

Reading Comprehension Strategies: A Narrative Review

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/dils.2022.02.02.001>

Received 01 September 2022; Accepted 01 October 2021; Available online 06 November 2022

Abstract: Learning and teaching a second language is always great fun and complex phenomenon that needs so much from the instructor and learner to involve in the process to get the maximum outcomes. Reading is essential for academic and personal growth and an equally important tool for learning. Hence, this study aimed to investigate the reading strategies and difficulties experienced by tertiary learners of English as a Second language. The primary source for collecting the data was published studies taken from Google Scholar; the recent studies have been gone through for the article; using the following keywords: Reading, reading strategies, and stages of reading. The findings suggest that less attention has been paid to the reading skills by the language teachers while teaching the target language to the learners. In addition, the learners and teachers do not conceive the reading skills as the essential and crucial part of teaching and learning a second language. Based on the findings of this study, it concluded that reading is one of the very basic skills of languages that enhance the capability of the learners to understand other parts and skills of the Language.

Keywords: Reading, reading strategies, stages of reading

1. Introduction

Learning and teaching a second language is always great fun and complex phenomenon which demands so much from the instructor and learner to indulge fully in the process and get the utmost outcomes. Language itself is just a hypothetical system that encompasses many skills to be learned eloquently to become a sharp speaker of that targeted language. Mainly, there are four basic skills on which any language of the world stands; reading, writing, speaking and listening. Writing and speaking are considered productive skills while listening and reading are thought to the receptive skills. In nutshell, all four skills shape any language therefore; these four skills equally play a significant role in

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the speaker's approach. But these days, much attention has been given to speaking and writing while isolating the listening and reading skills exponentially. In this regard, the present research study has dealt with discussing reading skills and teaching reading skills. The fundamental focus of the present study was on the reading, reading strategies, and stages of reading including skimming, scanning, inferring, self-monitoring, summarizing, etc. The researcher presented previous research studies which have been done by various research scholars all around the world in their respective contexts.

Overall, the study concluded that there has not been a systematic way or method to teach the reading skill in the classroom, and randomly the teacher is telling the students about reading skills; learners remain unaware and isolated from learning the reading skill and reading strategies which could help them to read any text easily and comprehend all the necessary parts of the text. Hence, the researchers suggested that the language teachers must set some healthy planning to teach the reading skill to the learners the way other language skills are being taught and told, and the instructors must keep aware of the learners regarding the value and importance of reading because reading skill is as valuable and significant as other language skills are in teaching and learning any language.

There are narrative review discusses a few selected published studies published by well-known scholars in the relevant area of the research. Furthermore, the motivation behind the study is to explore further the latest, significant, and reliable information and data. Moreover, the review articles assist both proficient and non-expert to know the growing quantity of innovative publications (Ketcham&Crawford,2007).

1.1 Purpose of Review of Articles

There are no formal principles or guidelines; on how to write a narrative review therefore, it highlights several questions in an individual manner devoid of plainly addressing the criteria of selection for retrieving studies (articles). For instance, the systematic review often follows the conventional IMRAD: Introduction; methods; results, and discussion pattern; on the other hand, narrative reviews do not follow any controlled or structured design. So you want to write a narrative review article? (2021). Journal of cardiothoracic and vascular anesthesia Retrieved from, www.jcvaonline.com.

Moreover, narrative reviews track the improvement of systematic principles or clinical concepts titles and topics require wider scope; the narrative style of writing may be misplaced or lost in the preventive rules of the systematic review. In addition to this the strength of narrative reviews comprises consolidation of preceding studies; summing up; classification of omissions or gaps accomplishing innovative discoveries by identifying earlier unfamiliar; invisible associations, Hence, establishing fresh conceptions.

Generally, review papers get published for accumulating relevant data on a specific topic by following such a pattern researchers save their time from searching and exploring a large number of studies. Furthermore, review articles grounded on their worth and understanding about doing the study. Further developing to this point, the review articles are generally categorized into three main types: a systematic review, a narrative review, and a best-evidence review.

Furthermore, a systematic or meta-analysis review finds out analysis also amalgamates research proofs from diverse and different articles grounded on a strict method and therefore generates a significant and valuable resource of information. Moreover, the systematic diligence towards study addition in an objective impartial technique serves to be a measure of elevated quality (Crombie & Davies, 2009). Furthermore, systematic reviews are suitable for the focused issues (Collins & Fauser, 2005) and hence are statistical techniques to combine the results from individual studies.

