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**READING STRATEGIES, METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS
AND L2 READERS IN LANGUAGE CLASS**
Shamim Ali, Ph.D.

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Abstract

This study focuses on how students from different ethnic backgrounds learn English language with the help of atypical and diverse learning strategies. This research was carried out with 60 students who learned English at the Certificate level. The research was designed to investigate the differences in the meta-cognitive strategies adopted for learning of English

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language by students of different ethnicities and urban-rural asymmetries and scholastic differentials. The aforesaid postulates stand significantly confirmed by this study

1. Introduction

The teaching and learning of English language has acquired a very important position in recent times. The 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed multifaceted advancement in science and technology, commerce and industry and internet-based mass communications; with English emerging as the dominant vehicle of communication-the prima donna and lingua franca of global communications and commerce. English is now being taught as a second language in almost all countries of the world. It is taught in all schools of Pakistan as a compulsory subject, from lower secondary to upper secondary levels. Despite its exceptional importance and official patronage, the level of proficiency in English leaves a lot to be desired. This study constitutes a very modest, but necessary step to help educators understand the underlying causes and problems impacting effective teaching and learning of the English language. Whilst concentrating on the ethnicity-oriented student's learning methods/strategies, this study has also tried to note the differences in learning techniques adopted by students coming from rural and urban school systems with their relative scholastic differentials.

Rural-urban learning differential is the unfortunate product of variable scholastic standards and the relative difference in the competence and linguistic proficiency of respective teachers. Students educated in rural areas of Pakistan are manifestly less proficient in spoken English as compared to students educated in urban schools. Students are taught English through **Grammar-Translation Method**. This method makes students dependent on their mother tongue. Whatever they read, they translate into their own vernacular and they cannot even write one original sentence. GT Method inhibits the development of linguistic styles and concepts and limits vocabulary. Even after studying for 14 or 15 years, their linguistic proficiency remains poor. Students

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desirous of higher education often feel the need for specialized English language courses. Urban students have relatively better exposure of English language as compared to the rural students. Cultural influences that mould, shape and enrich the process of learning are denied to rural students. They do not have adequate opportunities to converse in English. Secondly, rural students are taught in Urdu or in their vernacular languages, by teachers of questionable ability. Consequently, rural students tend to treat English as any other subject- not as a language to be used as a vehicle of communication. For higher education or for better paying jobs, rural students, more often than the urban students, feel obliged to join language courses.

Students face many challenges in language classrooms. To overcome these challenges they devise different learning strategies-both conventional and unconventional. Interestingly, there are notable differences in strategies/techniques adopted by rural and urban students. Rural students used cognitive strategies ,whilst Meta-cognition is more commonly used by urban students. For learning English, the use of memory, meta-cognitive and affective strategies are relatively more preferred by urban students. On the other hand, rural students show greater preference for cognitive, compensation, and social strategies as compared to urban student. Given the political baggage presently accompanying the English language, the potential impact of Cognitive Dissonance on learning poses an interesting challenge for teachers and students.

2. Objectives of Research

The aim of this research was to find out the relative differences in the meta-cognitive learning strategies adopted by students of different ethnicities and rural-urban backgrounds. Therefore, there was a great need for the language teachers to gauge the overall characteristics of the students' learning strategy. This study can help teachers to formulate their learning strategies and to improve their learning efficiency. This study will highlight the differences that exist between them.

3. Literature Review

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For the past couple of decades, Pakistan has paid greater attention to the teaching of English as a foreign language owing to its primacy in business and commerce; higher education in the fields of science and technology; and in internet based mass communications. However, the learning and teaching of English as a foreign language still faces numerous problems and challenges arising from the inadequacy of teaching materials and aids and of teaching methods or instructional techniques. Different strategies have been mooted to respond to the problems arising from institutional drawbacks at Teacher training courses and workshops, and via some forms of academic offerings. This is clearly not enough and the whole business of teaching and learning English remains essentially “work in progress”. However the National University of Modern Languages which began as an institute helps people to learn different languages, it acts as a springboard for emerging disciplines. The Functional courses department of English offers different levels of English courses. These courses are based on all four skills of language. Department has skilled teachers who apply most modern methods for teaching. All skills are very important for learning but Reading Skills has great importance.

