



Enhancing Reading Comprehension through Strategy Instruction: A Study with Adult EFL Learners in a Professional Training Context

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of explicit reading strategy instruction on adult EFL learners enrolled in a professional training program. Ten participants, initially placed at the CEFR A2+ level, completed a nine-week intensive English course (approximately 270 contact hours). While the first eight weeks focused on general language development, the final week introduced a targeted intervention in reading strategies, implemented after learners had reached an intermediate level of proficiency.

Data were collected through a researcher-developed comprehension test (administered in Weeks 1 and 9), an adapted version of the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSİ), and the reading component of the institution’s standardized end-of-course examination. Results revealed significant gains in reading comprehension (from 61% to 76%, $p < .001$) and in reported strategy use (from “sometimes” to “often” on the 5-point MARSİ scale, $p < .001$), both accompanied by very large effect sizes. The strongest improvements were observed in problem-solving and post-reading strategies.

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of reading strategy instruction is closely linked not only to instructional focus but also to its placement within the learning sequence. By demonstrating that a short, strategically timed intervention can produce substantial benefits in an occupationally oriented professional training context, the study extends existing research on L2 reading strategies and provides practical guidance on the optimal timing of strategy-based instruction for adult learners.

Keywords: *Reading Comprehension; Reading Strategies; Strategy Instruction; Adult EFL Learners; Professional Training Context; Intensive English Course; Metacognitive Awareness*



INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a core skill in second language (L2) education, especially for adult learners who often engage with texts in professional or task-oriented contexts. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, reading supports the acquisition of vocabulary, discourse structures, and functional language use. In structured training programs - including military-oriented or professional development courses - reading serves instrumental purposes such as interpreting written instructions, understanding protocols, and reviewing procedural materials. In these contexts, the ability to comprehend texts with accuracy and efficiency is not only an academic goal but also a practical necessity tied to workplace performance.

Despite its importance, adult EFL learners frequently face challenges in reading comprehension. Many struggle to extract main ideas, infer meaning, or adjust their reading strategies according to text type and purpose. These difficulties are often compounded by passive reading habits formed in earlier educational experiences and by limited exposure to effective reading strategies. Research has consistently shown that skilled readers - both in L1 and L2 - draw on a repertoire of strategies to actively engage with texts, monitor comprehension, and repair understanding when breakdowns occur.

The present study investigates whether explicit instruction in reading strategies - such as previewing, predicting, identifying key information, and summarizing - can lead to measurable improvements in reading comprehension among adult EFL learners. It also examines whether learners' awareness and reported use of such strategies increase over the course of a structured intensive program. In particular, the study advances the argument that the effectiveness of reading strategy instruction depends not only on the strategies taught, but also on the timing of their introduction within an intensive adult learning program, specifically after learners have reached a sufficient level of linguistic readiness.

By situating the intervention in a continuing professional education context, this study contributes to existing research on L2 reading strategies and broadens the empirical lens of the field to include adult learners in occupationally oriented, high-stakes training environments. The classroom-based design also provides practical guidance for language instructors seeking to integrate strategy instruction into intensive EFL programs where time is limited and outcomes are closely tied to learners' professional responsibilities.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 READING COMPREHENSION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Reading comprehension is a central component of second language (L2) learning and a key avenue for acquiring vocabulary, grammar, and discourse knowledge [1,2]. Foundational cognitive models such as those proposed by Rumelhart and Stanovich conceptualized reading as an interactive process involving both bottom-up (decoding) and top-down (prediction and schema activation) mechanisms [3,4]. These models are particularly relevant in L2 contexts, where learners must simultaneously manage unfamiliar lexical items, syntactic structures, and global textual organization.

In the L2 classroom, reading comprehension extends beyond linguistic knowledge. As Urquhart and Weir noted, comprehension depends on the interaction between the reader's background knowledge, the text type, and the reading purpose [5]. Adult learners in particular often read with instrumental goals - e.g., to understand procedural instructions, operate equipment, or pass certification tests - which places a premium on both efficiency and accuracy [6,7].

