

STRATEGIES IN EFL READING INSTRUCTION FOR  
LOW-LEVEL COLLEGE STUDENTS IN CHINA

Approved: Dr. Raymond Spoto Date: April 30, 2015  
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***Last Updated: January 15, 2015***

STRATEGIES IN EFL READING INSTRUCTION FOR  
LOW-LEVEL COLLEGE STUDENTS IN CHINA

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

University of Wisconsin-Platteville

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

English Education

By

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2015

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor, Professor Raymond Spoto, for his kindness, encouragement, and valuable advice. Without his academic guidance and patient revisions, this paper would not be finished.

My sincere gratitude also goes to my tutors in the University of Wisconsin-Platteville Writing Center, especially Beth Pieper, who helped me with some grammatical revisions, as well as the guidance of paper format. And also, I want to give thanks to the professors in Cohort 10 of the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, especially Professor Yuanyuan Hu, who gave me useful suggestions to my topic and structures.

My thanks also go to my father, mother and brother, who support and encourage me a lot in the process of writing the paper.

Abstract

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Under the Supervision of Prof. Raymond Spoto, PHD

At present, EFL reading instructions in Chinese reading classrooms is teacher-oriented, and language inputs, language knowledge and these explanations are the main focus. Teachers generally introduce the background knowledge of reading materials, and then explain the grammatical and lexical phrases covered in the materials. This teaching mode highlights the teacher's leading role, but ignores the training of reading ability, reading consciousness and reading strategies for their students. As a result, students lose the interests and perform badly in reading, especially for the low-level college students. Therefore, students will develop a dependence on reading and many problems will exist in reading. In addition, students will develop anxiety and weariness. As a consequence, learning is not so active, their vocabulary and reading cannot meet the requirement, because they are lacking in reading skills, reading consciousness and reading strategies.

This paper mainly provides a review of the research literature related to effective strategies in EFL reading instructions. It also discusses what kinds of reading strategies are suitable for Chinese low-level college students, and how to improve their reading ability by using these reading strategies.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
APPROVAL PAGE	i
TITLE PAGE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	
Definitions of Terms	
Purpose of the Study	
Significance of the Study	
Delimitation of the Study	
Methodology	
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	4
Reading Strategies	
Reading Models	
Categories of Reading Strategies	
Types of Effective Reading Strategies	
Summary	
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	17
REFERENCES	
The Importance of Effective Strategies in Reading Instructions	
Suggestions of Improving Reading Instructions by Using Effective Strategies	

## Chapter I Introduction

Reading is not only a tool for learning, but it is also a means by which learners can share the thoughts of others. According to Tindall (as cited in Jiujuan Huang, 2012), “reading plays a decisive role in fulfilling one’s dreams for those who take English as a second language” (p.66). For many students, reading is the most important skill of the four basic language skills. Only through wide and effective reading can students enlarge their vocabulary, master the rules, and learn how to organize an article. Thus one establishes a good foundation for speaking, listening and writing. In China, reading makes up a large proportion of the total scores in important English Proficiency Tests at various levels. For example: Tests of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), College English Test Band 4 (CET-4), College English Test Band 6 (CET-6), Tests for English Majors Band 4 (TEM-4), Tests for English Majors Band 8 (TEM-8). Therefore, reading competency is considered an essential prerequisite for all college and university students.

While although both teachers and students in China pay extreme attention to the improvement of the ability in English reading, the results are far from satisfactory. The Chinese traditional teaching method of reading is teacher-oriented instead of focusing on a student’s self-direction, especially for non-English major students; they have fewer reading classes than those who are English majors. As a result, they have more difficulties in English reading classrooms, as well as in college English Proficiency Tests such as, CET-4, CET-6 and so on.

Therefore, according to the structure of the EFL reading classroom, effective reading strategies should be taken. This paper mainly focuses on the effective strategies in EFL reading instruction for low-level college students in China.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The problems to be addressed are “what are reading strategies”, “why reading instruction for low-level students in China is necessary” and “how to teach reading strategies for low-level students in China?” The purpose of the study is to provide a review of the research literature related to the importance of effective strategies in EFL reading instructions for low-level college students in China, and how to make applications for improving reading comprehension for Chinese low-level college students.

