

# USING METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGY AND LEARNING STYLES TO CREATE SELF-DIRECTED LEARNERS IN READING COMPREHENSION

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## Abstract

*Metacognitive reading strategy plays a significant role in reading comprehension and educational process. Metacognitive reading strategy awareness, are strategies that help students to regulate or monitor cognitive strategies. They are the notions of thinking about thinking, and are defined as, planned, intentional, goal directed, and future-oriented mental processing that can be used to accomplish cognitive tasks (Salataki&Akyel, 2002; Phakit, 2003). On other hand, metacognitive reading strategy is not only the main important factors to facilitate students' reading comprehension for successful second/foreign language readers. Thus, teachers must first understand the learning styles and the characteristics of becoming a self-directed learners in reading comprehension. Therefore, this paper provides several learning styles to create self-directed learners in reading comprehension which can be combined with metacognitive strategy. Since learners differ in their preference to certain learning styles, it will be important for teachers to examine the variations in their students on the features of their learning styles to create self-directed learners in reading comprehension.*

**Key words:** metacognitive reading strategy, metacognitive reading strategy regulatory skills, reading comprehension, learning styles, self-directed learners.

## Introduction

This paper aims at showing how learners become self directed learners using metacognitive reading strategies and learning styles. Since reading is considered the most important skill in academic contexts (Carrell, 1988; Carrell, Devine, & Eskey, 1988, p. 1; Grabe, 1991, p. 375) and reading strategies are crucial for efficient comprehension (Carrell, 1988, 1998), it is imperative to prepare second/foreign language learners to become competent readers by raising their awareness of reading strategies, with the hope that such awareness will result in more effective use of these strategies. On other hand, metacognitive reading strategy is not only the main important factors to facilitate students' reading comprehension for successful second/foreign language readers. Thus, teachers must first understand the learning styles and the characteristics of becoming a self-directed learners in reading comprehension.

Firstly, this paper highlight metacognitive reading strategies and learning styles for universities and schools. Then followed by discussion of some important things, such as: "Why learning styles?", "What kind of learning styles are preferred by learners in university level and schools level?" How the students' ability to regulate themselves to

become self-directed learners?, “What is the goal orientation for self-directed learners to be successful in goal setting learning?”.

This paper then presents learning styles to create self-directed learners. This paper ends by emphasizing again the importance of metacognitive reading strategies and learning styles to create self-directed learners.

### **Metacognitive Reading Strategies and Learning Styles**

It is known that metacognitive strategies are important for successful second/foreign language readers. In the digital world where information is easily accessed, the ability to read is critical. According to Eskey (2005), many EFL students may not need to speak English in their daily lives but they need to read it to access the richness of information in English. In particular for EFL college or university students, Levine, Ferenz, and Reves (2000) mentioned that the ability to read academic texts is one of the most important skills.

Specifically for academic reading, thorough comprehension has become essential because it is often associated with the requirement to perform identifiable cognitive and procedural tasks such as taking a test, writing a paper or giving a speech (Shih, 1992).

Metacognitive awareness is a knowledge about the appropriate actions one takes in order to achieve a particular goal (Auerbach & Paxton, 1997; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989). Metacognitive reading strategies can help students to understand not only what strategies they can use (declarative knowledge), or how they should use them (procedural knowledge) but also why, when, and where they are supposed to use them at particular stage, and how to evaluate their efficacy (conditional knowledge), along with awareness of the purpose of reading that might trigger particular strategies (Anderson, 2002; Carrell, 1989). One of the main struggles that learners face in trying to develop an understanding of metacognition and ways to develop strategies that positively impact themselves is an overall lack of awareness to their own learning process. Learners, even at a rudimentary level, have some basic understanding of their own knowledge and thinking. Flavell (1979) describes three basic types of awareness of knowledge, which is described as an understanding of what one does and does not know, and what one wants to know. Second, there is an awareness of thinking, which describes an understanding of approaches to directed learning. Therefore, students need to know or learn how to read with ease in order to be motivated to read more English materials in order to build up their English ability.

