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Beliefs, Preferences, and Processes of College EFL Readers*

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This study aimed to explore EFL learners' beliefs and preferences about reading tasks and to examine the reading processes that they use for making sense of text. The subjects were comprised of 107 college students who were non-English majors and aged 19-28 years. Based on scores achieved on a reading comprehension test, they were divided into two groups (more-skilled and less-skilled readers) and asked to respond to a survey in class. The results of the survey revealed that: (1) a majority rate themselves as fair readers, which might be indicative of the insecurity they feel toward L2 reading; (2) authentic texts (especially magazines) and popular media appear to be their favorite reading materials; (3) unknown vocabulary is a major impediment to their L2 reading comprehension; (4) the more-skilled readers manifest a meaning centered view of reading, whereas the less-skilled readers center on vocabulary; and (5) both groups employ a multistrategic approach to L2 reading; however, the less-skilled readers are less successful in determining the meaning of unknown vocabulary. Pedagogical implications for EFL classroom teachers are provided.

[EFL readers/learning strategies/reading processes]

I. INTRODUCTION

Contrary to speaking, reading is not what everybody learns to do. Teaching reading in elementary and secondary schools takes a tremendous amount of time and effort. It is actually possible to say that more time is spent on reading instruction than any other skill. Efficient reading entails an interaction between language and thought. In other words, reading ability requires the reader to combine text information with information and expectations that he/she already has. Fluent readers are claimed to have multiple skills such as rapid word recognition, vocabulary development, text-structure awareness, and strategic

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reading. In comparison to L1 readers, L2 readers often suffer as they interact with text due to weak linguistic knowledge and limited vocabulary. They do not have an intuition referring to the L2 structures and they lack the culture-specific knowledge that is presupposed in texts. Furthermore, L2 readers might have difficulty understanding text organization. All those factors could possibly give rise to comprehension failure (Carrell, 1984; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Nunan, 1999).

The term L2 reading covers a wide scope and is used in an extremely general way. In order to clearly understand L2 reading development, the fundamental first step is to decide the specific learning characteristics of the individual group included. Likewise, in dealing with research implications for L2 reading instruction, it is equally urgent to elucidate the target L2 readers' nature. L2 readers are commonly defined as "cognitively mature individuals already literate in their respective first languages learning to read a second language" (Koda, 2005, p. 7). Reading teachers' ultimate goal is to minimize L2 students' reading difficulties and to help them maximize their comprehension achievement. In planning L2 reading curricula, teachers should take students' needs and goals, language proficiency, and reading experiences into consideration. It is also crucial to investigate students' motivations, and attitudes toward L2 reading, and the specific concerns of the curriculum (e.g., favorite topics, text materials, evaluation criteria). Nevertheless, those beliefs and preferences of L2 readers which could considerably influence reading development have been paid comparatively little attention in L2 research (Barnett, 1988; Grabe & Stoller, 2001).

Hence, the primary goal of the present research is to explore the metacognitive awareness of college EFL learners about reading in English and about themselves as readers. The secondary goal is to investigate the reading process that they engage in as they make their way through English texts. The specific research questions are as follows:

(1) What are the beliefs and preferences of EFL learners about English reading tasks?
(2) What are the processing behaviors that EFL learners take toward reading in English?
(3) What are the differences between the more-skilled and less-skilled EFL readers in regard to the above issues?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Metacognition refers to a level of thinking that involves active control over the mental processes used in learning situations. Metacognition directs the reader in selecting and utilizing reading strategies and also manages the reader's thinking and behavior. Metacognitive awareness is related to efficient learning, and may function as a critical

connection in the transition from novice to sophisticated reader. Regarding adult readers' metacognitive awareness about reading tasks and strategies, poor readers appeared to have misconceptions. For example, they claimed that reading word for word was easier than reading for general meaning which demonstrated that their focus was simply on exact story reproduction. They perceived reading as a decoding process rather than a comprehension task, implemented fewer strategies, and were less able to figure out how and when to employ particular reading strategies in comparison to good readers. In repairing miscomprehension, poor readers preferred to rely on external sources (e.g., asking someone) rather than use independent strategies (e.g., using context or sounding it out). Hence, it is necessary that reading instruction for adult disabled readers should concentrate on both awareness and use of a set of strategies (Gambrell & Heathington, 1981).

Jiménez, García, and Pearson (1995) conducted case studies to explore the cognitive and metacognitive knowledge of bilingual and monolingual readers and found that (1) definite knowledge of the relationship between L1 and L2 could enhance bilingual readers' reading comprehension; (2) unknown vocabulary was an impediment to reading comprehension for bilingual readers; and (3) reading proficiency and bilingualism observably influenced reading comprehension of the bilingual readers. The proficient bilingual reader disclosed that she had a word-driven view of reading, considered comprehension as the goal of reading, and implemented a multistrategic approach. In contrast, the less proficient bilingual reader possessed a deficient notion of reading, in which her primary concern was just to finish the task, with comprehension a secondary goal. She utilized a variety of strategies in a fragmented way; when she identified a problem, she seemed unable to coordinate these strategies to provide satisfactory solutions. Furthermore, she revealed an obsession with vocabulary as a barrier to comprehension.