## **Definition of Terms**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**Reading:** reading is the process of transferring an idea through a verbal symbol from the writer to the reader (Azmi, 2012, p.128).

**Strategy:** As to Cohen, strategy is a certain plan which is made in order to meet the goals during learning (as cited in Tsai, 2012, p.188).

**Reading strategy:** According to Wallace (1992), reading strategies are “ways of reading which readers employed flexibly and selectively and vary depending on the text-type, and the context and the purpose of reading” (p.146).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to provide a review of the research literature related to the importance of effective strategies in EFL reading instructions for low-level college students in China

## **Significance of the Study**

In China, all college students are required to pass CET-4, CET-6 of the college English

Proficiency Tests. The study of effective strategies is important to the practice of English reading comprehension. This work will make an impact on the use of effective learning strategies and should be of importance to others seeking information related to the effective reading strategies known as “best practices”. Therefore, it is necessary that teachers should explore and improve the quality of teaching related to reading comprehension.

### **Delimitation of the Study**

The research will be conducted in and through the library at the South-Central University for Nationalities and Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC and Wilson, Academic Search Elite and Google/Google Scholar as the primary sources. Key search topics included “teaching strategies”, “learning strategies”, “reading”, and “EFL”.

### **Methodology**

A brief review of literature relating to the importance of teaching and learning strategies in EFL reading classrooms for low-level college students in China was conducted. A second review of literature relating to the categories and types of effective strategies was presented. The findings will be summarized from analysis of how useful strategies effect EFL reading instructions for low-level college students in China and recommendations will be made.

## **Chapter II Review of Literature**

This chapter mainly focuses on a review of the previous studies and surveys. It gives definitions of reading, strategies and reading strategies; introduces three reading models; displays categories of reading strategies and finally lists some effective reading strategy types of EFL reading.

### **Reading Strategies**

It is mentioned in Azmi (2014), reading is the process of transferring an idea through a verbal symbol from the writer to the reader (p.128). Harmer (2007) defines it as activities which are controlled by the combination of the eyes and the brain, because the eyes mainly focus on getting the message and the information, while the brain will process it with the meaning of this information and help the reader to understand it (p.153). As a consequence, if readers want to enjoy the reading process, they should be equipped with large vocabularies, good understanding of grammars, and the background information to the reading materials, as well as personal experience (Pang, Muaka, Bernhardt & Kamil, 2003).

According to Christopher and George, they point out the word “strategy” is from Greek words “stratēgia” (generalship) and “stratēgos” (general or leader), (as cited in Gabriel Marcella, 2010, p.13). The father of modern strategic studies, German Major-General Carl von Clausewitz, defined strategy as “the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war” (as cited in Gabriel Marcella, 2010, p.14). Therefore, Gabriel Marcella (2010) understood strategy as “the integrated application of available means to accomplish desired ends, of course, does not limit strategy to the use only of available means. A well-developed strategy may include efforts that lead to an enhancement of means”(p.15). Then, increasingly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, definitions of strategy extended beyond the field of military and war, and are introduced into the education field.

O'Malley and Chamot regard strategies as the performances or behaviors which individuals express what they are thinking of, so that they can get new information, make further understandings, and learn more (as cited in Zhang, 2015, p.324). As to Cohen, strategy is a certain plan which is made in order to meet the goals during learning (as cited in Tsai, 2012, p.188). However, I prefer the descriptions of Oxford (1990): "there is no complete agreement on exactly what strategies are; how many strategies exist; how they are defined, demarcated and categorized; and whether it is—or ever will be—possible to create a real, scientifically validated hierarchy" (p.17). As a result, classification conflicts are inevitable.

