

Can L2 Less-proficient Adult Learners Become Skilled Readers?

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This study explored whether second-language (L2) less proficient adult learners can become skilled readers by investigating the effect on students' attitudes to strategy use when explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies is combined with an extensive reading approach. Studies have shown that proficient learners employ a wider range of metacognitive strategies than less proficient learners and use the strategies more efficiently and frequently. Teaching metacognitive strategies explicitly develops L2 learners into independent practitioners. Yet, little is known about the extent to which L2 less proficient students can incorporate metacognitive reading strategies in their reading. This paper addresses this issue by investigating students' attitudes towards, and the use of, metacognitive strategies. The study was designed as a case study, and interview data and reflective journals were collected. The results show that L2 less proficient adult learners can become skilled readers through explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with an extensive reading approach. The findings of the study reflect on explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies and extensive reading. The researcher suggests the value of introducing metacognitive strategies into L2 reading classrooms to broaden the learning skills of less proficient learners.

The ability to read independently is a key aspect of autonomous learning. Understanding the text requires a variety of metacognitive strategies like planning before reading, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating the reading process. This shows the important role that metacognition plays in reading. In consequence, research in metacognitive strategy training has become more vital in recent years (Efklides & Misailidi, 2010).

Many researchers have argued that proficient learners employ a wider range of strategies more efficiently than less proficient learners (e.g., Griffiths, 2008). Empirical research also reveals that high frequency use of the strategies is significantly correlated with proficient learners (Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001). Sheorey and Mokhtari's (2001), Upton's (1997), and Zhang's (2001) studies all suggested that proficient learners use a variety of global metacognitive strategies (e.g., prediction, identifying a text structure, questioning about the text, integration, commenting, inferring, and monitoring), while less proficient learners use more local strategies (e.g., paraphrasing and word solving). Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) found that skilled and efficient readers can orchestrate their cognitive resources by conducting planning, monitoring, evaluating, and using information or strategies available to them while making sense of the reading text. In contrast, unskilled or poor readers rarely monitor their reading comprehension and consider reading as a decoding process instead of a meaning-getting process, and as a result they fail to exercise control of the reading processes (Wagner & Sternberg, 1987); they are rather limited in their metacognitive knowledge about reading (Paris & Winograd, 1990). However, unskilled readers' metacognitive awareness of their own reading processes can be enhanced through direct instruction (Paris & Winograd, 1990). Thus, it is argued that if less proficient

learners are equipped with metacognitive reading strategies, they can also become skilled readers and successful learners. As Iwai (2011) argues, it is essential for second language (L2) teachers to teach metacognitive strategies explicitly, provide diverse methods, and assist L2 students' learning to develop them into independent practitioners. Without equipping L2 learners with metacognitive reading strategies, L2 learners can suffer from, and have negative attitudes towards, reading (Lee, Schallert, & Kim, 2015). Further, metacognitive reading strategies can be exercised through extensive reading (ER) because ER increases students' feelings of comfort and reduces anxiety towards L2 reading (Yamashita, 2013), as well as enhancing motivation (de Morgado, 2009). However, studies concerning the impact of the instruction of metacognitive reading strategies on L2 less proficient learners' reading performance have been limited. Therefore, the present study aimed to conduct explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies, combined with an ER approach, to equip L2 less proficient learners with metacognitive reading strategies.

Metacognition

Metacognition, referring to the ability to reflect upon, understand, and control one's learning, is fundamental and essential in language learning (Flavell, Miller, & Miller, 2002). Metacognition has two dimensions: knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition (Flavell, 1976). Knowledge of cognition contains three factors that facilitate the reflective aspect of metacognition: declarative knowledge (knowledge about self and about strategies, e.g., understanding what reading strategies are), procedural knowledge (knowledge about how to use strategies, e.g., knowing how to actually use reading strategies), and conditional knowledge (knowledge about when and why to

use strategies, e.g., understanding which reading strategies are most suitable for different tasks to achieve the reading goals) (Jacobs & Paris, 1987). Regulation of cognition, comprising selecting proper approaches and organizing processes of how to effectively conduct the strategies, contains five strategies that support the control aspect of learning, including planning, information management strategies, comprehension monitoring, debugging strategies, and evaluation (Baker, 1989). Overall, metacognitive strategies can be applied to various learning areas like speaking, reading, writing, listening, and social interaction.

Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Metacognitive strategies specific to reading are categorized into three strategies: planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Israel, 2007; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Planning strategies are used before reading to assist learners to get a general idea of the text and to activate learners' schemata for reading. Examples of planning strategies include previewing the general information like screening a title, heading, and illustration; checking the text structure (e.g., cause and effect); and setting the goals for reading. Monitoring strategies are employed during reading to comprehend the text. Monitoring strategies are comprehending vocabulary, self-questioning (reflecting on the extent to which readers understand what they read), summarizing, identifying the main idea of each paragraph, and determining which part of the text can be focused on or ignored based on the goals of the reading task. Evaluating strategies are used after reading to reflect on how to apply what learners have read to other situations. Evaluating strategies include identifying with the author or the character in the book, having a better perspective of the context described in the book, and assessing what to do with the information gained in the book.

One major difficulty encountered by many L2 readers while reading is a lack of linguistic knowledge. To deal with unknown words, guessing the meaning from context is identified as a very effective strategy by many researchers (e.g., Nation, 2008). Recognizing an appropriate meaning of a word requires figuring out the useful cues from the vocabulary itself, the context, and/or the illustrations. Inferring word meaning from context can be challenging for L2 learners due to the limited linguistic knowledge of the target language (Walters, 2006). However, empirical study (Kulaç & Walters, 2016) has shown that the instruction of contextual inferencing strategies enhances L2 learners' attitudes towards reading.

Benefits of Metacognitive Strategy Instruction in L2 Reading

Salataci and Akyel (2002) investigated the effectiveness of metacognitive strategy instruction on

university L2 students' use of metacognitive strategies during reading. The study revealed that local strategies (e.g., using a dictionary and focusing on grammar or word meaning) were employed less often after the four-week training than before, and after instruction the use of global strategies (e.g., predicting, skimming for main ideas, and summarizing) increased. Fung, Wilkinson, and Moore (2003), exploring the extent to which learning metacognitive strategies impacted on L2 reading comprehension, found that students benefited from the instruction of metacognitive reading strategies and developed appropriate usage of the strategies. Dabarera, Renandya, and Zhang (2014), investigating the impact of metacognitive strategy instruction on L2 reading comprehension among Year 1 Secondary students in Singapore, revealed that metacognitive strategy instruction has a positive impact on increasing metacognitive awareness and reading comprehension, as well as that metacognitive awareness-raising is closely related to reading comprehension improvement. The teaching of reading strategies like identifying the topic sentence, pinpointing the main idea of a paragraph, guessing the meaning from the context, and finding key words improves reading comprehension and learner awareness while using strategies (Kusiak, 2001) and enhances the use of strategies (Shih, 2015).

Extensive Reading

Hafiz and Tudor (1989) defined extensive reading (ER) as "the reading of large amounts of material in the second language (L2) over time for personal pleasure or interest, and without the addition of productive tasks or follow-up language work" (p. 4). It is intended to build good reading habits and L2 linguistic knowledge and to develop a liking for reading (Richard & Schmidt, 2002), and it is a lifelong method for L2 acquisition and intellectual growth (Krashen, 2004). ER is more individualized and designed to replicate real-life reading by focusing on meaning and general comprehension. There are some crucial principles for conceptualizing ER in a teaching/learning process:

- There is easy access to a variety of reading materials on a wide range of topics at different levels of linguistic difficulty;
- Learners choose what they want to read according to their interest and L2 level and then read unassisted and as much as possible;
- Reading is its own reward, providing advantages such as pleasure and new information;
- Students silently read at their own pace, usually faster rather than slower; and
- The teacher plays a role model of a reader, guiding the students rather than teaching them explicitly (Day & Bamford, 2002).