Brown (2001) holds the view that language learning strategies are techniques that the language learners apply to improve their own progress in second language (L2). Whilst institutional improvements are being devised, the Learner’s personal efforts continue to play a vital role in learning of languages. Brown (2001) further notes the significance of investment of time and effort by the learner himself/herself in learning of language; by which efforts the student greatly extends the range of his learning in formal class rooms. In Brown’s view, Learners employ different strategies-such as memory, cognitive and compensation or indirect strategies- meta-cognitive, affective, and social strategies. Students from urban background apply different strategies as compare to students from the rural background. They are not aware of social strategies, because of their socio-economic and educational background. They have environmental limitations as well.

This research will try to explore the differences in the meta-cognitive learning strategies employed by students hailing from urban and rural areas, duly recognizing the differences of culture and ethnicity on their learning behavior. It has been noted that

trained teachers do not insist upon one kind of good learner profile. These teachers do not demand that students act in class in a rigidly uniform fashion irrespective of their diverse learning backgrounds. Knowing their differences, the teachers don't take the risk of imposing a uniform methodology on the students that is unfavorable to their learning. Experienced language teachers try to incorporate the students' previous knowledge in the teaching matrix of the new language, conforming to Oxford's (1993) view that effective learners actively associate new information with existing information.

The environment of the classroom helps learners to devise learning strategies, because large classes allow students to work in groups which optimize the use of the communicative approach. This gives them a chance to employ and learn different strategies from their peers. Basically, the use of language learning strategies is also influenced by the class room environment. Therefore the present research is conducted in order to find the answer of the following question .This question is related to their awareness of reading texts for comprehension: and to discover the differences between Urban and Rural learners in their use of reading strategies in Reading class.

4. Research Questions

Q. What are the different meta-cognitive learning strategies applied by the Rural and Urban students in Reading Skills' class?

Q. How do meta-cognitive learning strategies vary between rural & urban students in Reading skills class?

5. Delimitation

The researcher has delimited her work to the National University of Modern Languages. This research is focused on the teaching/learning process in a classroom. However, no broad generalization has been made rather the researcher has focused mainly upon specific **Meta-cognition strategies** applied by learners in the Reading Classes.

6. Theoretical Framework & Research Design

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Many researchers have defined the term “language learning strategy”. Wenden and Rubin (1987:19) define learning strategies as "any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information.”According to Rubin, learning strategies are of two main types, these are: Cognitive Learning Strategies and Meta-cognitive Learning Strategies. He identified six main cognitive learning strategies contributing directly to language learning. It involves Clarification / Verification, Guessing / Inductive Inference, Deductive Reasoning, Practice Memorization and Monitoring. Whereas meta-cognitive are used to regulate or self-direct language learning. It involves various processes as planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-management. The amount of information to be employed by language learners is quite sufficient, learners employ various language learning strategies in the classroom. According to Rubin(1987) Language learning strategies are good indicators of how learners approach tasks or problems encountered during the process of language learning, and how teachers helps them in developing the communicative competence. Teachers who train students to use language learning strategies can help them become better language learners (Lessard-Clouston 1997:3) accentuates that helping students understand good language learning strategies and training them to develop and use such good language learning strategies can be considered good characteristics of a good language teacher. Research into the good language learning strategies revealed a number of positive strategies .Therefore, the descriptive part of the study is based on past research especially the theories of Rubin(1987:19), Flavell,1976; who pioneered much of the work in the field of strategies, made the distinction between strategies contributing directly to learning and those contributing indirectly to learning. Meta-cognition, the term, was first used by Flavell in the mid 1970s. Byrd and Carter, (2001), also classified it as a self-awareness of mental process. Oxford (1990) believes that meta-cognitive strategies provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process; therefore three aspects, (a) Global Reading Strategies (b) Problem-Solving Strategies and (c) Support Reading Strategies of meta-cognition were chosen for this study.