Students can be encouraged to develop a sense of their own knowledge by asking question such as, “What do I know?”, What don’t I know? And “What do I need to know?” these types of reflective questions can help learners become more self aware and help them to make real world connection to the information they are currently learning. When learners get results from assessments and grades on general assignments, especially when they receive unexpected results such as failure, learners will try to mentally comprehend and explain why these results occurred. In effective classroom, teachers are responsible for helping learners develop better metacognitive skills by incorporating active reflection throughout the learning process. Here are some suggestions for developing metacognitive skills. 1) Help students assess the task by being more explicit than you (teacher) may think necessary. Don’t assume that a basic description is enough. Fill in the details so that

students know what they are being asked to do. 2) Help students evaluate how well they're equipped to do the task by providing opportunities for self-assessment early and often. Show students how these kinds of assessments are helpful—how the self-knowledge they reveal enables students to better understand what the task requires. 3) Help students plan an appropriate approach by first implementing a plan you've provided and then by creating their own plans. It also helps if you make planning a central goal of the assignment. That means making time for it and letting it be a part of the assignment that counts. 4) Help students apply selected strategies and monitor progress by having students do guided self-assessments. Give them a set of criteria and help them apply those to what they've accomplished so far. Make reflection a part of the assignment by having students explain what they are doing and why. Peer review can also help students be realistic about their own progress and that of other students. 5) Help students adjust their strategies by encouraging them to analyze the effectiveness of what they've done. They need to reflect on their progress as they work on the task and on their performance once the task has been completed. They also need to know that there are multiple ways of tackling the task so that if what they tried did not work very well, they can use another approach next time.

To become self-directed learners, students must learn to assess the demands of the task, evaluate their own knowledge and skills, plan their approach, monitor their progress, and adjust their strategies as needed.

Teaching students how to become self-directed learners related to the using of metacognition and their learning styles. Demos (2005) states that 'many teachers are successfully using learning styles as a means of getting students to reflect deeply on their learning and thus develop their metacognitive capacities'. Learning Style' has been defined by various scholars mostly as a signal for individual differences. These differences may manifest itself in 'life styles' and even in personality types (Zhang & Sternberg 2005). Kolb(1984) and Honey and Mumford (1992) describe learning style as an individual preferred or habitual ways of processing and transforming knowledge. According to Kolb (1984), psychological attributes, resulted from individual differences, determine the particular strategies a person chooses while learning.

Learning styles refer to the concept that we, as individuals, process and perceive information in different ways. Individuals can get much of information about the world around them. Learning styles are used to describe and help the learners understand the different ways in different people learn. Some learners may be very receptive to visual forms of information such as pictures and diagrams, whilst others prefer written and spoken explanations. Some people prefer to learn actively and interactively. The idea of learning styles usually refers to a preferred way of learning. It implies that each individuals has a natural inclination toward learning of some kind and, that if that preference can be identified, teaching and learning experiences can be provided to help learners learn more effectively. Greater awareness of learning preferences and styles helps teachers to be more flexible in their teaching and to utilise a wider range of classroom methodologies. The aim is to help learners build their skills and capacities to learn well in both preferred and less preferred modes of learning.

As stated by Abdullah (2001), self-directed learners are "responsible owners and managers of their own learning process." Being a self-directed learners means that the

learner understand for him/herself what he/she needs in order to learn, go about obtaining what he/she needs, do what it takes to learn new things. Educators say that helping learners become independent, self-directed, lifelong is every bit as important to their ultimate success in life as helping learners develop skills for particular skill. In order to help students understand how to become self-directed learners, teachers must first understand both the educational and motivational psychology behind self-directed learning. According to Nelson & Conner (2008), teachers and administrators, along with parents and students, must have an understanding of the following characteristics of becoming a self-directed learner: Student motivation, goal orientation, self-efficacy, and locus of control, self-regulation, and metacognition. These concepts provide a framework for helping learners to truly gain understanding of themselves as learners and how they can improve their self-awareness as a learner. After knowing the learners' learning style, the teacher can implement metacognitive reading strategies in classroom to activate the learners' prior knowledge related to the topic of reading.