However, L2 learners face persistent challenges in achieving fluent and strategic reading. Difficulties arise at the lexical, syntactic, and discourse levels, and are compounded by limited exposure to L2 texts and reading practices [8,9]. Bernhardt's compensatory model



of L2 reading underscores the complex interplay between L1 literacy skills, L2 linguistic knowledge, and strategic competence [10,7]. Her work highlights the need for pedagogical approaches that build not only linguistic competence but also reading-specific strategies tailored to learner needs and text demands.

1.2 CONCEPTUALIZING READING STRATEGIES

In response to reading challenges, many researchers have turned to the concept of reading strategies, goal-directed cognitive and metacognitive actions used to enhance comprehension [11,12]. Cognitive strategies include actions like re-reading, summarizing, inferring meaning, or using context clues [13]. Metacognitive strategies, by contrast, involve planning how to approach a text, monitoring understanding during reading, and evaluating outcomes after reading [14,15]. A third category, socio-affective strategies, includes seeking help, self-encouragement, and managing anxiety [16].

These strategies are dynamic and recursive; they occur before, during, and after reading [1]. Skilled readers adaptively shift between strategies depending on the complexity of the text, the reading task, and their own comprehension goals [17]. Research suggests that less proficient readers tend to use fewer strategies and often apply them rigidly or inappropriately [18,19]. Consequently, teaching learners how to use strategies appropriately is considered an essential part of L2 reading instruction.

The concept of strategic reading has also been linked to learner autonomy. According to Benson, developing strategic competence empowers learners to regulate their own reading and become more independent in their language development, an important outcome in adult learning contexts [20].

1.3 INSTRUCTION IN READING STRATEGIES

A substantial number of empirical studies support the effectiveness of explicit strategy instruction in improving L2 reading comprehension. Carrell, Pharis, and Liberto demonstrated that training learners in a repertoire of reading strategies (e.g., skimming, scanning, predicting, and summarizing) led to significant gains in comprehension performance [21]. More recent studies show that learners receiving structured training outperform peers not exposed to such interventions in both comprehension and confidence [22,19].

Meta-analyses reinforce these findings. Jeon and Yamashita, in a large-scale review of L2 reading instruction studies, found that strategy instruction had a statistically significant and moderate effect on reading comprehension across diverse contexts [23]. Complementing these results, Souvignier and Mokhlesgerami (2006) showed in a classroom study that explicit training in strategies such as monitoring, questioning, and summarizing significantly enhanced L2 reading comprehension [24].

Various pedagogical models have been proposed to structure strategy instruction. Anderson's Strategic Reading Approach emphasizes making strategies explicit, modeling them in context, providing progressively supported practice, and encouraging learners to reflect on their use [25]. Grabe and Stoller emphasize the integration of strategy instruction into content-based lessons. [1], while Pressley notes that isolated strategy drills can be ineffective if disconnected from meaningful reading tasks [26]. While research on L2 reading has grown, the literature remains largely centered on academic ESL contexts, with applied or vocational training environments receiving comparatively little attention. As Chamot argues, strategy instruction must be adapted not only to learner proficiency but also to the specific reading demands of the instructional context [27].



1.4 ADULT LEARNERS AND STRATEGIC READING DEVELOPMENT

Adult learners bring unique strengths and constraints to language learning. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, adult learners are typically self-directed, goal-oriented, and motivated by immediate application [28]. These traits make them highly receptive to strategy instruction when it is clearly relevant to real-life tasks. However, they may also bring entrenched L1 reading habits - such as word-by-word processing or dependence on translation - that interfere with fluent L2 reading [18,7].