Chin (2008) surveyed college EFL readers to obtain their metacognitive awareness and preferences about reading in English. The results showed that a majority of the proficient and less-proficient readers believed that L2 reading proficiency correlated with L1 reading proficiency; reading practice promoted their reading skills; vocabulary strength, background knowledge, and grammatical competence had a strong impact on their reading proficiency; their reading performance varied depending on the nature of text (i.e., writing style or content). It was unfortunate that regardless of reading proficiency, many of the students did not find EFL reading enjoyable. Rather they manifested a lack of perception of progress, low confidence, and anxiety toward it. The less-proficient readers' obsession with vocabulary coexisted with a meaning-centered orientation to reading. In short, they appeared to hold a bottom-up view of reading which could be detrimental to comprehending a text. In order to unlock the meaning of unknown vocabulary, the proficient readers tried to seek solutions by themselves, whereas the less-proficient readers

revealed a great deal of dependence on outside sources, a finding which corroborated Gambrell and Heathington's (1981) observation.

Schoonen, Hulstijn, and Bossers, (1998) showed that a strong correlation existed between reading and vocabulary in both L1 and L2 contexts. In fact, vocabulary knowledge influenced L2 reading more than L1 reading, especially at the lower level. Metacognitive knowledge was also considerably conducive to L1 and L2 reading in that it made more contributions to reading abilities at the higher level than at the lower level. The stronger effect of vocabulary on lower proficiency levels confirmed the likelihood of a language threshold in L2 reading which should be accounted for in reading instruction. The findings of this study implied that language proficiency is an important factor that determines L2 reading abilities. Also metacognitive instruction on text structure and reading strategies could possibly strengthen metacognitive abilities that uphold more advanced reading.

Comprehension strategies show how readers perceive a task, what textual cues they pay attention to, how they make meaning of text, and how they fix what they do not understand. Strategies, therefore, demonstrate a reader's resources for comprehension. Strategies can be categorized into two levels: general comprehension and local linguistic strategies. General strategies are comprised of comprehension-gathering and comprehension-monitoring strategies (e.g., anticipate content or recognize text structure). Local strategies describe what readers do in order to understand particular linguistic units (e.g., paraphrase or reread) (Block, 1986). Likewise, Hosenfeld (1977) identified two types of strategies: main meaning line and word-solving strategies. Main meaning line strategies indicate what the reader does when attributing meaning to sentences in an uninterrupted manner. Word-solving strategies indicate what the reader does when he encounters an unknown phrase or vocabulary.

Carrell's (1989) research focused on the relationship between readers' metacognitive awareness of different kinds of reading strategies and their reading ability in their L1 and L2. The participants were placed into two groups; group one consisted of native speakers of Spanish and group two was made up of native speakers of English learning Spanish. The results demonstrated that in L1 reading, local reading strategies (i.e., those having to do with sound-letter, word-meaning, sentence syntax, and text details) negatively affected reading performance. In L2 reading, some differences existed between the Spanish L1 and English L1 groups. The ESL group, at more advanced proficiency levels, seemed to be more global (i.e., relied on background knowledge, text gist, textual organization) or top-down oriented, whereas the Spanish as a foreign language group, at lower proficiency levels, seemed to be more local or bottom-up oriented.

Padron and Waxman (1988) examined the influence of L2 students' perceptions of their cognitive strategies on reading comprehension. The results revealed negative and positive

strategies related to ESL students' reading achievement. For instance, "looking up words in the dictionary" was a negative strategy, whereas "underlining important parts of the story" was a positive strategy. Padron and Waxman claimed that the use of negative strategies could negatively affect L2 students' reading comprehension. It should be noted, however, that Padron and Waxman's study was targeted only to Hispanic elementary students and did not specify the participants' reading proficiency level. Thus, their findings might not be applicable to all L2 students.

In a similar vein, Barnett (1988) investigated the relationships among L2 reading comprehension, strategy use, and perceived strategy use. The results disclosed that a significant correlation existed among those three variables for college-level readers of French as a foreign language. Readers who successfully considered and kept track of context comprehended better what they read than readers who used this strategy less. Moreover, reader perception of strategy use interacted significantly with comprehension. Readers who believed that they employed more productive strategies were better able to read through context and understand than readers who did not believe that they employed those strategies.

Schema theory focuses on the significance of background knowledge in language comprehension. According to schema theory, a text simply directs readers in retrieving or making meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge, which is called the reader's background knowledge (i.e., schemata). Comprehending a text occurs from an interaction between the reader's background knowledge and the text (Carrell, 1984; Rumelhart, 1980). In exploring the role of schema availability in L2 reading comprehension, Carrell (1988) provides a distinction between formal schemata and content schemata. Formal schemata refer to the reader's background knowledge about rhetorical organization, whereas content schemata refer to the reader's background knowledge about the content area of a text. Johnson (1981) showed that the cultural background of a text had more influence on L2 students' reading comprehension than the level of linguistic complexity. In a subsequent study, Johnson (1982) analyzed the effect of prior cultural experience on L2 reading comprehension and discovered that prior cultural experience facilitated readers' comprehension of the familiar information in the text. The readers recalled a text better on a familiar topic than on an unfamiliar topic.

III. METHOD

1. Subjects

A total of 107 college EFL students who were enrolled in one of three sections of a required English course at a university in Gimhae participated in this study. More than half of the subjects were freshmen; the females outnumbered the males. They were non-English majors and aged 19-28 years. In order to evaluate the subjects' English language proficiency levels, the researcher implemented a pretest during the first week of the spring semester of 2008. In more detail, the subjects took a 60 item English language proficiency test that covered vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure. The test was a shortened version of TOEIC practice test from *Longman Preparation Series for the New TOEIC Test: More Practice Tests* (Lougheed, 2007). The data pool disclosed that the subjects' English language proficiency levels varied from 14 to 49 correct items.