Empirical studies have reported beneficial effects of ER on L2 competence, including vocabulary (Horst, 2005; Wang, 2013), reading comprehension (Yamashita, 2008), spelling (Polak & Krashen, 1988), writing (Lee, 2005), listening (Robb & Kano, 2013), general L2 proficiency (Manson & Krashen, 1997), grammar (Lee et al., 2015) and reading speed (Huffman, 2014). Yet, it needs to be noted that ER does not always yield positive impact on L2 learning. Reasons for the ineffectiveness of ER on L2 competence can be an overwhelming proportion of reading (Lai, 1993), the duration of the ER program (Lee, 2007), and student L2 level and inappropriate reading materials (Lee et al., 2015). Overall, the benefit of ER might be manifested more quickly in general reading skills than in L2 linguistic ability like vocabulary, spelling, and morphosyntax (Yamashita, 2008).

Research Questions

The present study conducted an intervention of explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with an extensive reading approach to enhance L2 less proficient students' metacognitive reading strategies and to develop the characteristics of skilled readers such as orchestrating cognitive resources by conducting planning, monitoring, evaluating, and considering reading as a meaning-getting process instead of a decoding process. The research attempted to answer one main research question with two sub-questions. They are as follows:

This is the main question of the study: Can L2 less proficient adult learners become skilled readers?

The sub-questions include the following:

1. What are L2 less proficient adult students' attitudes towards explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with an extensive reading approach?
2. How does explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with an extensive reading approach affect L2 less proficient adult students' use of metacognitive reading strategies?

Method

This study was designed as a case study of an intervention. According to Yin (2003) a case study design answers "how" and "why" questions; an empirical inquiry reveals a current phenomenon within its real-life context. It allowed the researcher to reveal L2 less proficient adult learners' attitudes towards explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with ER and provide an in depth analysis of their use of metacognitive strategies.

Participants

This study recruited eight adult students (3 males and 5 females), with seven majoring in business administration and one in German. The students, aged between 20 and 29, had daytime jobs and attended the night program of a university in Taiwan. They were identified by their English Language teachers as less proficient learners who exhibited low confidence in their language skills and were in danger of not completing their English course. They were recommended to take this additional voluntary training program by their English teachers. Realizing the importance of English language competence in the workplace, the students agreed to the suggestion.

Prior to the intervention, the participants were interviewed regarding their approach to English reading. Analysis of the interview data showed that students possessed passive style of learning: they studied, as required by the teacher, mainly for the tests. They were not fond of L2 reading because reading in their assigned textbook tended to be difficult for them. They rarely read English books or magazines for pleasure in their free time and considered L2 reading as an unpleasant and laborious process. The participants had not received broad exposure to strategic reading instruction except for the use of a dictionary. In their English classes they read word by word and read relatively slowly, pausing at times to consult a dictionary. Sometimes students would look up all the new words before reading, indicating that they lacked reading skills.

Intervention

This study conducted an eight-week intervention of explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with an ER approach to develop students' metacognitive reading skills. It took place during the summer vacation, and they all worked regular office hours.* Various English online learning resources such as the university e-learning resources and public online resources (e.g., a BBC learning website) were provided. Online reading materials included graded readers and different types of magazines. Students were also encouraged to borrow books from the library.