Research suggests that adults benefit most from strategy training that is contextualized, reflective, and integrated into communicative tasks [29]. Zhang and Wu found that adult learners improved not only in reading performance but also in metacognitive awareness when instruction included explicit modeling and peer discussion [19]. Similarly, Anderson reported that adult learners' use of strategies increased after training, particularly when combined with feedback and opportunities for self-assessment [14]. Despite these findings, few studies examine strategy instruction in intensive, outcome-driven programs like occupational training. These settings differ significantly from academic environments in their reading demands, instructional pacing, and learner expectations, warranting further investigation.

1.5 GAPS IN THE LITERATURE AND RELEVANCE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

While there is strong evidence supporting the role of strategy instruction in L2 reading development, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing research has been conducted in academic ESL and EFL settings, with comparatively limited attention paid to vocational, professional, and continuing education contexts. Second, relatively few studies have examined how adult learners in intensive, outcome-driven programs - such as professional or military-oriented training courses - develop strategic reading competence under time constraints and performance-oriented conditions. Third, there is limited empirical research that traces both reading performance and strategy awareness across an entire instructional cycle, particularly with regard to the sequencing of strategy instruction within a course.

The present study contributes to the literature by addressing these gaps in three specific ways. First, it extends research on reading strategy instruction to a professional adult learning context that differs substantively from traditional academic environments in terms of learner goals, instructional intensity, and reading demands. Second, it provides empirical evidence supporting the pedagogical importance of instructional timing by demonstrating that strategy instruction introduced after a period of linguistic skill consolidation can be particularly effective. Finally, by combining performance-based measures with self-reported strategy awareness data, the study offers a more comprehensive account of how adult learners develop strategic reading competence over the course of an intensive EFL program.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were ten adult English language learners, eight men and two women, enrolled in an intensive English course delivered by a state-affiliated training center. The learners were part of a continuing education program designed to help public sector professionals, including military and civilian personnel, attain the level of English proficiency required for their current or future job responsibilities. Participants ranged in age from their mid-20s to early 40s and came from varied educational and professional backgrounds. The course was offered within a formal institutional setting and was part of a structured progression system aimed at advancing learners through defined proficiency levels.



Placement into the course was determined by institutional procedures and was based on initial writing and speaking assessments aligned with the CEFR framework [30]. Productive skills were prioritized during placement due to their high communicative value and the challenges they pose for adult learners. At the time of selection, all participants were placed at the pre-intermediate (CEFR A2+) level. They formed a single intact class taught by the same instructor over the full course duration.

This study employed a within-group, pretest-posttest design to examine developmental changes in reading comprehension and strategy use over time. The aim was not to compare groups, but rather to assess the effects of an instructional intervention within a real-world classroom setting. Such designs are well established in classroom-based second language acquisition research, particularly when logistical constraints or ethical considerations make random assignment or control groups impractical [31,32,33]. The structure of the study aligns with practitioner research traditions that prioritize pedagogical relevance and contextual authenticity.

2.2 COURSE CONTEXT AND STRATEGY INTERVENTION

The course lasted nine consecutive weeks, with six hours of instruction per day, totaling approximately 270 contact hours. The program was designed to help learners progress from CEFR A2+ to B1 level and followed an integrated skills approach, emphasizing reading, writing, speaking, and listening, along with structured grammar and vocabulary development. The course did not rely on a single textbook; instead, instructional materials were drawn from multiple sources to accommodate the breadth of the syllabus and the diverse communicative needs of the learners.

Grammar instruction was supported by *Fundamentals of English Grammar* [34], vocabulary development was guided by *English Vocabulary in Use: Intermediate* [35], and professional terminology was introduced through *Campaign: English for the Military* [36] and a specialized dictionary of military terms. Additional units were developed around a wide range of general EFL topics, including work and jobs, hobbies, free time activities, daily routines, travel, education, entertainment, food and shopping, sport, mass media, and descriptive or narrative functions (e.g., describing people, places, events; comparing and contrasting; narrating in the present and past). To meet the demands of this broad syllabus, supplementary materials were adapted from a variety of EFL textbooks and instructional resources, selected for their level-appropriateness and relevance to learners' professional and communicative contexts.