2. Data Collection

1) Reading Comprehension Test

For the purpose of determining the subjects' reading proficiency levels, the researcher gave them another multiple-choice standardized test which focused on reading comprehension during the seventh week of the spring semester of 2008. The test was an adapted version of a TOEIC practice test from *Longman Preparation Series for the New TOEIC Test: More Practice Tests* (Lougheed, 2007), which comprised of 12 reading passages and 50 comprehension question items. The results showed that all the subjects gained total scores ranging from 12 to 48 correct items. Based on the scores, the subjects were divided into groups of high and low ability students. The subjects who attained a score of 30 correct items and above were assigned to a category of "more-skilled readers," while those who attained below 30 correct items were assigned to a group called "less-skilled readers." There were 47 "more-skilled readers" with a mean reading score of 35.9. The number of "less-skilled readers" was 60 with a mean reading score of 21.8.

2) Questionnaire

All the subjects of both groups were surveyed during the thirteenth week of the spring semester of 2008. The questionnaire was written in Korean to make sure that the subjects clearly understood the questions and the choices. The items on the questionnaire were adapted from the findings of earlier studies (Barnett, 1988; Carrell, 1989; Chin, 2008). To be more specific, the questionnaire comprised of two parts. Part I was constructed to examine the subjects' beliefs and preferences in English reading tasks, whereas part II was

to investigate the subjects' processing behaviors toward reading in English. The surveys were taken in class and the subjects were given ample time to respond to them. Following a standard protocol, the subjects remained anonymous but identified their major, gender, reading comprehension test score, and age. The subjects were basically asked to circle the best choice from among several. Specifically, responses of the items 3-4 were presented on a five-point Likert Scale: Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral/Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Items 1 & 5-16 were provided in the form of multiple choice questions. There was also one-ended question (item 2), where subjects were asked to state their own opinions.

3. Data Analysis

All the quantitative items on the questionnaire were tallied and summed. As a subsequent examination, all the responses to each item were tabulated and compared to analyze similarities and differences between the more skilled and less skilled readers. Referring to items 3-4, t-tests were run afterwards to decide the statistical significance between the two groups. For the sake of convenience, subjects' responses to items 3-4 were collapsed into three types: P (Positive: Strongly Agree (5) & Agree (4)), U (Undecided/Neutral (3)), and N (Negative: Disagree (2) & Strongly disagree (1)). In analyzing the subjects' responses to the open ended question (item 2), the researcher reviewed the corpus, explored regularities and patterns, and developed a set of coding categories. Following Holsti's (1969) guidelines, she made sure that the coding categories were strict enough. That is, all relevant elements in the data could fit into a category and each category was unequivocal, so that no single element could be sorted into more than one category. In response to item 2, the subjects were admitted to write down more than one type of material which could be assorted into a separate category. Accordingly, total percentage of all the categories turned out to be more than 100%. The categories which were under 5% in total were simply labeled into "miscellany" as a whole.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. EFL Learners' Beliefs and Preferences in English Reading Tasks

As shown in Tables 1 and 2 (see the Appendix), the first question in Part I of the questionnaire asked the subjects to assess themselves as EFL readers. Regardless of L2 reading proficiency, nobody rated himself/herself as an excellent reader. A large number of the subjects felt that they are fair readers (more-skilled 59.57% vs. less-skilled 75%). It is

notable, however, that another 40.42% of the more-skilled readers rated themselves as good readers, whereas only 10% of the less-skilled readers said so. 15% of the less-skilled readers even believed themselves as poor readers. A possible explanation for this finding might be that even though the more-skilled readers were found to have higher self-confidence than their counterparts, most of the subjects still have great anxiety about reading in English. These responses could also indicate that they feel insecure, which is an impediment to interacting with English texts.

In response to item 2, the more-skilled and less-skilled readers reported that they prefer to read magazines the most (51.06% vs. 45%). Overall, male students liked sport and automobile magazines such as *Sport* and *Autoweek*, whereas female students favored fashion and beauty magazines such as *Vogue* and *Elle*. Moreover, both groups said that they enjoy reading literature (48.93% vs 33.33%), EFL materials (40.42% vs. 36.66%), and newspapers (40.42% vs. 28.33%). In literature, novels were predominant. Regarding EFL materials, TOEIC textbooks were most popular. It may simply reflect the fact that nowadays TOEIC scores are one of the crucial factors that determine success in searching for a job after graduation in Korea. Among newspapers, *Korea Herald* and *Korea Times* were most frequently mentioned. Similar to comics (more-skilled 23.4% vs. less-skilled 18.33%), the subjects also appeared to be interested in reading through "popular media" (more-skilled 19.14% vs. less-skilled 20%), which referred to movie and drama scripts, subtitles/captions, pop song lyrics, and commercials. Travel guides and advertisements (i.e., brochures and flyers) were comparatively unpopular. Only the female students (more-skilled 8.51% vs. less-skilled 10%) claimed to read cook books. In miscellany, proverb handbooks, e-mail messages, and menus were included.