The class met once a week for 2 hours. Students were taught how to choose suitable reading materials according to their interests and English language competence. The reading strategies were also explicitly instructed and practiced, including pre-reading skills (e.g., checking the title and author, formulating an hypothesis about the context by using titles, illustrations, and headings), while-reading skills (e.g., skimming/scanning, guessing the meaning of a new word, identifying key words, getting the main point, summarizing), and post-reading skills (e.g., reflecting on

what has been learned, drawing inferences, associating new information with old, writing in a reflective journal) (for an example of the reading strategy activities, see Appendix 1). The teacher explained the strategies both in English and Chinese to ensure that all students understood how to use them. Since ER aims for reading for pleasure, students were instructed to get the overall idea of the text without using a dictionary during the reading process. Regarding the amount of reading, it is necessary for students to read at least one book or one magazine article per week in order to establish a reading habit (Day & Bamford, 2002). Furthermore, to hold participants accountable for the reading, they were required to write a reflective journal (Appendix 2) either in English or Chinese every week for eight weeks. It is worth noting that the questions listed in reflective journal were designed based on the characteristics of skilled readers (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995) to promote good reading habits, such as being aware of what they are reading, knowing why they are reading, having strategies for handling potential problems, and monitoring their comprehension of textual information.

Data Collection

Eight students participated in this study, and two of them dropped out during the intervention due to time constraints. This study was conducted through semi-structured one-to-one interviews with the six students (2 males & 4 females) after the post-test to find out how individual students viewed the extensive reading. Interview questions (Appendix 3) mainly related to participants' attitudes towards, and perceptions of, the impact of extensive reading on their learning, including whether they liked the intervention, how it impacted on their learning behavior, and whether they encountered any difficulties and perceived reading improvement. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and audio recorded. Reflective journals in which students recorded their reading information were also gathered. Some students missed submitting their reflective journals for a particular week, and therefore only forty-two journal entries in total were collected from the six students who completed the program over the eight-week training period.

Data Analysis

The transcripts of the interview data were read, re-read, and then analyzed using "open coding" (Merriam, 2009). I discussed the coding remarks with a trained researcher using a sample of the interview data, and then we individually marked the data. The coding units were tallied and met a satisfactory interrater reliability at 91.8% agreement. The discrepancies in the coding remarks were discussed with a mutual agreement

reached. We then looked through the remarks, attempting to identify the themes through an iterative process to recognize commonalities and disparities in the coding remarks. Having identified the themes, we then individually classified the remarks into the themes. There were at least three coding remarks from three different individuals for each theme, and themes with less than three coding remarks were deleted. The interrater reliability for the theme categorization reached a satisfactory agreement of 98.5%. The same processes were utilized for analyzing student journals with a satisfactory interrater reliability.

Results

Positive Attitudes

The majority of students had positive attitudes towards explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with an extensive reading (ER) approach. They felt happy to learn metacognitive reading strategies, enjoyed ER, and considered it helpful to L2 learning. Students favored this reading approach also because they learned English in an easy and simple way. Sample comments are as follows:

- "It is the first time that I enjoy reading. I had never had the pleasure of reading in reading class."
- "I can learn English in an easier way. I gradually accumulate new English words and sentence patterns through reading. I learn better this way."
- "It [reading] is not for gaining higher score, but a matter of true learning, learning for my own sake."

Motivation

Students commented that ER made them feel like reading and that it motivated them to read. They used to see L2 reading as a laborious and unpleasant task that was largely a decoding process involving extensive use of dictionary resources. Through this intervention, they had experienced the joy of reading. One student wrote the following:

Reading used to be as a job looking up words in the dictionary to me, and I didn't like it at all. Now, I am motivated to read and read happily because I can understand what it means without looking up every new word.

Keeping a reflective journal is another reason to motivate students to read. Students claimed that they considered themselves lazy and needed to have a

clear purpose such as submitting a reflective journal, which helped motivate them to take more responsibility for their own reading and learning. The following is a sample response: “One of my weaknesses is laziness, and I need to be pushed to learn. The reading approach required reflective journals, and this is why I kept reading. I can better organize my reading because I know it is something that I must complete and I can do it.”