Reading instruction was implemented consistently throughout the course, beginning in Week 1. In the first eight weeks, learners engaged with diverse text types through guided practice that focused on developing core reading skills such as identifying main ideas, following text structure, interpreting discourse markers, making inferences, and using context clues to deduce meaning. These skills were reinforced through reading tasks, comprehension exercises, class discussions, and reflective questions. While learners practiced many comprehension-supportive techniques during this time, the instruction was not explicitly framed in terms of strategy awareness or metacognitive control.

In Week 9, a dedicated instructional intervention was introduced, focusing on explicit reading strategy instruction. This timing was intentional and reflected the pedagogical rationale that strategy-based instruction is most effective when learners have achieved a level of linguistic competence that enables them to reflect on their reading behavior and apply techniques purposefully [18,19]. The intervention aimed to consolidate existing skills while promoting conscious awareness and flexible use of strategies before, during, and after reading.



The instructional approach was informed by Anderson's Strategic Reading Model and the cognitive and metacognitive framework developed by Chamot and O'Malley [14,16, 25]. Strategy instruction followed a three-phase structure. In the pre-reading phase, learners were taught to preview headings and visuals, activate prior knowledge, and set reading purposes. The while-reading phase emphasized monitoring comprehension, identifying key ideas, adjusting reading pace, and making lexical and structural inferences. The post-reading phase included tasks such as summarizing, paraphrasing, evaluating comprehension, and discussing implications of the content.

Instructional sessions involved teacher modeling, guided practice, collaborative discussion, and individual reflection. Texts used during this phase included both previously encountered materials and new passages designed to match learners' level and professional context. The overall goal was to develop strategic reading competence, enabling learners to select and apply strategies in a flexible, goal-directed manner across text types and reading tasks. This emphasis on strategic awareness is well established in L2 reading research, which has shown that skilled readers engage actively with texts through a range of cognitive and metacognitive behaviors [1,11,13].

2.3 ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

Three instruments were used to assess changes in reading comprehension and strategy use: a custom-designed reading comprehension test, a reading strategy use questionnaire, and the institution's standardized end-of-course examination.

The reading comprehension test was designed by the instructor and administered twice - once at the beginning of the course (Week 1) and again at the end (Week 9). Each version of the test included two adapted passages of approximately 250 - 300 words. The texts were drawn from instructional materials used during the course and were selected to reflect learners' level and thematic familiarity. The test assessed both literal and inferential comprehension through a combination of multiple-choice and short-answer items. The test was designed to ensure content validity and alignment with CEFR descriptors [9,37]. Although formal reliability testing was not possible due to the small sample size, test construction remained consistent across both administrations.

The reading strategy questionnaire was adapted from the *Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARS)* developed by Mokhtari and Reichard [15]. The adapted version consisted of 15 Likert-scale items, each rated on a 5-point scale from "Never" to "Always," and measured learners' self-reported use of Global strategies (e.g., setting a purpose for reading), Problem-Solving strategies (e.g., guessing meaning from context), and Support strategies (e.g., using reference materials or taking notes). Minor wording adjustments were made to align the items with the learners' professional EFL context, while maintaining the original conceptual structure and response format. The MARS has been widely used in both L1 and L2 reading research, building on earlier work comparing native and non-native readers [17] and demonstrating robust construct validity and reliability through confirmatory factor analysis [38]. The questionnaire was administered twice - at the beginning of the course (Week 1) and at the end (Week 9).

Finally, learners completed the institution's standardized end-of-course examination, which included a reading section aligned with CEFR B1 descriptors. While the exam was not designed to measure strategy use explicitly, it provided an external assessment of learners' reading proficiency and served to triangulate the findings from the study-specific instruments.