Item 3 was to explore aspects that make EFL reading difficult for the subjects (see the Tables 3 and 4 in the Appendix). "Unknown vocabulary" (more-skilled 85.11% vs. less-skilled 85%) was shown to be the biggest obstacle, followed by "getting the overall meaning of the text" (more-skilled 65.96% vs. less-skilled 66.67%). More than half of both groups also claimed that "the organization of the text" (53.19% vs. 51.67%) and "the grammatical structures" (51.06% vs. 60%) caused them difficulty. Around a third of both groups (23.4% vs. 31.67%) mentioned "relating the text to what I already know about the topic" (i.e., background knowledge). A majority of the subjects (85.11% vs. 71.67%), however, gave a negative answer to "pronunciation of the words." As displayed in Table 9 (see the Appendix), *t*-test results between the more-skilled and less-skilled readers disclosed that there was no significant difference found in regard to all those six elements on item 3. In other words, the findings demonstrated that regardless of L2 reading proficiency, students have more concern about word meaning than text gist. Thus this study refutes Carrell's (1989) observations that more-proficient L2 readers tended to be global oriented while less- proficient L2 readers tended to be local oriented.

As shown in Tables 5 and 6 (see the Appenix), item 4 examined the subjects' perceptions about fluent EFL reading. The vast majority of the more-skilled readers figured that "getting the overall meaning of a text" contributes to fluent EFL reading the most (93.62%), followed by "guessing at word meanings" (91.49%) and "drawing on a large vocabulary store" (89.36%). More than half of them also mentioned "integrating the information in the text with what he/she already knows" (65.96%), "grasping the organization of the text" (63.83%), and "having a good command of grammar" (61.7%). On the other hand, the less-skilled readers marked "guessing at word meanings" as the most influential (95%), followed by "drawing on a large vocabulary store" (93.33%) and "getting the overall meaning of a text" (85%). A substantial number of them pointed out "grasping the organization of the text" (75%), "having a good command of grammar" (66.67%), and "integrating the information in the text with what he/she already knows" (50%). Only around a third of both groups found "using a dictionary" (25.53% vs. 28.33%) and "focusing on the details of the content" (25.53% vs. 31.67%) conducive to fluent EFL reading. A majority of the subjects, however, gave a negative answer to "sounding out words" (70.21% vs. 63.33%).

T-test results between the more-skilled and less-skilled readers (see the Table 10 in the Appendix) showed that a significant difference was found in response to item 4.1 ($t = -1.98$, $p < .05$). That is, a significantly larger number of the less-skilled readers claimed that "drawing on a large vocabulary store" paves the way toward fluent EFL reading, in comparison with the more-skilled readers. A possible explanation for this outcome might be that the less-skilled readers are still more obsessed with words, a result consistent with the findings of Jiménez et al. (1995) and Chin (2008).

2. EFL Learners' Processing Behaviors toward Reading in English

As Tables 7 and 8 illustrate (see the Appendix), Part II of the questionnaire mainly explored the types of reading strategies that the subjects thought best described the way they interact with English texts. When asked what they pay attention to while reading in English (item 5), an overwhelming majority of the more-skilled readers (93.62%) reported paying the most attention to "what the reading passage means"; only 6.38% marked "what individual words mean." No students claimed to focus on the form or grammatical function of the words or the structure of the passage. Likewise, 65% of the less-skilled readers said that they give the most attention to "what the reading passage means." They ranked "what individual words mean" and "what the structure of the passage is" equally in second place (15%). Only 5% marked "what the form or grammatical function of the words are." Thus we can see that during text processing, the more-skilled readers are more likely to attend to meaning construction than their counterparts. Regarding item 6, "read straight through the

passage and reread only the difficult sections" was the most popular strategy that the more-skilled readers use while reading in English (53.19%); "read straight through the passage once and then reread it" was ranked in second place (29.79%). In contrast, the less-skilled readers mentioned "read straight through the passage once and then reread it" and "read straight through the passage and reread only the difficult sections" equally by 36.67%. This result could be interpreted that the more-skilled readers tend to use "rereading" strategy to repair miscomprehension more than the less-skilled readers.

On item 7, during text processing, many of the subjects claimed that they think about what they know about the topic of the passage (more-skilled 70.21% vs. less-skilled 66.67%). Less than a third of both groups reported simply beginning reading the text itself (19.15% vs. 25%). A few of them mentioned that they don't usually consider how it relates to what they already know (6.38% vs. 5%) and that they think about what they know about the author's style or point of view (4.26% vs. 3.33%). Thus it can be conjectured that regardless of L2 reading proficiency, most of the subjects engage in activating their background knowledge which leads to efficient comprehension (Carrell, 1984). In response to item 8, more than a third of the more-skilled readers perceived that "what kind of passages they are" is the factor that most affects their reading behaviors (31.91%), followed by their reading purposes (29.79%). Another 27.66% said that they read different English passages the same way because they're written in English. Similarly, 35% of the less-skilled readers reported that they read different English passages differently depending on "what kind of passages they are." Another 31.67% felt that they read different English passages the same way because they're written in English, whereas 21.67% said that they read different English passages differently depending on their reading purposes. Notably, a few of both groups believed that they read different English passages the same way because they are usually difficult (10.64% vs. 11.67%). Thus we can see that passage structure has the biggest impact on the way they interact with English texts, whereas difficulty is their least concern.