Apart from that narrative review is acknowledged to be a traditional review that summarizes the diverse most important studies whose findings can be found in to complete explanation served by the

authors' own experience; existing theories; and models. Furthermore, narrative reviews are broad in extent (Byrne, 2016); making them appropriate for a vast variety of issues and problems (Collins & Fauser, 2005). Further developing to this point, several qualitative methods and techniques are applied to evaluate diverse studies and to understand the outcomes in a worth-added content.

The third type of review is a best-evidence review which provides a kind of substitute for both: the systematic and the narrative reviews, by mixing organized quantitative methods. Moreover, the concentration is focused on individual articles and substantive problems from narrative perspectives concentrating on the best evidence in a particular area or field. Therefore, these techniques add a logical organized systematic process to study selection including the usefulness of treatment. Thus, all the review procedures are explained explicitly to offer readers adequate knowledge about the primary research (Slavin, 1986).

Hence, the main purpose of this chapter is to provide a synopsis and understanding of the essential outcomes of studies about reading comprehension strategies. Moreover, this review article adopts the design based on a narrative review.

2. Materials and Methods

The core aim of this section is related to the review and discussion of the studies on reading comprehension strategies. Hence the primary source for collecting the data was published studies taken from Google Scholar. Moreover, the recent studies have been explored and accessed for the article by using the following keywords: Reading, reading strategies, and stages of reading. Furthermore, a few sources were taken by applying snowballing process by scrolling the references list of the accessible sources. Furthermore, the articles which were published in the remote past are not included since they focus on the latest and updated information. In addition, the searched findings were accumulated, read in detail; examined, focusing on findings the results on “reading comprehension strategies employed by undergraduate ESL learners.

3. Results and Discussion

The primary aim of this review paper was to evaluate the reading and reading strategies that are being taught and learned by the instructors and learners respectively in the classroom setting. Overall results concluded that less attention has been given and paid to the reading skills by language teachers while teaching the target language to the learners. Still, the learners and teachers do not conceive of reading skills as the essential and crucial part of teaching and learning a second language. Moreover, the findings were followed by discussing several areas of reading skills such as reading strategies, stages of reading, critical reading, impact of reading strategies, low proficiency adult learners English language, how to teach reading strategies, reflective learners, predicting, skimming, scanning, inferring, self-monitoring, summarizing, etc. the reason to discuss reading skills to such an extent as to provide the ground to the teachers to teach reading skill and tell the learners to work on their reading ability and reading competency.

3.1 Reading Strategies

Reading Strategies cannot be defined with one, single authentic definition as different scholars hold different views on it, hence it has multiple and various definitions. Garner (1987) presents the definition of reading strategies as “generally deliberate, playful activities are undertaken by active learners, many times to remedy perceived cognitive failure”. Richard (2002) opines that reading strategies are those plans that the reader employs to overcome hindrances and obstacles that he confronts while reading to construct the meaning of the text. While according to McNamara and Danielle (2012) “the reading comprehension strategies are cognitive or behavioral actions that are enacted under a particular contextual situation, with the objectives of enhancing some aspects of comprehension”. Furthermore, Barnett (2002) explains reading techniques and strategies as the cognitive exercises that acquire when

the readers approach a piece of text to comprehend the meaning of what they read. Further developing to this point, the reading strategies are the comprehension processes; readers employ for making sense of what they go through. So the reading skills and strategies are those operative techniques and effective procedures and tactics employed by the readers of English as a foreign language to attain optimum success and achievement in comprehension of a text. However, the importance of a teacher cannot be diminished in this context who himself is supposed to be aware of strategic reading and must teach a student to employ the right strategy at the right time.

