward becoming less dependent on the teachers' assistance.

Compensation strategy training helps to improve comprehension as well as efficiency in reading. By using compensation strategies, students will improve their reading performance and will be better readers.

Compensation reading strategy training equips the students with problem-solving abilities, which they can apply whenever they encounter reading difficulties. It promotes learner autonomy, enables students to take responsibility for their own learning .

Therefore compensation reading strategies can be considered as certain types of enabling activities because they equip the reader with a base knowledge necessary for dealing with the content of the structure of materials. Therefore,

teaching students to become more strategic when they read increase their understanding of important textual information, as well as their motivation .

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