Item 9 examined the subjects' beliefs about their own reading purposes. A considerable number of both groups reported that they read an English passage because they want to learn how to read in English (46.81% vs. 46.67%). It is striking that they rarely read an English passage because they find the topic interesting or they want to find out how the story ends (17.02% vs. 10%). Thus we can see that the topic and the storyline of text are not crucial factors that motivate the subjects to read. Rather the subjects seemed to possess "instrumental motivation" in that they want to read English texts as a means for improving reading skills (Brown, 1994). Regarding item 10, the majority of both groups (91.49% vs. 83.33%) reported that while reading in English, they "often" or "sometimes" predict what might come next. In short, regardless of L2 reading proficiency, "predicting" emerged as a popular strategy among the subjects.

Items 11-12 explored the subjects' perceptions about titles and illustrations of English texts. A large number of both groups said that when an English reading passage has a title, they read it first and imagine what the passage might be about (63.83% vs. 76.67%). Less than a third of the subjects claimed that they attempt to make connections between what they already know and the title (27.66% vs. 13.33%). This result suggests that a title of English text helps the subjects predict the content more than utilize their background knowledge. Regarding illustrations, the most common strategy among both groups was to "expect the reading passage to reflect what is in the illustrations" (42.55% vs. 46.67%), followed by "imagine what the reading passage might be about based on the illustrations" (38.3% vs. 41.67%). All in all, this finding shows that together with titles, illustrations contribute to predicting the content for the subjects.

Items 13-16 were to investigate the subjects' strategies to deal with unknown vocabulary. When they come to a word they don't know, the more-skilled readers marked "guess what the word might mean and reread the sentence" the most (31.91%), but "guess what the word might mean and go on" was not far behind (29.79%). Likewise, the less-skilled readers ranked "guess what the word might mean and reread the sentence" in first place (26.67%), followed by "skip the word and come back to it later" (25%). Among both groups, "look the word up in a dictionary and reread the sentence" (10.64% vs. 8.33%) and "look the word up in a dictionary and write the English meaning on the page" (12.77% vs. 16.67%) emerged as uncommon strategies. In other words, both groups preferred to guess word meanings rather than consult a dictionary. If a paragraph contains several words they don't know, however, the more-skilled readers claimed to "look up the ones that seem most important and guess the others" the most (31.91%), followed by "guess only the ones that seem important" (25.53%) and "guess what they all mean" (19.15%). In contrast, the less-skilled readers preferred to "look them all up in a dictionary, regardless of importance" (25%), while another 23.33% marked "guess only the ones that seem important."

To figure out what an unfamiliar word might mean, the more-skilled readers (89.36%) claimed to "consider what the rest of the sentence or paragraph says" more than the less-skilled readers (76.67%), while both groups rarely "analyze the grammatical form of the word" or "consider any illustrations." Thus it can be concluded that the more the subjects make use of the content, the better they read in L2. Finally, when they figure out what new words mean, the vast majority of the more-skilled readers said that their guesses are correct (93.62% marked "usually" or "sometimes"). In contrast, a lot smaller number of the less-skilled readers believed so (68.33% marked "usually" or "sometimes"). A possible explanation for this outcome might be that when coming across unknown vocabulary, the less-skilled readers were less able to construct appropriate word meanings for comprehension than their counterparts, which corroborates the findings of Jiménez et al. (1995).

V. CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this research was to explore how EFL learners perceive reading in English and themselves as readers. The more-skilled and less-skilled readers in general believed that they are fair readers rather than excellent or good readers. In other words, they seemed to feel uncomfortable about their L2 reading. Although it is hard to decide exactly why the students felt this way, it is conjectured that since they are not English majors, they may have more confidence in their academic fields (e.g., biology, education, law, etc.) than in their L2 reading proficiency. With regard to favorite reading materials, this study demonstrated that the students are interested in "authentic" texts (e.g., magazines and newspapers) besides EFL materials. Popular media (e.g., drama scripts) appeared to be another important resource that should not be disregarded. The subjects of both groups found that unknown vocabulary is a major impediment to their L2 reading comprehension. They hardly, however, mentioned pronunciation of words which suggests that oral reading is their least concern. As a requirement for fluent EFL reading, the more-skilled readers emphasized comprehension, whereas the less-skilled readers centered on vocabulary. In brief, the more-skilled readers manifested a meaning centered view of reading but the less-skilled readers did not.

The survey showed that the students of both groups employ a variety of strategies to make sense of text, although passage structure considerably influences their L2 reading behaviors. To be more specific, they claimed to take all the possible clues (e.g., context, background knowledge, title, illustrations) into consideration. Predicting and rereading are also commonly used strategies. Their fundamental reading purpose is to develop reading skills, while pleasure is secondary. When encountered unknown vocabulary, the more-skilled readers are more willing to guess word meanings than their counterparts. When it comes to consulting a dictionary, the more-skilled readers make a distinction between important and less important words, whereas the less-skilled readers tend to treat them in the same way. The less-skilled readers are less successful in determining the meaning of unknown vocabulary, compared to the more-skilled readers.

