CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

The objectives of this study are to explore the effects of metacognitive reading strategy training on participants' metacognitive awareness differences as well as change of reading behaviors before and after the instruction. Also, the participants' perceptions of the MRST and their reading experiences are the main concern of the research. On the basis of the findings, some implications, limitations, and suggestions for further studies are provided.

Summary of Major Findings

The evidence gathered has uncovered several important findings that are concluded in this section. First, the metacognitive reading strategy training was successful in increasing both high-proficient and low-proficient readers' metacognitive awareness of strategy use. Before the MRST, the HPG participants demonstrated a moderate strategy use while the LPG participants showed a more meager one. A few of them, including both high-proficient and low-proficient readers, even did not realize that reading needs skills or so-called reading strategies. Nevertheless, after the training, the two groups exhibited a significant difference in their metacognitive awareness of reading strategies as well as reading process. Moreover, the LPG readers, who depended mostly on bottom-up strategies before the MRST, were getting aware of utilizing top-down strategies after the training. Meanwhile, HPG readers tended to demonstrate a clearer purpose in mind before reading, and showed higher-level of thinking during the reading

process.

Second, the metacognitive reading strategy training may be effective in enhancing both high- and low-proficient readers' reading comprehension. Comparing the scores of the Pre-reading Comprehension Test and Post-reading Comprehension Test with t-test, both groups of participants made significant progress in scores after the training. The participants also held positive attitude toward reading comprehension improvement after the MRST. However, the reading comprehension improvement may fail to receive independent confirmation owing to the fact that the controlled group was absent in the study.

Third, with regard to the three selected metacognitive reading strategies: semantic mapping, prediction, and summary, both groups of readers exhibited positive attitude toward the MRST. The investigation of the participants' response to the MRST shows that both groups of readers were inclined to use the three instructed strategies with increased frequency and became more aware of doing so during reading after the four-week training. In addition, the lively class discussion inspired the students to think critically and to activate their background knowledge in order to read strategically. Furthermore, many participants, especially low-proficient readers, built up their confidence in English reading after the MRST.

Fourth, the MRST helped the participants perceive the importance of fixed-up behaviors in locating the reading difficulties and using available resources to repair their reading comprehension. Some of the high-proficient readers and many of the low-proficient readers would ask for external help, for example, asking teachers for help when meeting any reading difficulties before the MRST. Nevertheless, after the treatment, most of them would know to use contextual clues to solve their reading problems. Before the MRST, most low-proficient readers and a few high-proficient readers failed to trigger their background knowledge to help their reading. However,

after learning the semantic mapping and prediction strategies, most of the readers in the two groups realized using what have they already known to scaffold the reading will lead to successful and effective reading.

Fifth, some low-proficient readers pointed out in the interview that, after the MRST, they were aware what reading problems they had and what kind of strategy could be used to solve specific problem. But to their disappointment, the insufficient vocabulary problem made them unable to use the strategies effectively at the end no matter how hard they tried. And this runs against some findings of ESL research (Chen, 2005; Cheng, 2000; Ko, 2004), which guaranteed that applying metacognitive reading strategies can make up insufficient vocabulary problem for many ESL readers. The factor for this situation may be that these readers spent all their efforts on decoding in a cognitive process, thus failed to use reading strategies in a metacognitive way. That is, the insufficient vocabulary put them in a disadvantage position in which the readers could only use bottom-up strategies to decode the readings.

To sum up, the MRST was proved to be effective in promoting the participants' metacognitive awareness of strategy use and enhancing their confidence and interest in reading English. Although the differences between HPG and LPG readers still exist after the four-week instruction, most participants performed higher strategic reading awareness of using available resources and background knowledge in prediction, macrostructure in summarization, and fixed-up behaviors. The MRST also made some change to the participants' perception of good reading behaviors and good readers. Finally, all readers expressed their willingness to learn and use more strategies in the future.

Implication

The findings derived from the study may offer some educators pedagogical

implications. First, most EFL teachers traditionally stressed the importance of decoding skills in their reading instruction, which put the readers, especially the low-proficient readers, in a helpless condition. Many instructors even ask their students to underline the unknown words in the reading process. The unreasonable prerequisite to knowing every word makes reading activities boring and stressful for EFL readers. However, increased metacognitive awareness has been proven to have a better use of reading strategies, which result in an increase in monitoring comprehension in children as well as in adults (Carrell, 1989; Paris, Cross and Lipson, 1984). Therefore, it is advisable for reading teachers to provide EFL students with metacognitive reading strategies training. Future reading instruction emphasis should be placed on providing a more supportive and scaffolding language learning environment for the EFL students to have a better understanding of the reading process.