When it comes to "reading strategies", definitions vary from person to person. Anderson (1991) thinks that reading strategies are that readers consciously use certain methods step by step to help themselves to get information, to process what they have achieved, and then create new understandings or ideas in reading (p.460). Block (1986) states it as "how readers conceive a reading task, what textual cues they attend to, how they get meaning from what they read, and what they do when they don't understand" (p.465). Oxford defines reading strategies for readers, in order to get better understandings of reading materials, apply some useful skills to solve problems that they encounter during the reading (as cited in Bamanger & Gashan, 2014, p.15). According to Wallace (1992), reading strategies are "ways of reading which readers employed flexibly and selectively and vary depending on the text-type, and the context and the purpose of reading" (p.146). As a result, we can conclude that reading strategies are methods, skills or ways that helps readers to make further understandings and get new information from the reading materials.

### **Reading Models**

Based on the previous research on the reading process, three major reading models are

frequently cited in the reading process: bottom-up models, top-down models and interactive models.

1. The bottom-up models: As its name implies, the bottom-up models view the reading process that the reader begins reading by constructing meaning from the prints of the written text such as, from the bottom. The reader begins with letters, and then goes on to words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and so on. The main feature of this model is its focus on the function of the text itself. The most comprehensive and influential bottom-up model was proposed by American psychologist Guogh (1972). He holds that a good reader is one who can decode words at a rapid pace whereas a poor reader in this model depends on context for word recognition (pp.331- 358). Poor students tend to read the text word by word at a low speed. This model is inadequate because it fails to recognize how students utilize their expectations about the text based on their knowledge of the language and how it works. LaBerge and Samuels' (1974) bottom-up model emphasizes the role of attention in processing information. Skilled readers can allocate their attention to comprehension, whereas beginning readers need more attention (pp. 293-323).

According to the bottom-up models, reading instruction begins with letter-by-letter teaching and then progresses to words. The grammar-translation method is based on this model. In class, the teacher teaches students to read new words, explains the new words in Chinese, and asks students to memorize the new words. Then, the teacher turns to the text. The teacher spends most of the time in explaining the text sentence by sentence, analyzing long sentence structures, and paraphrasing difficult sentences or giving the Chinese translation. After finishing the text, the students will be asked to finish the exercises after the textbook, which focuses on vocabulary, grammar and structure, and finally, the teacher checks the students' answers.

Following this method of reading instruction, students spend most of their time in recognizing new words, and by the time they reach the end of a sentence, they may forget the meaning of the beginning part, let alone the organization of the whole text. Students form the bad habit of having to find out the meaning of every unfamiliar word in order to understand a sentence, and they are lacking in reading skills. They do not know that different materials and different reading purposes require different reading speeds and comprehension methods. Moreover, most of the interaction in the classroom is from the teacher to students; there is little student initiation and little student-student interactions. The reading instruction method based on bottom-up models increases a student's dependency on teachers and dictionaries.

With these deficiencies, the model begins to attract criticism and gradually, with the advent of the top-down view of reading as a psycholinguistic process, the bottom-up view of reading falls into disfavor.

2. The top-down models: Eskey (2005) holds that the top-down model is based "from brain to text" and focuses on the whole reading process. In contrast to bottom-up models, top-down models are diametrically opposed to these lower-level processes. Kenneth S. Goodman and Frank Smith are major proponents of the top-down models. Goodman (1967) describes reading as "a psycholinguistic guessing game" (p.108). During reading processes, thought and language interact, and readers maximize their knowledge to reduce the dependence on textual information. Like Goodman and Smith (1971) emphasizes the role of meaning and highlights the reader's personal experience in constructing meaning from text and describes reading as a purposeful, selective and predictive process. There are four distinctive and fundamental characteristics of reading cited by Smith (1971): reading is purposeful, reading is selective, reading is based on a certain prior knowledge to comprehend, and reading is anticipatory.

From the top-down process of reading, Block(1986)thinks that good readers have the ability to go beyond the information given in the text and tend to use meaning-based cues to evaluate their understanding of the textual information (pp.463-494). However, poor readers often rely much on word-level cues, cannot infer meaning from surface-level information, and can only identify the consistency within a sentences rather than that between sentences.

However, this model also has its own limitations. It tends to over-emphasize many such high-level skills as the prediction of meaning by means of contextual cues, certain kinds of background knowledge, but neglect the lower level skills such as the perceptual and decoding dimensions of that process. It sometimes fails to distinguish adequately between beginners and fluent readers. The fluent readers operate by recognizing words on sight while beginners can not.