On the whole, the value of this study may be acknowledged as providing classroom teachers with a glimpse of students' metacognitive awareness and processing behaviors about EFL reading tasks. Nevertheless, limitations should be acknowledged for future explorations. First, in addressing reading strategies, this survey was designed less effectively by its failure to specify which genre was being referred to. Accordingly, it is unclear whether the strategies that the students claimed to use in the questionnaire were to refer to textbooks or authentic materials. A follow-up questionnaire covering a variety of genres might have to be conducted in order to see if students' strategies are changed depending on the nature of text. Likewise, it would be worthwhile if their assessment about

themselves as EFL readers varies according to what they read. A second limitation of this survey is that it did not explore students' perceptions of their needs and their sense of what helps them become better EFL readers. For this reason, the results may not be enlightening enough to be applied to plan a reading curriculum. An additional extension of this research might interview students to collect more complete information about students' goals, reading resources, and evaluation expectations. Finally, this research should be replicated to investigate how EFL students' perceptions and strategies affect their overall reading comprehension in other teaching contexts. The findings of such studies might allow classroom teachers to understand EFL readers in a broader scope.

VI. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this research offer the following implications for EFL reading teachers. First, many of the EFL students in this survey did not seem to have confidence in their reading proficiency. As a confidence building strategy, teachers should provide the students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their positive features in class. For instance, a new unit might start with a task in which everyone is able to do well, and afterwards, more challenging activities should be balanced with manageable tasks. This way, students are likely to recognize their strengths and abilities and be motivated to become risk takers during text processing. Anxiety and fear, however, are key elements that are detrimental to motivation and achievement. By removing the factors that can give rise to anxiety and fear, teachers can create a non-threatening classroom which reinforces favorable reading intentions. To be more specific, teachers would do well to encourage collaboration rather than competition but avoid comparing proficient and less proficient readers. While students' accomplishments should be praised, criticisms and corrections should be given with caution (Dörnyei, 2001; Hudson, 2007; Park, 2006).

Interest is essential, for it enhances motivation, which in addition is a crucial factor to the development of EFL reading skills. In order to motivate the desire to read in English, teachers should introduce interesting texts, which are appropriate to students' reading levels. This study disclosed that EFL students are keen on authentic materials and popular media. To overcome the limitations of a text, teachers should utilize authentic materials and popular media in class. Authentic materials and popular media pave the way to contextualize language learning. If reading lessons are designed to comprehend anything that is related to the real world (e.g., a cooking recipe), students are expected to pay more attention to content and meaning than to language. This serves students as a useful source of language input, for students can be exposed to more than just the language introduced by the teacher and the text (Day & Bamford, 1998; Gebhard, 2000).

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1

More-Skilled Readers' Responses to Items 1-2 (data in percentages; n = 47)

Item	Content
1	How would you rate yourself as an EFL reader? excellent good 19(40.42%) fair 28(59.57%) poor
2	What kinds of English materials would you prefer to read? -magazines: 24(51.06%) -literature (fairy tales/storybooks, poems, essays, novels): 23(48.93%) -EFL materials (TOEIC/TOEFL, English textbooks, dictionaries, grammar books): 19(40.42%) -newspapers: 19(40.42%) -comics: 11(23.40%) -popular media: 9(19.14%) -content area textbooks: 8(17.02%) -advertisements: 5(10.63%) -the Bible: 5(10.63%) -travel guides: 5(10.63%) -cook books: 4(8.51%)

TABLE 2

Less-Skilled Readers' Responses to Items 1-2 (data in percentages; n = 60)

Item	Content
1	How would you rate yourself as an EFL reader? excellent good 6(10%) fair 45(75%) poor 9(15%)
2	What kinds of English materials would you prefer to read? -magazines: 27(45%) -EFL materials (TOEIC/TOEFL, English textbooks, dictionaries, grammar books): 22(36.66%) -literature (fairy tales/storybooks, poems, essays, novels): 20(33.33%) -newspapers: 17(28.33%) -popular media: 12(20%) -comics: 11(18.33%) -content area textbooks: 7(11.66%) -cook books: 6(10%) -travel guides: 6(10%) -advertisements: 4(6.66%) -the Bible: 3(5%) -instruction manuals: 3(5%)

TABLE 3

More-Skilled Readers' Responses to Item 3

Item 3	In your case, what makes EFL reading difficult?	frequency/ % of responses (N=47)			
		Mean	P	U	N
		SD	%	%	%
3.1	the grammatical structures	3.43	24	12	11
		1.08	51.06	25.53	23.4
3.2	unknown vocabulary	4.15	40	5	2
		0.78	85.11	10.64	4.26
3.3	pronunciation of the words	1.98	1	6	40
		0.64	2.13	12.77	85.11
3.4	relating the text to what I already know about the topic	2.89	11	21	15
		0.79	23.4	44.68	31.91
3.5	getting the overall meaning of the text	3.6	31	10	6
		0.88	65.96	21.28	12.77
3.6	the organization of the text	3.38	25	14	8
		0.87	53.19	29.79	17.02

TABLE 4

Less-Skilled Readers' Responses to Item 3

Item 3	In your case, what makes EFL reading difficult?	frequency/ % of responses (N=60)			
		Mean	P	U	N
		SD	%	%	%
3.1	the grammatical structures	3.65	36	16	8
		1.09	60	26.67	13.33
3.2	unknown vocabulary	4.2	51	7	2
		0.9	85	11.67	3.33
3.3	pronunciation of the words	2.12	2	15	43
		0.76	3.33	25	71.67
3.4	relating the text to what I already know about the topic	3.1	19	27	14
		0.95	31.67	45	23.33
3.5	getting the overall meaning of the text	3.77	40	16	4
		0.81	66.67	26.67	6.67
3.6	the organization of the text	3.45	31	17	12
		1.02	51.67	28.33	20