3.2 Stages of Reading Strategies

According to Noli and Sabariah (2011), Strategic reading consists of three stages which are pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading. Gardner (1983) asserts that the readers, who employ reading strategies, speedily and actively interact with the text and readily construct the meaning. The strategic readers establish the purpose of their reading and select and employ the right methods for achieving those purposes, screen and monitor their constructed meaning and comprehension and evaluate the overall task. Nordin et. al. (2013) believed that strategic and efficient readers construct, inspect, examine and widen the meaning prior, during, and after the reading process while the poor reader commences reading without paying any heed to the substance or subject matter, overlooks the difficult words, move one without knowing the meaning, and do not integrate and engage their prior knowledge to help understand the text they are reading. Construction of meaning commences even before the reading process starts. Various studies have shown that strategic readers employ planning strategies before the reading process to make the reading content and meaning more accessible while the reading is in progress. Saricoban (2002) asserts that pre-reading activities are significant as they aid the student in stimulating and activating their previous or prior knowledge regarding the topic and enable the reader to foreknow and foresee the content that they are going to read. While the reading process gets in progression strategic readers use strategies during the reading process as well to get themselves intact and engage in the process of reading and meaning-making. Samuels, Ediger, Willcutt and Palumbo, (2005) affirm that strategic readers are well aware of the fact when and where the specific strategy is employed. Proficient and strategic readers also use monitoring strategies to ascertain their understanding of the content of the text. According to Goodman, Burke and Sherman, "Some of the strategies include: checking for understanding, confirming predictions, asking questions and pausing" (1980). As a well-planned response is important before and during the text, it is equally mandatory to be there while the reading process gets to an end. Blachowicz and Ogle (2001) highlight that the formation of meaning and comprehension of the text is not completely achieved before and during the reading but to have an in-depth understanding and better comprehension of the text the reader needs to summarize the important and key ideas and evaluate the readings. Alexander (2003) asserts that to have better and optimum comprehension of the text, a reader needs to use deep-level processing strategies that transmute the literal meaning of the content.

3.3 Critical Reading

Okitasari (2022) conducted the study in the form-critical inquiry-chart to teach critical reading. His research inquiry aimed to find out how inquiry charts help the students in learning critical reading and explain the usefulness and drawbacks and challenges faced by the students while teaching and learning critical reading. He employed a qualitative method and data was collected through classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and various written tests. However, the overall results demonstrated that inquiry-chart learning strategy helped the learners master their critical reading capabilities. While deep interview results revealed that the learners showed a positive attitude toward the inquiry-chart learning strategies and were too much happy and motivated towards reading as many books as they can. Moreover, the learners believed that critical learning strategies have been a great assistance for them to deepen and broaden their knowledge about the topic and enhance their level of thinking-process.

3.4 Impact of Reading Strategies

Mohammed, Ghazwan Mohammed Saeed (2022), carried out their research investigation very recently to observe the impact of reading strategies and how reading strategies affect and drive self-efficacy in reading comprehension of the learners. However, the main target of their research study was to check the correlation between reading strategies and self-efficacy and to what extent this correlation impacts and drives the reading comprehension level of the learners. The target population of their study was 183 EFL learners from the University of Bisha. The researchers collected data by distributing close-ended questionnaires regarding reading strategies and self-efficacy and how these two effects reading comprehension. Since the study was quantitative, so the researchers utilized SPSS software version 26 to analyze the data. However, the obtained score of the participants and analyzed results of the questionnaire were matched to check the mean score of the participants. The results showed that Saudi EFL learners employ various kinds of reading strategies, especially universal reading strategies and memory reading strategies. The utmost dominant self-efficacy factor which was found among Saudi EFL learners were confidence and self-regulation. Overall, the correlation between reading strategies and self-efficacy remained positive in the study. Moreover, it has been noted that there is a remarkable and positive influence of reading strategies on the overall reading comprehension level among EFL learners.

3.5 Low Proficiency Adult Learners English Language

Affendi and Noah (2022) investigated low proficiency adult learners' English language in the setting of a Malaysian university. The research study aimed to push and motivate adult and tertiary level learners to use and imply different sorts of reading strategies to comprehend the text at the maximum level of understanding. However, the targeted population was low English proficiency adult learners who study at the tertiary level. The findings revealed that the low English proficiency adult learners hardly implement and use any of the reading strategies while reading any text because they do not possess and reach the highest level where reading strategies would get used properly. The study further revealed that if the English language reading strategies should teach at a higher level properly then the adult learners might get to learn to use reading strategies which are quite necessary to understand the decode the message of any text.