3. The interactive models: The interactive model makes up the deficiencies of both bottom-up and top-down models, combining elements of these two models. The interactive theory of reading is proposed by Rumelhart (1977), who puts forward that background knowledge plays an important role as incoming information is matched against the reader's world knowledge, and maintains that reading is a "perceptual" and "cognitive process" (p.573). Stanovich (1980), states that in interactive models "processes at any level can actually compensate for deficiencies at any other level...Higher processes can actually compensate for deficiencies in lower-level processes" (p.36). So, according to the interactive model, language is simultaneously processed at many levels. Grabe (1991) proposes two conceptions of interactive models. The first relates to the interaction that occurs between the reader and the text. This shows that meaning does not simply reside in the text itself, but that as readers interact with the text their own background knowledge helps to comprehend the task. The second conception of interactive models is about the interaction between bottom-up and top-down processes. Fluent

reading involves both decoding and interpretation skills (pp.375-397).

According to the interactive model, reading is a process influenced by both the text and the reader. The model suggests that readers need to decode and interpret if they have deficiencies in either component-decoding skills or with language or background knowledge, if not, they will have difficulties with reading in English.

### **Categories of Reading Strategies**

The taxonomy of reading strategies has different approaches. For example, Block (1986) divides reading strategies as general comprehension-gathering and comprehension-monitoring, and local attempts to understand specific linguistic units. Carrell (1989) groups reading models as bottom-up and top-down types, which we have already mentioned above. Anderson (1999) categorizes reading strategies into three different groups: cognitive strategies (thinking), metacognitive reading strategies (thinking about your planning), and compensating reading strategies. Furthermore, Oxford Chamot and O'Mally list a useful and comprehensive classification of reading strategies. They divide it into three categories: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies and social strategies (as cited in Tsai, 2012).

1. Metacognitive strategies: Since the 1980s, metacognition has become the focus of second language acquisition or foreign language teaching research. There are a number of studies on metacognitive awareness and language learning. The following is a brief review of literatures available in relevant aspects both abroad and at home.

As far as first language (L1) reading research is concerned, the well-known research done by Baker and Brown (1984) has investigated several aspects of the relation between metacognitive ability and effective reading. Two dimensions of metacognitive ability have been generally recognized as: a) knowledge of cognition or metacognitive awareness which includes

the reader's knowledge about his or her own cognitive resources; b) regulation of cognition which includes the compatibility between the reader and the reading process (pp.353-394). Thus, if a reader is aware of what is needed to perform effectively, it is possible to take steps to meet the demands of a reading situation more effectively; however, if the reader is not aware of his or her own limitations as a reader or of the complexity of the task at hand, then the reader can hardly be expected to anticipate or recover from problems. This shows that metacognition is closely related to students' reading comprehension.

O'Malley (1985) conducted a study to determine whether strategy instruction in a natural classroom setting would result in improved learning for various types of second language tasks with students of English as a second language. The overall approach taken in the study is to randomly assign students to receive strategy instruction in one of three groups that are differentiated by the combination of strategies they receive. In the metacognitive group, students received combined instruction on metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies. The cognitive group receives instruction on cognitive and social/affective strategies alone, and the control group is asked to work on the language learning tasks using whatever procedures they typically use in performing classroom assignments. The control group also receives some special reading instruction intended to support the school program. Students receive instruction and practice in the use of learning strategies for fifty minutes daily for eight days and they have separately received strategy instructions in aspects of vocabulary, listening and speaking. The results indicate that the metacognitive group in turn scored higher than the cognitive group, which in turn score higher than the control group. Also, the study demonstrates that strategy training is effective in a natural classroom environment with integrative language tasks such as speaking and listening.

Carrell (1989) conducts a study on metacognitive strategy training for ESL reading, with 26 ESL students at Southern Illinois University. The training period lasted four days in total. Strategy training was provided merely to two experimental groups of nine students respectively: semantic mapping and the experience-text-relationship method. The control group of eight students received no special training, but participated in pre- and post-tests. The results show that metacognitive strategy training is effective in enhancing second language reading, and that the effectiveness of one type of training versus another may depend upon the way reading is measured, and also that the effectiveness of the training is related to differences in the learning styles of the students.