An Increase in Confidence

Unlike the normal English reading class, students gained more confidence with reading through ER. Though they experienced pressure when reading English articles or stories, they were better able to handle the pressure after the intervention. The following is a sample comment: “I have less learning anxiety. I used to set the reading article aside and avoid reading it. Now I could overcome the resistance.”

Self-regulation

All the participants learned to plan their reading schedule to fit their own learning agenda based on their work time. They claimed that they set their own schedule for reading with the result that they had no excuse for not completing their reading assignments. In the normal English reading class the material tends to be far more difficult for less proficient learners, leading to reduced motivation to complete reading assignments. In contrast, extensive reading allows them to arrange their own learning, including choosing the material, and to set up their own schedule. Thus, they are responsible for their own learning schedule. Sample responses are as follows.

- “I felt that I forgot to do something. Then suddenly I remembered it was Wednesday, and it is my English day. I should read.”
- “After a long day at work, I don’t have much time left for study. But I would rest for a while, and then I read.”

Reading Skills Developed

Students learned to guess the meaning of a new word or a sentence through the context clues and pictures provided without immediately turning to their dictionary in the first place. After reading, they used a dictionary to confirm the meaning of the new words, and this reinforced acquisition of new lexis. The following asserts this learning:

I used to use dictionary whenever I encountered a new word. Now I first guess the meaning based on the context. Sometimes I got it wrong. But gradually I

improved. It also helps guess the meaning if I have the background knowledge of the text.

Students perceived that they are better at getting the main idea. They checked the topic and grasped the key words to get the big picture; they realized that it is not necessary to know every new word to understand the text. One student remarked, “I checked the topic and the key words to get the main idea of the article. If I don’t do this and just read, I am not able to understand what I’m reading.”

Students also claimed that they gained the skill of skimming. The purpose of ER is to read for pleasure. They learned that while getting the gist of a paragraph, they could skip the rest of the paragraph and read the next one. Sometimes they would skip the parts they did not understand and keep reading to comprehend the overall meaning. A sample comment is as follows: “I used to read word by word in reading class. Now I learned to skip some parts after getting the main idea of the story.”

Inferring meaning is another skill developed. Students were able to understand the underlying morality of a story and the implied meaning of an article. They were motivated and enjoyed learning about family relationships, teamwork, and life skills from reading, as the following comment shows: “It was really inspiring and I also learned that when dealing with difficulties in life, I should also keep a clear mind.”

Persistence

An additional characteristic of reading, persistence, is developed. Reading L2 stories can be frustrating for less proficient students before comprehending the text, thus they might give up reading easily. Students claimed that they developed the ability to persevere with their reading. Even though they were not able to understand very well at the beginning, they would keep reading till the end and finally were able to comprehend the meaning of the text. As a student made this observation: “I need to be patient even though I don’t get the main idea during reading. I just kept reading, and the words that I didn’t know repeated several times in the text. At the end I could manage to understand what the story meant.”

Perceived Improvement

Participants perceived that, through explicit instruction of reading strategies combined with the ER approach, their reading comprehension improved. They were able to gain a better understanding of the reading material. Sample comments are as follows.

- “I felt really happy when I understood the meaning of a metaphor used in the story

- and realized why it was funny.”
- “I used to read and get the superficial meaning of the words without thinking deeply about the text. Also, I might not understand the irony the author expressed. Now I can gradually understand the implications of the text.”

An increase in vocabulary knowledge was also perceived by the majority of students. One main reason for the improvement of lexical knowledge was that students encountered the new words several times throughout reading the story, and this helped them to memorize the new words. They not only learned more vocabulary, but also had a better understanding of the language use, as illustrated by the following comment:

I learned that a word can carry different meanings in different contexts. I used to recite one Chinese meaning for one English word before reading. While reading, I sometimes couldn't fit the meaning into the context. Then I got confused. Now I understand what happened. I also learned that some words I already knew can be used in different contexts.

