Reading Strategies in L1 and L2: Comparison of Korean EFL Learners’ Reading Strategy Use

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Mie Ae Jung & Nam Hee Kim. 2012. Reading Strategies in L1 and L2: Comparison of Korean EFL Learners’ Reading Strategy Use. Studies in Modern Grammar 68, 211-240. This study aims to investigate the relationship between metacognitive awareness and the use of reading strategies in L1 and L2 reading depending on the participants’ L2 reading proficiency. A total of 167 Korean EFL university students participated in this study. They responded to questionnaires asking about their metacognitive reading strategies in their L1 and L2 reading for academic purposes. The findings showed that (a) there were positive relationship between L1 reading and L2 reading in terms of their use of metacognitive reading strategies, and (b) significant differences were found in the use of strategies in L1 vs. L2 reading in terms of L2 reading proficiency: L1 and L2 global strategy use in the high proficiency group, L1 and L2 support strategy use in the high, intermediate, and low proficiency groups, and overall L1 and L2 metacognitive reading strategy use in the intermediate proficiency group. There were no significant differences in L1 and L2 problem-solving strategy use in all three proficiency groups. The most influential factor in predicting overall use of L2 metacognitive reading strategies was found to be L1 global strategy use. Pedagogical implications for strategy-based reading instruction were suggested.

[Key words: L1 & L2 metacognitive reading strategies, global strategies, support strategies, problem-solving strategies, L2 reading proficiency, strategy-based instruction]

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1. Introduction

In situations where English is learned as a foreign language and there are many more chances to encounter reading materials in English than there are to practice oral communication, reading must be a top priority for English education. While reading ability is important for getting information from the huge amount of written English-language materials in educational environments, especially in colleges, and universities students have little interest in practicing their reading skills.

For EFL students, learning to read in English is a complex process that involves incorporating flexible reading rates, self-monitoring their metacognitive reading strategies, and developing accurate and fluent decoding skills, a sizable reading vocabulary, reading comprehension strategies (Grabe, 1991). Many factors, such as background knowledge, language proficiency in their L2, and metacognitive knowledge can all be considered to better understand adult L2 readers' reading processes and their comprehension of the text.

In studies of language learning strategies, both L1 and L2 researchers have emphasized that metacognitive strategies are significant in a reader’s language learning process. O’Malley and Chamot (1990) emphasized that “students without metacognitive approaches are essentially learners without direction or opportunity to plan their learning, monitor their progress; or review their accomplishments and future learning directions” (1990:8). Vandergrift also emphasized ”metacognitive strategies are crucial because they oversee, regulate, or direct the language learning task, and involve thinking about the learning process” (2002:599). In this sense, there needs to be thorough research done on what kinds of metacognitive reading strategies are used while students are reading. Although there have been some studies done in Korea on overall reading strategies in Korea (Lee, 1994; Park, 1999; Yim, 2004), few studies have been