2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data from the reading comprehension test and the reading strategy use questionnaire were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests to determine whether statistically significant changes occurred between the pre- and post-intervention periods. Descriptive statistics - including means, standard deviations, and gain scores - were also calculated to identify trends in learner development. The alpha level for statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. Paired-sample t-tests and descriptive statistics were conducted in SPSS (version 27), while Microsoft Excel was used for data organization and preliminary calculations.

The results of the institutional end-of-course exam were analyzed descriptively to verify whether learners achieved the course's stated proficiency outcomes and to provide contextual support for the observed gains in reading comprehension. This triangulated approach - drawing on direct performance data, self-report measures, and institutional outcomes - enhances the interpretive strength of the study and aligns with recommended practices in applied linguistics and language education research [39,31]. Given the exploratory and classroom-based nature of the study, the analytical procedures were selected to balance statistical rigor with pedagogical relevance.

3. RESULTS

This section reports the outcomes of the instructional intervention on learners' reading comprehension performance and self-reported reading strategy use. Data were drawn from the researcher-developed reading comprehension test, the adapted reading strategy questionnaire, and the reading component of the institution's end-of-course examination.

3.1 READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE

Learners' comprehension scores showed clear improvement from the beginning to the end of the course. In Week 1, the group averaged 61% (SD = 6.48), which reflects moderate comprehension at the pre-intermediate level. By Week 9, the average had risen to 76% (SD = 5.73), an absolute gain of 15 percentage points. In practical terms, this means learners answered about 25% more questions correctly at the end of the course compared to the beginning. This difference was statistically significant, $t(9) = 6.11$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.93$). In educational research, such a value indicates a substantial learning impact.

Beyond the overall rise in scores, learners also improved in the types of questions they could handle. Post-test results showed stronger performance not only on factual (literal) comprehension items but also on inferential questions that required integrating information across sentences or using contextual cues to deduce meaning. This suggests that the explicit strategy training in Week 9 enhanced both surface-level understanding and deeper processing of texts.

3.2 READING STRATEGY USE

The MARSII questionnaire results showed a clear increase in learners' reported use of reading strategies. At the beginning of the course, their average score was 2.74 (SD = 0.38), which corresponds to "sometimes" on the 5-point scale. By the end of Week 9, the average had risen to 3.85 (SD = 0.42), corresponding to "often." In practical terms, this means learners reported moving from using strategies only occasionally to using them regularly. This change was statistically significant, $t(9) = 7.02$, $p < .001$, with a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.22$), indicating a strong impact of the intervention on learners' strategic behavior. As these data are based on self-report measures, the results reflect learners' perceived strategy use, which nonetheless showed a strong and consistent upward trend.



When broken down by strategy type, the strongest improvements appeared in problem-solving strategies - such as re-reading difficult passages, inferring meaning from context, and adjusting reading speed - which increased by an average of 1.28 points. Post-reading strategies, like summarizing and paraphrasing, also showed considerable gains. Even global strategies, such as setting a purpose before reading, improved significantly. Taken together, these results suggest that the Week 9 intervention was especially effective in strengthening learners' ability to monitor, repair, and consolidate comprehension - the very skills that the instructional design had targeted.

3.3 INSTITUTIONAL END-OF-COURSE EXAMINATION

The institutional end-of-course examination provided an external measure of learners' overall proficiency. All ten participants successfully passed the reading section, and eight of them scored above the institutional benchmark for intermediate-level competence. These results confirm the trend observed in the researcher-developed test, showing that the group as a whole reached the program's stated learning target by the end of the nine weeks.

Although the institutional exam was not designed to measure strategy use directly, learner reflections during exam review sessions indicated that several participants consciously applied strategies introduced in Week 9. For example, some reported scanning for key information before answering multiple-choice items, while others mentioned mentally summarizing paragraphs to retain main ideas. This pattern suggests a possible transfer of strategy use beyond classroom tasks to high-stakes assessment contexts.