Some students claimed that they could read faster than before. That means they could comprehend the meaning of the text or get the gist of the text more easily. A sample comment is as follows:

I used to read slowly because I read word by word. Now I can read faster by skimming and comprehend the main point of the story.

Students' reflective journals also revealed that they learned to choose an appropriate reading material for themselves based on their interests and language proficiency, from easy to complicated and short to long stories or magazine articles. In terms of choosing fictional works, one main reason for choosing a particular story was that they had heard of the story before, which facilitated reading comprehension. L2 reading for less proficient learners can be frustrating, yet with help of their background knowledge they felt less pressure. Furthermore, all students chose the reading articles from the learning website provided, except with the one student who borrowed books from her friend. Having read the books or articles, students reported that the information they gained could be applied to their work, shared with friends, and served as motivation in their lives. The time spent on reading varied, from thirty minutes to five hours per week. Inspiringly, they maintained the habit of reading during the eight weeks.

Discussion

The first sub-question seeks to investigate L2 less proficient adult students' attitudes towards explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with an ER approach. L2 less proficient learners encounter difficulties when reading due to poor strategy use and a lack of lexical knowledge. The success of metacognitive reading strategy training in encouraging L2 reading was demonstrated by the interview results: students reported having an increase in their confidence and motivation and having a positive attitude towards ER. Students' positive attitudes enhanced their willingness to participate in extensive reading and facilitated building reading habits and made reading become a routine activity (Lee & Schallert, 2014). These findings lend support to previous research by Kaniuka (2010), in which the teaching of reading strategies enhances learner attitudes towards reading, and by Yamashita (2013), in which the ER approach increased students' feelings of comfort and reduced anxiety towards L2 reading, as well as gained intellectual values. The resulting positive attitudes led to the decision to continue reading. Thus, constant involvement in reading not only strengthens these positive attitudes, but improves reading skills and abilities, as discussed below.

The second sub-question investigated how explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with an ER approach affects L2 less proficient adult students' metacognitive reading strategies. The success of metacognitive reading strategy training in enhancing a use of L2 metacognitive reading strategies was demonstrated by the student interviews and reflective journals which revealed the use of a variety of metacognitive strategies, including planning a reading schedule, selecting proper reading material, using strategies like guessing, identifying key words and the main idea, skimming, inferring, monitoring reading comprehension, and evaluating what to do with the information gained. The results of this study which show that students use more of global strategies (e.g., skimming for main ideas) and less local strategies (e.g., using a dictionary, focusing on grammar or word meaning) is in agreement with Salataci and Akyel's (2002) finding which showed students receiving metacognitive strategies instruction employed more global strategies instead of local strategies. The results of the present study also lend support to the previous research by Fung, Wilkinson, and Moore (2003) where students receiving metacognitive strategy training developed appropriate use of the strategies. The behavior of using global metacognitive strategies was defined as skilled reading by Pressley and Afflerbach (1995). That means L2 less proficient adult readers in

the present study became skilled readers who were able to orchestrate their cognitive resources by conducting global metacognitive reading strategies, and this answers the main research question.

One main difference between before and after receiving metacognitive reading strategies instruction is that students have changed their L2 reading behavior from being overwhelmingly concerned with decoding to focusing more on an overall understanding of the text. That is, students placed greater emphasis on text-level issues rather than lexical- or sentence-level issues. This is a clear evidence of change in student reading behavior and is considered a characteristic of skilled readers, as was found by Wagner and Sternberg (1987), in that skilled readers consider reading as a meaning-getting process rather than a decoding process.

It is worth noting that it is a long-term process to cultivate the characteristics of skilled readers (El-Dinary, Pressley, & Schuder, 1992). The development of metacognitive reading strategies in the present study is mainly attributed to the instruction in metacognitive strategies conducted. However, a development of L2 reading strategies within eight weeks is also possibly due to a transfer of L1 reading strategies, and this needs further empirical research.