TABLE 5

More-Skilled Readers' Responses to Item 4

Item 4	What is required for fluent EFL reading?	frequency/ % of responses (N=47)			
		Mean	P	U	N
		SD	%	%	%
4.1	drawing on a large vocabulary store	4.28	42	4	1
		0.71	89.36	8.51	2.13
4.2	sounding out words	2.23	2	12	33
		0.7	4.26	25.53	70.21
4.3	getting the overall meaning of a text	4.3	44	3	0
		0.59	93.62	6.38	0.00
4.4	using a dictionary	2.74	12	15	20
		1.01	25.53	31.91	42.55
4.5	guessing at word meanings	4.4	43	3	1
		0.71	91.49	6.38	2.13
4.6	integrating the information in the text with what he/she already knows	3.74	31	14	2
		0.74	65.96	29.79	4.26
4.7	focusing on the details of the content	2.89	12	17	18
		0.91	25.53	36.17	38.3
4.8	grasping the organization of the text	3.74	30	14	3
		0.9	63.83	29.79	6.38
4.9	having a good command of grammar	3.51	29	12	6
		0.83	61.7	25.53	12.77

TABLE 6

Less-Skilled Readers' Responses to Item 4

Item 4	What is required for fluent EFL reading?	frequency/ % of responses (N=60)			
		Mean	P	U	N
		SD	%	%	%
4.1	drawing on a large vocabulary store	4.53	56	4	0
		0.62	93.33	6.67	0.00
4.2	sounding out words	2.3	5	17	38
		0.89	8.33	28.33	63.33
4.3	getting the overall meaning of a text	4.2	51	8	1
		0.73	85	13.33	1.67
4.4	using a dictionary	2.9	17	20	23
		1.17	28.33	33.33	38.33
4.5	guessing at word meanings	4.37	57	3	0
		0.58	95	5	0.00
4.6	integrating the information in the text with what he/she already knows	3.55	30	25	5
		0.89	50	41.67	8.33
4.7	focusing on the details of the content	2.97	19	20	21
		1.13	31.67	33.33	35
4.8	grasping the organization of the text	3.97	45	11	4
		0.92	75	18.33	6.67
4.9	having a good command of grammar	3.82	40	15	5
		0.95	66.67	25	8.33

TABLE 7

More-Skilled Readers' Responses to Items 5-16 (data in percentages; n=47)

Item	Content
5.	When I read in English, I pay attention to -what individual words mean: 3(6.38%) -what the reading passage means: 44(93.62%) -what the form or grammatical function of the words are: -what the structure of the passage is:
6.	When I read in English, I -read straight through the passage once and then reread it: 14(29.79%) -read each paragraph and reread it before I read the following paragraph: 6(12.77%) -read straight through the passage and reread only the difficult sections: 25(53.19%) -read straight through the passage and do not reread: 2(4.26%)
7.	When I read in English, I -don't usually consider how it relates to what I already know: 3(6.38%) -think about what I know about the topic of the passage: 33(70.21%) -think about what I know about the author's style or point of view: 2(4.26%) -simply begin reading the text itself: 9(19.15%)

8.	I read different English passages -the same way because English passages are usually difficult: 5(10.64%) -the same way because they're written in English: 13(27.66%) -differently depending on my reading purposes: 14(29.79%) -differently depending on what kind of passages they are: 15(31.91%)
9.	I read an English reading passage because -I find the topic interesting or I want to find out how the story ends: 8(17.02%) -I have questions to answer about it: 9(19.15%) -it has been assigned: 3(6.38%) -I want to find out what the author has to say: 5(10.64%) -I want to learn how to read in English: 22(46.81%)
10.	When I read in English, I predict what might come next -often: 14(29.79%) -sometimes: 29(61.7%) -hardly ever: 4(8.51%) -never:
11.	When an English reading passage has a title, I -read the title but don't consider it as I read the passage: 4(8.51%) -read it first and imagine what the passage might be about: 30(63.83%) -think about what I already know and how it might relate to the title: 13(27.66%) -read the title but don't think much about it:
12.	When an English reading passage has illustrations with it, I -imagine what the reading passage might be about based on the illustrations: 18(38.3%) -look at the illustrations without relating them to the reading passage: 4(8.51%) -expect the reading passage to reflect what is in the illustrations: 20(42.55%) -compare what is in the illustrations to what I read: 5(10.64%)
13.	If I come to a word I don't know, I -skip the word and come back to it later: 7(14.89%) -guess what the word might mean and go on: 14(29.79%) -guess what the word might mean and reread the sentence: 15(31.91%) -look the word up in a dictionary and reread the sentence: 5(10.64%) -look the word up in a dictionary and write the English meaning on the page:6(12.77%)
14.	If a paragraph contains several words I don't know, I -guess what they all mean: 9(19.15%) -guess only the ones that seem important: 12(25.53%) -look up the ones that seem most important and guess the others: 15(31.91%) -look them all up in a dictionary, regardless of importance: 7(14.89%) -skip that paragraph: 4(8.51%)
15.	To figure out what an unfamiliar word might mean, I -consider what the rest of the sentence or paragraph says: 42(89.36%) -analyze the grammatical form of the word: 2(4.26%) -consider any illustrations: 3(6.38%)

	-don't do any of the above:
16.	When I figure out what new words mean, I find that my guesses are -usually correct: 14(29.79%) -sometimes correct: 30(63.83%) -usually incorrect: 3(6.38%) -untrustworthy:

TABLE 8

Less-Skilled Readers' Responses to Items 5-16 (data in percentages; n=60)