3.6 How to Teach Reading Strategies

Rohmawati, Pahamzah and Syafrizal (2022) on how to teach reading strategies to the learners of vocational high school. The researchers aimed to teach the learners reading strategies along with developing their reading comprehension level and competence. They used a qualitative method in which a kind of case study was done and implemented by focusing on social reality and examining complex, simple, and interactive objects. The study found that the students faced a lot of problems in lacking the proper vocabulary to decode the message of the context and hence the learner's reading comprehension ceased while reading any text. To master the student's vocabulary area and overcome vocabulary issues, the researcher implied the two pre-reading strategies including contextual redefinition and providing a word list. Moreover, the results revealed that the reading strategies applied by the researchers helped and increased the reading comprehension level of learners, especially the vocabulary of the students reaching the maximum level. The overall, findings revealed that the vocabulary problems are one of the fundamental issues that the students face while reading any text and this issue destroys and minimizes the motivation level of student's reading ability and reading habits, but when the students were given proper reading strategies to overcome those vocabulary problems which ultimately affects the students reading comprehension then the learners excelled and vocabulary substantially enhanced along with the development of motivation level.

3.7 Reflective Learners

Nabila Ayu Nisa (2022) conducted her research investigation on reflective learners under the umbrella of using a reading learning strategy. The scale of the study was exploring high school vocation

learners and the study aimed to know the significant difference between three types of reflective learners' reading learning strategies. The samples were drawn from senior high school students and the total number of respondents was chosen 35 who were enrolled in 12th grade. The researcher employed the matching familiar figure test (MFFT) to categorize the students into various reflectivity and impulsivity. Subsequently, the questionnaire was administered to explore the learners learning strategy preferences. The collected data were tested and analyzed by using ANOVA with a significance level of 0.05 through SPSS software. The overall findings demonstrated that reflective learners reading strategies differed quietly from their counterparts who are known as the non-reflective learners. The findings further revealed that reflective learners preferred to use prior knowledge and experience they hold in their metacognitive system rather than using some new and other reading strategies. However, the reflective learning process is one of the learning styles in that the learners always reflect and prefer their prior experiences and knowledge to use and apply in all sorts of languages. Consequently, this makes the work of teachers difficult to infuse and inculcate new ideas into the mind of learners, especially reading strategies should be taught in such a way by the instructor so that the learners get away to use their own experience by getting the input from latest strategies which teacher is teaching them in the class. In this way, the combo will build and learning goals will be achieved.

3.8 Predicting

According to Magiliano (1993) prediction in reading can be defined as thinking about what is to be coming next in the content. The strategy is employed by the readers who are efficient in reading. Such efficient readers utilize pictures, headings as well as their individual experiences to make predictions before the commencement of the reading process. Hence, predictions come ahead or are made before the reading process starts. Jessica (2000) affirms that predicting is a strategy used in reading, this strategy aids the readers to think that what is there in the text and what is going to happen next based or grounded on the text, the author, and the background knowledge that the reader has. This strategy positively impacts the reader as it provokes and stimulates the readers' interest, trigger and galvanize their previous knowledge and information or pre-teach the words, vocabulary, and the concepts that turn out to be difficult (Jessica, G. (2000) as cited in The Ohio University Education, 2014). So, in this way predicting helps the readers to decide what is coming next in the text and the readers later approve or refute their predictions about the content found in the text (Test Wise Word Association, 2006).

3.9 Skimming

According to Widiatmoko, a rapid or quick read is a mixture of motor skills; eye movement, and visual capabilities with a person's cognitive abilities in reading (2001). Therefore, skimming is a type of reading strategy that encompasses the rapid and quick movement of eyes to seek information from the written material (Tarin, 2008). Moreover, Admin (2012) asserts that skimming is a reading technique that involves quick reading to seek a general idea about the written text.

Liao (2011) highlights that skimming is a strategy for reading that is three or four times faster than the normal reading speeds. This technique is mostly utilized and employed when the reader has a bulk to read in a constrained time. Sutz and Weverka (2009) asserts that the reader utilizing the technique only has to take the significant and important information instead of reading everything minutely.

3.9.1 Steps of Skimming

Noticing all the title of the text and succeeding headings and subheadings. Reading the opening and concluding sentences vigilantly. To grasp the central idea, read the first and the last sentence of the paragraph (Mack & Ojalov, 2009), as cited in The article of New York Times, 2014).

Abdelrahman and Bsharah (2014) have also highlighted the steps of skimming:

- Go through the opening or first sentence of the paragraph

- Highlight the ending or the last sentence of the paragraph
- Focus on the keywords that lie in between

Abdelrahman and Bsharah (2014) also gives two patterns of skimming namely the reader ought to follow all three steps in Formal style which is concerned with textbooks that carry long complex sentences and paragraphs. The reader may follow the first two steps in an informal style when the content carries shorter sentences and paragraphs.