Several researches related to the preferred learning styles in university and schools have shown by some researchers. Renou (2010), who carried out perceptual learning styles and achievement in a university-level foreign language course shows that forty-nine percent of the students in university were visual learners, twenty-three percent were auditory learners, twenty-one percent scored the same on both visual and auditory perceptual learning styles. The remaining seven percent of the learners were tactile styles. Shannon (2008), who carried out the using of learning styles to create self-directed learners in high school reveals that seventy-three percent students who had kinesthetic as one of their top two ranked learning styles. This was followed by interactive with forty-five percent, haptic with thirty-eight percent, visual with thirty percent, print with fifteen percent aural with ten percent. And Chuah Chong-Cheng (in Abidin et al: 2011) discusses the importance of learning styles as being not only necessary, but also important for individuals in academic setting reveals that ten percent of what they read, twenty-six percent of what they hear, thirty percent of what they see, fifty percent of what they see and hear, seventy percent of what they say, and ninety percent of what they say as they do something. These research indicate that learning styles make an impact on the students' learning process to become self-directed learners. In most cases, a very successful learners learn in several different ways. On the whole, every student has certain degree of preferences in each type of learning style, and the majority of them have dominance in one or more styles of learning. Helping learners to identify the ways that they learn best and providing them with opportunities to use all their senses and different intelligences is one of the key challenges for teachers.

A successful learner has a goal orientation in his/her learning. As defined by Caraway et al. (2003), it is the individual's ability to make plans and set goals, and works in combination with self-efficacy, to increase a student's motivation. One theory that focuses on the components of goal orientation is the target achievement goal theory, developed by Dr. Donna Woolard. Here, means that the central focus of target achievement goal theory focuses on method in which individuals determine their goals in achievement settings in academic. According to this theory, there are three factors that act together to determine a person's motivation: development of achievement goals, a person's perceived

ability level, and the achievement behavior of the individual. In following this theory, individuals in an achievement setting are usually driven to follow one of two possible goals when determining whether or not they have been successful in goal setting. A learner may have a task goal orientation where the focus is on improving performance relative to the past performance, not on comparison with others. Others may have an outcome goal where a learner constantly compare themselves with others. Such as factors are external and uncontrollable. Therefore the goal orientation for self-directed learners to be successful in goal setting learning tends to support that task orientation is more favorable to positive behaviors in achievement settings.

### **Different Kinds of Metacognitive Reading Strategies and Metacognitive Reading Strategy Regulatory Skills**

Learners with good metacognitive skills are able to monitor and direct their own learning processes. Learners who demonstrate a wide range of metacognitive skills perform better in reading comprehension and complete work more efficiently. According to Ahmadi et al (2013) explained different kinds of metacognitive reading strategies cited from Brown (1987). It consists of three various types of metacognitive reading strategy awareness. First, Declarative knowledge. Declarative known is defined as knowing “about” things. It is the knowledge involves information about individual knowledge as a learner, and about what elements affect one’s performance. Second, Procedural knowledge. According to Veenman (2005), procedural knowledge refers to knowing “how” to do things. It is defined as knowledge about the execution of procedural skills. Third, Conditional knowledge refers to knowing when and why to apply different cognitive actions (Desoete & Roeyers, 2003). From these different kinds of metacognitive reading strategies, Ahmadi et al support the claim that skilled learners possess declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge about cognition. This knowledge usually improve performance. Learners who implement a wide range of metacognitive skills means that they are self-regulated learners who utilize the “right tool for the job” and modify learning strategies and skills based on their awareness of effectiveness. Individuals with a high level of metacognitive knowledge and skill identify blocks to learning as early as possible and change “tools” or strategies to ensure goal attainment. Metacognition helps learners to perform many cognitive tasks more effectively. Strategies for promoting metacognition include self-questioning, thinking aloud while performing a task, and making graphic representations.