Item	Content
5.	When I read in English, I pay attention to -what individual words mean: 9(15%) -what the reading passage means: 39(65%) -what the form or grammatical function of the words are: 3(5%) -what the structure of the passage is: 9(15%)
6.	When I read in English, I -read straight through the passage once and then reread it: 22(36.67%) -read each paragraph and reread it before I read the following paragraph: 14(23.33%) -read straight through the passage and reread only the difficult sections: 22(36.67%) -read straight through the passage and do not reread: 2(3.33%)
7.	When I read in English, I -don't usually consider how it relates to what I already know: 3(5%) -think about what I know about the topic of the passage: 40(66.67%) -think about what I know about the author's style or point of view: 2(3.33%) -simply begin reading the text itself: 15(25%)
8.	I read different English passages -the same way because English passages are usually difficult: 7(11.67%) -the same way because they're written in English: 19(31.67%) -differently depending on my reading purposes: 13(21.67%) -differently depending on what kind of passages they are: 21(35%)
9.	I read an English reading passage because -I find the topic interesting or I want to find out how the story ends: 6(10%) -I have questions to answer about it: 7(11.67%) -it has been assigned: 16(26.67%) -I want to find out what the author has to say: 3(5%) -I want to learn how to read in English: 28(46.67%)
10.	When I read in English, I predict what might come next: -often: 14(23.33%) -sometimes: 36(60%) -hardly ever: 10(16.67%) -never:
11.	When an English reading passage has a title, I

-read the title but don't consider it as I read the passage: 6(10%)
-read it first and imagine what the passage might be about: 46(76.67%)
-think about what I already know and how it might relate to the title: 8(13.33%)
-read the title but don't think much about it:

12. When an English reading passage has illustrations with it, I
-imagine what the reading passage might be about based on the illustrations: 25(41.67%)
-look at the illustrations without relating them to the reading passage: 1(1.67%)
-expect the reading passage to reflect what is in the illustrations: 28(46.67%)
-compare what is in the illustrations to what I read: 6(10%)

13. If I come to a word I don't know, I
-skip the word and come back to it later: 15(25%)
-guess what the word might mean and go on: 14(23.33%)
-guess what the word might mean and reread the sentence: 16(26.67%)
-look the word up in a dictionary and reread the sentence: 5(8.33%)
-look the word up in a dictionary and write the English meaning on the page: 10(16.67%)

14. If a paragraph contains several words I don't know, I
-guess what they all mean: 12(20%)
-guess only the ones that seem important: 14(23.33%)
-look up the ones that seem most important and guess the others: 8(13.33%)
-look them all up in a dictionary, regardless of importance: 15(25%)
-skip that paragraph: 11(18.33%)

15. To figure out what an unfamiliar word might mean, I
-consider what the rest of the sentence or paragraph says: 46(76.67%)
-analyze the grammatical form of the word: 3(5%)
-consider any illustrations: 10(16.67%)
-don't do any of the above: 1(1.67%)

16. When I figure out what new words mean, I find that my guesses are
-usually correct: 8(13.33%)
-sometimes correct: 33(55%)
-usually incorrect: 15(25%)
-untrustworthy: 4(6.67%)

TABLE 9

T-test Results for More-Skilled and Less-Skilled Readers' Responses to Item 3

Item 3	Group	N	Mean	Std Dev	t-value	p-value
3.1	More-skilled	47	3.43	1.08	-1.06	0.2897
	Less-skilled	60	3.65	1.09		
3.2	More-skilled	47	4.15	0.78	-0.31	0.7579
	Less-skilled	60	4.20	0.90		
3.3	More-skilled	47	1.98	0.64	-1.00	0.3219
	Less-skilled	60	2.12	0.76		

3.4	More-skilled	47	2.89	0.79	-1.20	0.2329
	Less-skilled	60	3.10	0.95		
3.5	More-skilled	47	3.60	0.88	-1.04	0.2985
	Less-skilled	60	3.77	0.81		
3.6	More-skilled	47	3.38	0.87	-0.36	0.7196
	Less-skilled	60	3.45	1.02		

TABLE 10

T-test Results for More-Skilled and Less-Skilled Readers' Responses to Item 4

Item 4	Group	N	Mean	Std Dev	t-value	p-value
4.1	More-skilled	47	4.28	0.71	-1.98	0.0499*
	Less-skilled	60	4.53	0.62		
4.2	More-skilled	47	2.23	0.70	-0.42	0.6771
	Less-skilled	60	2.30	0.89		
4.3	More-skilled	47	4.30	0.59	0.75	0.4564
	Less-skilled	60	4.20	0.73		
4.4	More-skilled	47	2.74	1.01	-0.72	0.4724
	Less-skilled	60	2.90	1.17		
4.5	More-skilled	47	4.40	0.71	0.30	0.7643
	Less-skilled	60	4.37	0.58		
4.6	More-skilled	47	3.74	0.74	1.21	0.2295
	Less-skilled	60	3.55	0.89		
4.7	More-skilled	47	2.89	0.91	-0.36	0.7201
	Less-skilled	60	2.97	1.13		
4.8	More-skilled	47	3.74	0.90	-1.25	0.2130
	Less-skilled	60	3.97	0.92		
4.9	More-skilled	47	3.51	0.83	-1.75	0.0832
	Less-skilled	60	3.82	0.95		

*$p < .05$

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College

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