3.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Taken together, the findings from the three data sources - the researcher-developed test, the MARSQI questionnaire, and the institutional exam - show consistent and meaningful improvement in both reading performance and strategy awareness. Learners' comprehension scores increased from an average of 61% to 76%, a gain of 15 percentage points (about a 25% relative improvement). Their reported strategy use also rose significantly, moving from "sometimes" to "often" on the 5-point scale. Both of these gains were statistically significant and accompanied by large effect sizes, underscoring the strength and reliability of the improvement.

Notably, the greatest growth occurred after the explicit strategy instruction in Week 9. This pattern suggests that the instructional sequence - eight weeks of general skill development followed by a focused week of strategy training - was effective in enhancing both the cognitive dimension of reading (improved comprehension skills) and the metacognitive dimension (greater awareness and deliberate use of strategies).

4. DISCUSSION

The present study examined the impact of a focused reading strategy intervention delivered at the end of a nine-week intensive English course for adult learners in a professional training context. The findings demonstrate statistically significant gains in both reading comprehension and self-reported strategy use between the beginning and end of the course, with large effect sizes in both domains. These results not only confirm the value of explicit strategy instruction in L2 reading but also extend the evidence base to a population and instructional sequence that have received comparatively little attention in the literature.

4.1 READING COMPREHENSION GAINS IN CONTEXT

The 15-point gain on the researcher-developed test, supported by strong performance on the institutional exam, indicates that learners were able to apply newly acquired strategies



not only to familiar classroom texts but also to novel assessment tasks. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted primarily in academic ESL and EFL contexts, which has shown that explicit instruction in strategies such as previewing, identifying main ideas, and summarizing can measurably improve comprehension [21,22]. The very large effect size observed here ($d = 1.93$) suggests that even a short, well-timed intervention can produce substantial learning benefits in an intensive course.

The timing of the intervention - introduced in Week 9, after learners had advanced from A2+ to B1 level - appears to have been a key factor in its success. This supports previous arguments that learners need to reach a certain linguistic threshold before they can fully benefit from strategy instruction, since lower proficiency may limit their ability to reflect on and regulate their reading processes [18,19]. In this study, the first eight weeks provided a foundation of core reading skills, enabling the final week's training to consolidate and systematize learners' strategic approaches to texts.

4.2 GROWTH IN STRATEGY AWARENESS AND USE

The significant increase in reported strategy use - from an average of 2.74 ('sometimes') to 3.85 ('often') on the adapted MARS scale - shows that learners became more conscious and deliberate in their reading behaviors. The largest gains were in problem-solving strategies, such as re-reading difficult sections, using context to infer meaning, and adjusting reading speed. These strategies are closely linked to active engagement and monitoring during reading [14,15] and are often found to distinguish more proficient readers from less proficient ones [17]. Strong gains in post-reading strategies, such as summarizing and paraphrasing, further suggest that learners developed habits of reflection and consolidation - behaviors that promote deeper comprehension and longer-term retention of information. Importantly, while similar gains in strategy awareness have been reported in university-based EFL studies, the present findings suggest that comparable developments can occur in professional training environments when instruction is carefully timed and contextualized.

These results are consistent with findings reporting that explicit instruction tends to be most effective when strategies are directly modeled, practiced, and reinforced in class [23,24]. In the present study, teacher modeling and guided group work likely contributed to this growth by making strategies visible, contextualized, and applicable to the texts learners encountered.

4.3 CONTRIBUTION TO THE LITERATURE

While there is an increasing number of studies on reading strategy instruction in academic ESL and EFL contexts, comparatively little attention has been given to structured adult professional training environments, such as continuing education or occupational language programs, where reading proficiency is closely tied to workplace performance rather than academic coursework. By documenting gains in both comprehension and strategy awareness among adult learners in a professional training program, this study extends existing models of L2 reading strategy instruction beyond predominantly academic settings. It also demonstrates that strategy instruction need not span an entire course to be effective; when placed after a period of language skill consolidation, even a short, intensive strategy-focused module can produce strong outcomes.