Metacognitive reading strategy regulatory skills have three essential skills (Jacobs & Paris, 1987). First is Planning. According to Zare-ee (2008), planning involves the selection of appropriate strategies and the allocation of resources that affect performance. For instance, making predictions before reading, strategy sequencing, and allocating time or attention selectively before beginning task. Furthermore, planning is the process of thinking about and organizing the activities required to achieve a desired goal. Second is Monitoring skill. Monitoring is a strategy that analysis of information as a project progress. The purpose of monitoring is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a project or organization. Third skill is Evaluation. Evaluation is defined as appraising the conclusion and regulatory processes of an individual’ learning. For example, evaluation involves re-evaluating personal’s aims and conclusions. It can also be summative ( drawing learnings

for a completed project or an organization that is no longer functioning). However, Ahmadi et al did not explain become self-regulated learners (deals with metacognitive reading strategy regulatory skills) there is another factor which is controlling the the learningto create self directed learners that is learning styles.

Considering other expert opinion in teaching reading related to metacognitive strategies and learning styles. Many teachers are successfully using learning styles as a means of getting students to reflect deeply on their learning and thus develop their metacognitive capacities. (Demos, 2005). If the teachers accept students in different learning styles, then the potential benefits for teachers and learners are considerable. A greater knowledge of a range of learning styles will help teachers to do some these following activities:

- Be more aware of their preferred teaching style. This might include the way the teachers communicate and the kinds of methods and techniques to explain the subjects. It might also include the way they plan lessons and the kinds of tasks and activities devised for learners.
- Recognise the students' learning styles, particularly those that are different from their own.
- Teachers will be able to match their teaching to their students' learning styles by explaining and presenting subjects in different ways, using alternative teaching aid and techniques giving activities that teachers provide to suit their students' learning styles.

In summary, helping learners to identify the ways that they learn best giving a big contribution for both teachers and learners. When the learners know about their preference learning style and regulate themselves, they will be a self-directed learner.

### **What Are Learning Styles?**

Learning styles refer to the concept that individuals process and perceive information in different ways. One assessment tool that can be used in establishing a person's learning style is the Perceptual Modality Preference Survey (PMPS).

This survey focuses on seven perceptual sensory intake methods that help shape how the individuals view the world around them. There are seven perceptual styles: print, aural, visual, interactive, haptic, kinesthetic, and olfactory (Institute for Learning Styles Research, 2003). According to the Institute for Learning Styles Research (2003), print learning refers to seeing printed or written words. This type of learner often take notes, remember things easily that are read, recall information more readily after seeing or writing something. Aural learning refers to listening. These learners excel within a lecture setting, are usually excellent listeners, can learn concept by listening to a visual medium. Interactive learning refers to verbalization. These learners prefer group discussions, enjoy question and answer session. Then, visual learning refers to seeing visual depictions. These learners function well by seeing and by watching demonstrations, often have a vivid imagination. Haptic learners refers to the sense of touch or grasp. These learners prefer a "hands on" approach learning, tend to doodle on notebooks. Kinesthetic learning refers to whole body movement. These learners focus with direct involvement in things. They often fidget or find a reason to move, often find success in ohysical response activities. Olfactory

learning refers to sense of smell and taste. These learners use smell to enhance learning, are frequently able to identify smells, and can associate a particular smell with specific past memories.

These learning styles give the main message for teachers and learners. Most learners have elements of more than one learning style. They may have a preference for one way of learning, but can also learn in other ways although it may be hard to do so. Knowing their preferred learning styles may help learners develop strategies to compensate for weaknesses and build on strengths. It is important that learners are able to make use of all their senses when gathering, processing and recalling information. Some research suggests that the most able learners are those with reasonable learning styles who can adapt their ability to learn to the prevailing materials and circumstances. In other words, making people move out of their preferred learning style gives them the possibility of developing new learning strategies.

## Conclusion

Since the importance of metacognitive reading strategy in reading comprehension used by EFL students. They may be supplemented with other factors that is learning styles to create self-directed learners. Moreover, this paper evolves that metacognitive reading strategy is not one of the main important factors to facilitate learners' reading comprehension to create self-directed learners after knowing the learners' preference learning styles. Hopefully, some research findings have stated above are able to become a solution related to teach reading comprehension.

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