Keeping a reflective journal encourages L2 less proficient adult learners to keep reading with more metacognitive awareness towards L2 reading. Students claimed that keeping the journal was one main motivation for them to read. Through keeping a reflective journal, students were also more aware of what they were reading, knowing why they are reading, and reflecting on strategies for dealing with problems and for monitoring their comprehension. This developed characteristics of skilled readers (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995).

The participants also perceived an improvement in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and reading speed. These findings support previous researches by Yamashita (2008), in which extensive reading enhanced readers' reading comprehension; by Wang (2013), in which students' vocabulary knowledge increases from an extensive reading program, and by Huffman (2014), in which students' reading speed improved with extensive reading. The perceived improvement arguably further enhances students' confidence in L2 reading.

Background knowledge helped with reading comprehension, and it lessened the pressure of L2 reading. During the eight weeks, most L2 less proficient adult learners selected, at least once, the reading material which they had heard of in L1 because they were familiar with the story and felt more comfortable while reading it in L2. The result supports the previous research by Anderson and Pearson (1984) that background knowledge influences readers' comprehension performances.

It is also important to note that self-regulation competence attained in the present study is essential for developing skilled readers. Self-regulation competence is closely related to L2 students' reading competence (Nejabati, 2015). The finding of the present study revealed that less proficient learners can be successfully trained and become able to self-regulate their L2 reading. Less proficient learners who have the ability to regulate their cognition, behavior, actions, and motivation strategically and autonomously arguably have greater potential to attain their learning goals. Students with self-regulation competence are able to make their own learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, and more effective (Oxford, 2011). Therefore, L2 reading pedagogy needs to take self-regulation competence into account when training students to become skilled readers.

Conclusion

This study sought to explore whether L2 less proficient adult learners can become skilled readers by examining the impact of explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with ER on student attitudes towards L2 reading and use of L2 metacognitive reading strategies. It was found that they developed the characteristics of skilled readers: they had a positive attitude towards reading strategies which in turn lead to the development of global metacognitive reading strategies. Self-regulation competence is obviously essential for training less proficient students to become skilled readers.

The current study was limited in several ways. First, a small sample size was used with convenience sampling. Thus, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be generalized to a larger population. However, the study revealed a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2003). Though the sampling is small, the results of this study indicate that when L2 less proficient adult learners are equipped with metacognitive reading strategies, they can become skilled readers. Second, the present study was limited by using students' reports. Future study can apply think-aloud protocols to gain more in-depth insights into learners' metacognitive awareness of reading. Also, further work needs to be done to establish whether explicit instruction of metacognitive reading strategies combined with ER impacts on L2 less proficient adult learners' reading comprehension by using quantitative methods with a larger sampling.

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Appendix 1

A reading strategy activity

Using context to guess meaning:

- (A) My father is a *sagacious* man. He always makes good decisions, and I try to follow the advice he gives me. What kind of person makes good decisions and gives good advice? Which of the following words would probably describe the writer's father?
- stupid
 - cheerful
 - wise
- (B) My grandmother taught me how to be *frugal* when I didn't have much money. For example, she told me to buy things on sale, cook my meals at home, and not to drink pearl milk tea every day. The word "frugal" is closest in meaning to
- kind
 - thrifty
 - helpful

Appendix 2

Reflective Journal

- What is the title?
- Where did you get your reading material?
- How much time did it take you to read the book?
- Why did you decide on reading this book?
- Write down a summary of the book/story.
- Do you like it? Why or why not?
- What do you like best about the book?
- Are there any problems occurred in the process of comprehending the textual information? How did you deal with the problem?
- Would you recommend this book to your friends?

Appendix 3

Interview Questions

- Do you like this reading approach? Why or why not?
- How does the reading approach impact on your attitudes towards L2 reading?
- Do you perceive any impact of the reading approach on your L2 reading?
- Are there any difficulties occurred during reading? If yes, how did you deal with the difficulty?