Furthermore, the study reinforces the pedagogical principle that sequencing matters. Integrating strategy instruction too early - before learners have sufficient linguistic resources - may lead to cognitive overload and limit uptake. In contrast, situating the intervention after sustained skill-building allows learners to connect strategies to an already developing repertoire of reading skills, increasing the likelihood of transfer to independent reading tasks. In light of these comparisons, although the processes underlying strategic reading development



appear largely similar across academic and professional contexts, the timing and functional orientation of instruction assume greater importance in intensive professional training programs.

4.4 PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

For EFL instructors working with adult learners in intensive programs, the findings of this study point to several practical lessons. First, the timing of strategy instruction is crucial: introducing it once learners have reached a sufficient linguistic level ensures that strategies can be applied effectively to texts that are challenging but manageable. Second, the types of strategies emphasized matter. Training that highlights problem-solving and post-reading strategies - such as re-reading, inferring meaning from context, summarizing, and paraphrasing - can be especially effective, since these behaviors help learners monitor their understanding and consolidate what they have read. Third, using authentic or professionally relevant texts during strategy training enhances its perceived usefulness and increases the likelihood that learners will transfer strategies from the classroom to real-world reading tasks.

Together, these implications suggest that strategy instruction should not only teach techniques but also align them with learners' proficiency level, cognitive needs, and professional goals.

4.5 LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The small sample size ($N = 10$) restricts the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, the very large effect sizes and the consistency of results across multiple measures suggest that the improvements observed were not accidental. Another limitation is the absence of a control group, which makes it impossible to rule out the influence of broader language development during the nine-week program. However, the fact that the most substantial gains occurred immediately after the Week 9 intervention points strongly to the impact of the strategy training itself.

A further limitation concerns the use of self-report data for measuring strategy use. While instruments such as MARSII provide valuable insights into learners' perceptions, they may not fully capture actual, moment-to-moment strategy use during reading. Future research could further explore reading strategy use by complementing questionnaire data with additional methods, such as asking learners to explain how they approach a text while reading or observing reading behavior in the classroom.

Future studies could also expand on the present work in several ways: by testing strategy interventions with larger and more diverse populations, by exploring how the timing and sequencing of strategy instruction affect uptake, and by examining whether follow-up reinforcement supports long-term retention of strategies. Comparative studies across academic and professional EFL contexts would be especially valuable in identifying which strategies transfer effectively across different domains of adult learning.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the effects of a targeted reading strategy intervention delivered in the final week of a nine-week intensive English course for adult EFL learners in a professional training context. The findings showed significant improvement in both reading comprehension and reported strategy use, with the strongest gains observed in problem-solving and post-reading behaviors. These results demonstrate that explicit strategy instruction can enhance not only learners' comprehension skills but also their metacognitive awareness and autonomy as readers.



A key contribution of this research lies in its focus on adult learners engaged in structured, occupationally oriented training programs and in its empirical support for the pedagogical significance of instructional timing in reading strategy development. The study shows that even a brief but focused intervention can be highly effective when introduced after learners have consolidated their general language skills.

For EFL instructors, the results suggest that strategy instruction in intensive EFL programs should be purposeful, carefully timed, and closely aligned with learners' communicative and professional needs. For researchers, the findings open new avenues for investigating how instructional timing, strategy selection, and context-sensitive materials interact to shape reading development in adult second language education.

Ultimately, the study reinforces a central principle in applied linguistics: reading comprehension is not solely a product of linguistic knowledge, but also of strategic, conscious engagement with text. By encouraging this engagement, instructors can help learners become more adaptable, confident, and effective readers, both within the classroom and in their professional contexts.

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