As Brown maintains that skimming is concerned with fast reading to get the gist or central idea of the content, hence Ueta (2005) believes that “students are likely to depend more on top-down processing” (2005). So it is deduced that reading the opening and last lines or sentences of the paragraphs is necessary as usually, the main idea of the paragraph lies in the first and last sentences of the paragraphs.

3.9.2 Scanning

Edge (2000) defines scanning as a reading strategy in which a reader goes through the content of the text to look for specific information.

According to Grellet (1981) “scanning is a reading technique that requires the reader to search for specific information without reading the whole text, through looking at its title, table of content and so on”. Gebhardt asserts that using scanning as a strategy for reading comprehension is like moving one’s eyes like radar to get particular and specific information from the text. Harmer (2007) asserts that in scanning the reader looks for specific pieces of information like looking for a telephone number in a directory or finding the name or other details in a research paper. In this strategy the reader is not supposed to read the whole text via close reading rather he/she quickly goes through the content to look for a specific piece of information. Moreover, Maxwell (1970) as well as Diaz and Laguado (2013) also believe that scanning needs a quick search for a specific and particular piece of information like locating the places, names, and dates from the text. So, scanning is a capability and skill to speedily and quickly locate the desired piece of information from the text.

Aritonang, Lasmana, and Kurnia (2018) affirm that scanning is one of the most important reading strategies that is taught in all developed reading courses; highlighting the importance of the Scanning. Mikulecky & Jeffries (1996) asserts that “When you scan you have a question in mind. You do not read every word, only the words that answer your question.

Brown (2003) maintains that scanning is quick reading and the purpose of this strategy is to locate the specific information without being involved in close reading and reading every word of the text.

In reading classrooms when the students are instructed by the teachers to search and find the keywords that the text carries and overlook or ignore the other things. With such instruction, the teacher does not expect the students to understand everything with which the text is composed of. With such instructions, a teacher puts the students to utilize scanning as a reading strategy (Nunan, 2015). Learning scanning as a reading strategy is very crucial for the readers to strengthen and improve their reading skills. Moreover, González (2017) affirms that reading everything in detail from the text is not necessary. González (2017) terms this scanning as “a time-saving language tool that is useful”.

Olson and Ames (1972) and Thamrin (2014) give the steps of scanning strategy as:

- Fix your mind on the specific piece of information that is to be found.
- Decide or choose the clue which is going to assist in locating the searched information.
- Quickly pay a glance down the pages to get the clues.
- After getting the clues, read the portion to receive the requisite information.
- During the procedure, a reader must vigilantly follow the steps and may look for two or three searches to scan the required information which may be found via italic words, underlined words or sentences, tables, and indexes (Sutz & Weverka, 2009).

3.9.3 Inferring

Lee (2013) in his study *Thinking Matters: Inferencing in ESL reading Lessons* cites the example for understanding inferring. “John showed Mum his school report. He was not allowed to play video games anymore”. The reader here via using inferencing concludes that the result of John was not good which is why he refrained from playing video games. Prezler (2006) asserted that “inferences are evidence-based guesses i.e. in case of reading; students use their prior knowledge to make inferences about the text”. Inferring or making inferences is the reading strategy that is widely known and referred to as “read between the lines” (Zimmermann, 2009). He further opines that reading between the lines refers that the author wants the reader to go through the content and come to a conclusion that is exact to what the author wants. Zimmermann (2009) affirms that drawing and making inferences is a technique that employs the prior and background knowledge of the reader (schema), knowledge, and information that has been extracted from the content or text. The reader based on prior knowledge and extracted content information constitutes critical judgments and constructs the understanding of the text. Kispal (2008) opines that inferring or inferencing is a strategy in which the reader makes use of two or more two pieces of information from the content to arrive at “an implicit third” (Kispal, 2008). The inferences are those conclusions and drawings that the reader constitutes regarding the unsaid content, based on the said content or text.