Second, teachers should instruct students to focus on knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition. In terms of knowledge of cognition, students should be informed of declarative (know what), conditional (know when) and procedure (know how) information about using a reading strategy. Therefore, students may know what a strategy is, when it is used and how it is used, and then they may use the strategies effectively and generalize them to different reading situations. As for regulation of cognition, teachers should encourage students to be engaged in monitoring their reading progresses. When monitoring the reading process, students will be aware of the fixed-up behaviors when encountering difficulties. As shown in the results of the study, most students, especially the low-proficient ones, enhanced their strategic reading awareness after the MRST. Accordingly, an instructor should scaffold students' reading activities by helping them generate metacognition in reading, and then promote their reading comprehension at last. As Abromitis (1994) put it, the teacher plays an important role in developing students at all levels increasing metacognitive awareness and strategy use.

Third, teachers should provide students with more opportunities to practice the strategies they have been taught. According to Garner (1988), learning reinforcement is an important factor for the effectiveness of metacognitive reading strategies training. Therefore, as students have more chances to practice the strategies they learned, they may internalize the use of metacognitive reading strategies and decide which strategy is suitable and effective in facilitating reading comprehension and become active, critical, and reflective readers.

Fourth, teachers should provide students with more opportunities to read extensively by giving students English newspapers, magazines, and books to choose from, instead of giving the English reading comprehension tests all the time. In this study, students failed to decide before reading whether reading is for fun or for test. The reason is clear that the chances they have for reading English are almost for taking tests. English didn't appear to be a language for pleasure reading. Additionally, extensive reading will also enrich their background knowledge as well as their vocabulary power. Given more chances to practice the reading strategies, students may feel more confident about which one is suitable and effective in facilitating their reading comprehension, according to different task requirements.

Last but not least, instruction in basic language knowledge should go before that of metacognitive strategies instruction, for metacognition can only become a facilitating factor when cognition really happens. For many years, researchers have focused on seeking so called "metacognitive strategies" to build up readers' comprehension monitoring. However, the truth is that if readers don't possess sufficient basic language ability, then no matter how much metacognitve strategy training they get, the outcome will turn out to be fruitless.

Limitation and Suggestion

Based on the study findings in the present study, some suggestions for the future studies are given as follows. First, future research needs to explore the long-term effectiveness in the MRST. It is required to measure students' metacognitive awareness of strategy use and reading comprehension as well as reading behaviors over a long period of time. Then, the long-term effectiveness in the MRST can be determined.

Second, a control group can be designed in the future study to contrast with the experiment group. The control group without the MRST would provide a basal line in comparison with the experiment group. Also, a large-scale of EFL readers at different proficiency levels may be recruited for future studies. Then, the effect of the MRST will be more convincing.

Third, the texts selected for the study were mainly expository texts, and only three metacognitive reading strategies were included. The effects of other reading strategies upon different genres of texts are left unexplored and needed further investigated.

Fourth, the relationship between individual learning styles and metacognitive reading strategy instruction is needed to investigate in future studies. As observed in this study, one slow-speed reader always put reading speed in the first place according to his reading experiences. Reading is a highly individual language process (Sarig, 1987). Readers with different strengths and weaknesses match with compatible reading strategy instructions. Therefore, future case studies will be needed to investigate into the relationship between learning styles and the effect of the MRST, to substantiate the results of the present study.

Fifth, further research can explore the correlation between low-proficient readers' decoding abilities and the effectiveness of metacognitive reading strategies. According to the LPG responses to the Questionnaire I, II, and III, and their interview with the

researcher, they tended to fail to use the instructed strategies effectively even though they were aware they had to, because of their insufficient decoding ability. As mentioned above, when decoding is not automatic, attention may not be focused on deriving meaning. Therefore, further studies are recommended to investigate the relation between decoding ability and effective use of metacognitive reading strategies.

Sixth, the most basic concern expressed in the related literature is that we may not be able to observe the workings of our own minds with any accuracy, and we are telling more than we actually know (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). As parts of cognitive processes become automated, only the final parts of the process are left in memory, available for reporting to the interviewer. Automatic processes are "unconscious" in the sense that reporting the conscious behaviors is not necessary for their activation. (Cavanaugh & Perlmutter, 1982; Ericsson & Simon, 1980). Accordingly, it needs further and pervasive investigation on whether introspection is a valid tool for scientific observation.