In China, before 1980's, researchers focused on elementary and middle school students' Mandarin reading skills. Since the 1990s, metacognition has started to arouse many Chinese researchers' interests. Quite a number of non-native EFL teachers and researchers have shown great enthusiasm in the research of English learning strategies and their training in terms of reading comprehension. As a result, a good number of studies have been done in this field.

Yang & Zhang (2002) conducted a study to investigate the correlation between metacognition and EFL reading comprehension of Chinese college students. Questionnaires, reading comprehension tests and EFL proficiency tests were used in this study. The results suggest that students need to know more procedural and conditional knowledge. Their metacognition awareness is closely and positively related to their EFL reading performance. In addition, metacognition has an effect on both EFL proficiency and EFL reading performance.

Liu Huijun (2004) carries out another empirical study on the relationship between metacognitive strategies and English reading. It investigates 64 Chinese EFL students from Nanjing Normal University, who already got some knowledge about metacognition before the

investigation. Both questionnaires and English reading tests were employed as instruments in this study. Results suggest that the Chinese English majors use metacognitive strategies more or less in English reading. Most of the students in the survey report an occasional use of the strategies in questioning. Moreover, the study also indicates that there is some positive relationship between the frequency of overall metacognitive strategy use and the positive results on English reading.

2. Cognitive Strategies: metacognitive strategies mean that the students use these kinds of strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning goals and processes. However, “cognitive strategies are used to accomplish both language and content tasks, including elaborating on prior knowledge, making inferences, and using imagery or linguistic transfer” (as cited in Tsai, 2012). According to Phakiti (2003), cognitive strategies are continued mental activities that are used to deal with problems about the related reading materials by using their previous language and world knowledge. Here, world knowledge is general knowledge, such as information of economy, business, politics, environment and science which are closely related to the task reading materials (p.30). Therefore, he concludes that cognitive strategies attempt to make predictions, translations, summaries by applying grammar rules, and inferring meaning with previous knowledge.

Meanwhile, Azmi (2012) points to six types of cognitive learning strategies as follows:

a. Clarification: learners use cognitive learning strategies to make sense of what they have learned from the new language, so that they can understand these new rules and make combinations with these new rules and their productions (words, phrases, sentences, etc.) and the new language.

b. Guessing: learners use strategies to induct new linguistic forms, semantic meaning or

the writer's intention with previous world and language knowledge.

c. Deductive strategies: learners use strategies to look for ways to solve problems and use general rules in learning a second language.

d. Practice: learners make full use of the storage and retrieval of a language, then after a lot of practice, the accuracy of usage reaches to a high level.

e. Memorization: memorizing strategies also focus on the storage and retrieval of a language, and some strategies are the same for practicing, such as drill and repetition.

f. Monitoring: learners use strategies to check both linguistic and communicative mistakes in practicing, and then make corrections (p.125).

3. Social strategies: as to Chamot and O'Mally, social strategies are used to complete a learning or communication task by asking questions or conducting team work with others (as cited in Tsai, 2012). Furthermore, Azmi (2014) holds that social strategies are learners engage in activities which can make them practice what they have learned. Here, the strategies focus on offering opportunities for learners to practice instead of pushing learners to learn something (125).

### **Types of Effective Reading Strategies**

Before viewing the types of reading strategies, we need to make clear the categories and purposes of reading. As to Phillips, reading purposes can be grouped into two categories: one is for information, and the other one is for pleasure. In addition, different purposes of reading may lead to degrees of different comprehension. If readers read for information, more accuracy and details should be focused. However, if readers just read for fun, they have no need to pay high attention to the facts during the comprehension. Also, they can take a quick look about what is happening or what is the main idea (as cited in Omaggio, 1986, p.150). Therefore, according to

purposes of reading, Munby divides reading into two categories: intensive reading and extensive reading. The intensive reading is for information and details, here, he gives four ways to improve intensive reading instruction: (1) understanding the plain sense, or factual, exact surface meanings in the text; (2) understanding implications, which involves making inferences and being sensitive to emotional tone and figurative language; (3) understanding the relationship of ideas in the reading passage, including intersentential relationships and linkages between paragraphs; (4) being able to relate the reading material to one's own knowledge and experience (as cited in Omaggio, 1986, p.150).