3.9.4 Self-Monitoring

According to Rafferty (2010), “Self-Monitoring (SM), falls in the category of self-management meta-cognitive strategy in which the learners (readers) are taught to be aware of a particular behavior. Lane and Menzies (2011) assert that self-monitoring is a process comprised of two steps. The first step is observation, where the student observes a certain behavior and the second step is recording. After observing, the student goes for recording the specific behavior (Joseph & Eveleigh, 2011). The recorded behavior can be inscribed on a chart or may verbally be communicated (Wright, 2013). Ford (2013) affirms that proficient and skilled readers employ self-monitoring as a strategy for reading comprehension. Moreover, the review of the self-monitoring strategy highlights positive outcomes from self-monitoring; the constructive outcomes including increases in on-task behaviors; productivity; besides the skills, for instance, the reading comprehension and the word identification” (Ford, 2013). While Joseph and Eveleigh (2011) asserts that the two benefits of a self-monitoring strategy are On-task behaviors and higher work efficiency. Skilled readers are those whose mind begins to think along with reading and they do not only think rather they also self-monitor their thoughts. “They also have procedures in place before, during, and after they read to ensure they will comprehend texts” (Berkeley & Taboada, 2014). A proficient reader who does not get properly what the text says, he or she will reread the content to get the optimum understanding (Hedin, 2010).

3.9.5 Summarising

Summarising is a reading strategy employed by the readers and Oxford (2006) defines “summarizing as a short description of the main ideas or points of something without any details”. While Ozdemir (2018) opines that summarization is a strategy that is the abbreviated form of the text extracted from the central and secondary ideas and its reconstitution by the readers. Hence, summarization requires rephrasing of the author’s intent, feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Reading Rockets Organization (2014), puts forth to summarize a piece of text that teaches learners the way how to distinguish and discriminate the most significant elements in a text. Furthermore, summarizing also teaches the students how to ignore inappropriate information; how to put together the innermost ideas in a useful way. Further developing to this point, teaching learners to summarize enhances their cognitive ability concerning what is being read. Ozdemir (2018) further extends the same idea as, summarizing a text needs further cognitive processes like seeking the central idea, connecting the secondary ideas with the main and central, excluding the unnecessary and less significant details, and ordering the details of the main and

secondary ideas as per the actual text (Ozdemir, 2018). Moghaddam (2007) cites Brown, Day, and Jones as in summarization, the reader in comparison with simple comprehension, needs to have more deliberate processing strategies. For summarization, the reader needs to have a complete understanding of the text Palmer (2003) affirms that perfect and complete understanding and comprehension of the text is necessary to reduce or compact the text in to summarize form. Highlighting the importance of summarization as a reading strategy Corder (2000) asserts, that summarization is undoubtedly, the most significant and encompassing of all the reading strategies and techniques available for the students for effective studying and comprehension. Summarizing a text presents a conceptual framework of the text on the other hand the framework speeds up the process of retaining the content in the memory. Research shows that summarization is a reading strategy that is widely employed and the readers who are good at comprehending the text use summarizing as a reading strategy. Studies highlighted that the students who are skilled and proficient in comprehending the text, are also good at summarizing it on the other hand teaching summarizing strategy to the learners may also increase the comprehension of the readers (Kudret & Baylik, 2016). As the reader summarizes the text in his language, summarizing strategy also strengthens writing skills along with better comprehension (Bellet, 2005).

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of several studies, this can be summed up that teaching and learning a second language requires the appropriate teaching strategies because learners must know and have adequate knowledge of using various strategies to use them in their context and raise their understanding level. However, reading is one of the very basic skills of language which enhances the capability of the learners to easily understand other parts and skills of the language. Knowingly or unknowingly, the learners apply lots of ways while reading any piece of paper or text; therefore, there is a dire need to make the learners aware of what strategies could be helpful for them while reading. A teacher has to provide knowledge and raise the understanding bar of the learners regarding teaching language and its skills so that the learners make conscious progress in their learning style. Since, it is an obvious fact that every learner is different from one another because of their background education, knowledge, and environment that's why they all need different reading strategies which can easily make ways for them to learn and grow in their comfort zone without taking any hesitation and rush. So, teachers are required to let the learners know all the reading strategies and then leave them to choose on their own which they find best for them to master reading skills.

Acknowledgement

All praise is to Allah Almighty who has bestowed me with His countless blessings. And He enabled me to pursue such task and has been completed it successfully. I thank my supervisor Dr Elizabeth M. Anthony Associate Professor Department of English who supported and guided me at every step of my research. Her caring nature made me work and achieve the target. Truly, this review article would not have been complete without her guidance and suggestion. Furthermore, I would like to my profound gratitude to the Center of Language Studies for giving such opportunity to publish this review article.

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