In contrast, the extensive reading is for pleasure. Phillips points that speed and skill should be important for getting main ideas in this stage (as cited in Omaggio, 1986, p.151). Meanwhile, Grellet presents four main ways to read: skimming, scanning, extensive reading, and intensive reading (as cited in Omaggio, 1986, p.151).

Based on the research, there are so many strategies to help students read more fluently and successfully. Here are some types of effective reading strategies as follows:

a. previewing: have a quick look at the titles or the photos to get the information of what the text is going to discuss.

b. predicting: guess what is the main idea about the whole passage by using the reader's previous experience or background knowledge.

c. skimming and scanning: have a quick look at the first sentence of each paragraph to get the main idea.

d. guessing: guess the meaning of new words by using the clues in the text.

e. paraphrasing: try to reorganize the information and ideas in the text and retell it (Kennedy and Keatley, as cited in Azmi, 2012, p.128).

As is suggested in Brown's (2007) book, there are ten strategies which are related to bottom-up and top-down processes as follows:

(1) Identifying the purpose in reading: identifying the purposes clearly in reading instructions will lead to efficient and successful reading. Therefore, as a teacher, helping students know what they are looking for is vital and necessary.

(2) Using graphemic rules and patterns to aid in bottom-up decoding: for low-level English learners, learning to make the correspondences between spoken and written English is a difficult activity. They are usually familiar with oral language but still have difficulties in learning English spelling conventions. As a result, hints, clues, explanations about certain English orthographic rules and peculiarities should be offered. For example, "short" vowel sounds in patterns, such as bad, big, let, wish, etc. "long" vowel sound in patterns as boat, beat, etc.

(3) Using efficient silent reading techniques for improving fluency: it may not be suitable for the low-level students, because they don't have enough vocabulary and grammatical patterns that can help them to read fast. However, it is still helpful for increasing the reading rate and comprehension efficiency by teaching a few silent reading rules, such as avoiding pronouncing word by word, looking at several sentences as a whole, and skipping over new words or inferring its meaning from its context.

(4) Skimming the text for main ideas: it is one of the most valuable reading strategies, and it means quickly viewing through the whole texts to get the topic or main ideas, or predicting the purpose of the text.

(5) Scanning the text for specific information: it is the other most valuable reading strategy. It requires that the reader acquire detailed information which is presented in the texts. It

means that readers scan for the specific information (dates, names, and short terms) without looking through the whole text. Thus, this reading strategy can be widely used in reading schedules, syllabuses, forms, etc.

(6) Using semantic mapping or clustering: the semantic mapping strategy can help readers group ideas into meaningful clusters by providing some order to the chaos when they feel bored with long strings of ideas and events.

(7) Guessing when you aren't certain: readers can make guess the meaning of a word, a grammatical relationship, a discourse relationship, a cultural reference, implied meanings, content messages and so on.

(8) Analyzing vocabulary: there are several skills to guess or analyze vocabularies as hints or clues, such as prefixes (co-, inter-, un-, etc.); suffixes (-tion, -tive, -ally, etc.).

(9) Distinguishing between literal and implied meanings: this kind of strategy combines top-down processing skills. Readers usually have to find out the real meaning which is suggested in literal meanings. For example, you are shopping with your girlfriend, and she say: I love this watch, but I don't have money with me. Obviously, she wants you to pay for her or lend her some money.

(10) Capitalizing on discourse markers to process relationships: it is described in Brown's book that "Many discourse markers in English signal relationships among ideas as expressed through phrases, clauses, and sentences. A clear comprehension of such markers can greatly enhance [the] learners' reading efficiency" (2007, p. 366-371).

## **Summary**

We can conclude from the above discussions that reading strategies can affect EFL English reading, because they have very close relationships in a language teaching.

### **Chapter III Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the review of existing literature related to strategies in EFL reading instruction for low-level college students in china, the following conclusions can be drawn.

#### **The Importance of Effective Strategies in Reading Instructions**

For low-level college students, they have big problems in applying strategies. According to Swanson & Paz (1998), “researchers have consistently demonstrated that poor readers, unlike good readers, do not acquire strategic reading behaviors by themselves, and that poor readers need to be taught how, where, and when to consistently carry out such procedures” (p.209). For example, Garner and Reis point that poor readers find more difficulty in making sense of reading materials, because they don’t have the habit of going back to reread as often as good readers (as cited in Swanson & Paz, 1998, p.209). Raphael and Pearson discover that poor readers usually are unaware that different assignments pose different kinds of questions. Therefore, they can not find proper strategies for certain tasks (as cited in Swanson & Paz, 1998, p.210). Radislav Millrood also holds that poor readers, especially young readers have too much pressure on exams such as College English Tests. As a result, they tend to be very sensitive to failure and they build up all kinds of defense between what they absorb and what they need (as cited in Stagovala, 2007, p.2). What’s more, Lau (2006) conclude from the findings of previous studies that poor readers mainly have problems in using the following strategies: (1) they don’t know how to get the main ideas of the reading materials; (2) they don’t know how to master the structure of reading materials so they always fail to organize the main ideas; (3) they have less reading experience and they don’t know how to use previous knowledge to understand the reading materials; (4) they fail to draw inferences to intensive reading; (5) they don’t know the importance of using effective reading strategies (p.384). Therefore, in conducting effective strategies for low-level

students in EFL reading instructions, teachers should pay high attention. Willingham (2006) states that in the last twenty five years, there are over 500 studies have been conducted to explore the impact of teaching the various strategies of reading skills. The results show that strategy-based teaching could be seen as a good method to enhance comprehension (as cited in Bamanger and Gashan, 2014, p15).

### **Suggestions of Improving Reading Instructions by Using Effective Strategies**

Firstly, as is mentioned in Akyol and Ulusoy (2010), teachers should be good readers with good and effective reading strategies in their teaching, because their reading habits and attitudes will affect reading instructions directly (p.878). Meanwhile, there is a hypothesis that suggests that about effective teachers should be equipped with good reading and writing ability in language teaching. And this hypothesis also shows that, if teachers are good readers and writers, their students are more likely to become successful readers by imitating the teachers' skills, habits and strategies (Brooks, 2007). As a result, a teacher's behavior, especially in dealing with effective reading strategies for reading is extremely important in reading instructions.

Secondly, for the low-level college students, reading tends to be a big problem because they are lacking in vocabulary, grammar and translation skills. As a result, most students feel reading is boring and difficult, so they don't want to read for information, let alone to read for fun. Therefore, active teaching methods and strategies should be applied in stimulating a student's reading motivations and interests. Paulson and Faust define active learning as doing many activities in a reading classroom instead of listening to the teacher's translations and explanations. According to Paulson & Faust; Roming & Allbee's research, "students understand the material better and retain it longer if they can react to a lecture or course material actively"

(as cited in Fritz, 2002, p.189). When students are involved in relaxed reading classroom, they will read actively, pay high attention to the reading material, practice critical thinking and interact more with teachers and classmates. As a consequence, students will be interested in reading, will focus on reading for fun first and then on collecting information.

Thirdly, using authentic reading materials in reading instructions is necessary. Grellet holds that authenticity is not only the actual words in reading materials but also the presented forms, such as newspapers, stories, magazines and so on (as cited in Omaggio, 1986, p.152). When the students read authentic materials, they will feel more connected to their real life. Here are two reasons for using authentic materials in reading teaching: a) To some extent, simplifying a text always leads to the natural redundancy and rhetorical organization changes, so the reading materials will be much more difficult for the reader to read. b) Trying to transfer the difficult reading materials into certain tasks or activities which are much better to understand. Teachers “should think about grading the task, not the passage, in designing reading comprehension practice activities” (Omaggio, 1986, p.152).

In conclusion, using strategies in EFL reading instruction for low-level college students in China is really necessary and meaningful. In addition to this paper, further research with detailed data analysis should be conducted in the future, and effective reading strategies should be listed by using more authentic cases.

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