The second part of this research is quantitative in nature. There are different ways of assessing the different aspects of meta-cognition. Therefore I have applied MARS (Meta-cognitive Awareness of Reading Strategy Inventory), developed by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002). It has all features which cover various aspects of meta-cognition. As mentioned earlier that this research only used quantitative method for data collection therefore a questionnaire was developed and distributed to the students of Certificate level at the National University of Modern Languages. These learners were from varied ethnic backgrounds. The purpose of this questionnaire was to find out the significant differences in the use of meta-cognitive language- learning strategies among rural and urban students. The feedback of the questionnaires was evaluated. There were 30 statements for them to consider. The statements were set with reference to the learners' common features and learning styles. The researcher considered this questionnaire to be very effective in gathering the data, to analyze and to evaluate the result.

7. Questionnaire

Meta-cognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory

Directions: Following are different kinds of reading strategies, read the corresponding statements carefully and mark your response.

S.No	Strategy	Statement	Yes	No
1	Global Reading Strategy	When I read, I have a purpose in mind		
2	Support Reading Strategies	I take notes during reading		
3	Support Reading Strategies	I usually summarize the text after reading		

4	Problem-Solving Strategies	When I lose concentration, I try to remain on track		
5	Support Reading Strategies	I highlight information in the text		
6	Support Reading Strategies	I look up difficult words from dictionary		
7	Global Reading Strategy	For increased understanding, I use tables		
8	Global Reading Strategy	For better understanding I use context clues		
9	Support Reading Strategies	I re-paraphrase the concepts while reading		
10	Problem-Solving Strategies	I infer the meaning of unfamiliar words		
11	Global Reading Strategy	I develop my thinking skills for good understanding of the text.		
12	Global Reading Strategy	I read the headings and sub headings		
13	Support Reading Strategies	When I don't understand the text I read aloud		
14	Problem-Solving Strategies	I don't read without purpose		
15	Problem-Solving Strategies	I read carefully for better understanding		
16	Support Reading Strategies	I like to discuss the text with peers to check my understanding		
17	Global Reading	I preview the text		

	Strategy			
18	Problem-Solving Strategies	I adapt the text according to my reading speed		
19	Global Reading Strategy	I read important details and try to omit irrelevant details.		
20	Problem-Solving Strategies	If/when text becomes difficult, I still give proper attention		
21	Problem-Solving Strategies	I think about the text while reading		
22	Problem-Solving Strategies	I try to visualize information while reading		
23	Global Reading Strategy	I notice at once the boldface and italics to identify important information		
24	Global reading Strategy	I analyze and evaluate the material of the text		
25	Support Reading Strategies	I read again and again to find out the relationship among ideas		
26	Global reading Strategy	I check my understanding when a difficult concept arises		
27	Global Reading Strategy	I try to guess what the text is about		
28	Problem-Solving Strategy	I re-read if the text becomes difficult		
29	Support Reading Strategy	I ask W/H questions myself, If I don't get through the text .		
30	Global reading	I always check my guesses about the text		

	Strategy			

8. Data Collection & Analysis

The National University of Modern Languages is considered to be the most suitable university for data collection for this research because learners come here from all over Pakistan to learn English. Students from the remote areas of Punjab, Khyber- Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Baluchistan. Demographic characteristics of learners varied in the classes observed. As mentioned earlier pursuant to the empirical design of this research, a questionnaire in the form of statements was given to students. It is pertinent to mention that these students come from a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

8.1 Meta-Cognitive Reading Strategies used by Urban Students

S. No	Strategy	Statement
1	Global Reading Strategy	When I read, I have a purpose in mind
2	Support Reading Strategies	I usually summarize the text after reading
3	Problem-Solving Strategies	When I lose concentration, I try to remain on track
4	Support Reading Strategies	I highlight information in the text
5	Global Reading Strategy	For increased understanding, I use tables
6	Global Reading Strategy	For better understanding I use context clues
7	Support Reading	I re-paraphrase the concepts while reading

	Strategies	
8	Problem-Solving Strategies	I infer the meaning of unfamiliar words
9	Global Reading Strategy	I develop my thinking skills for good understanding of the text.
10	Global Reading Strategy	I read the headings and sub headings
11	Global Reading Strategy	I preview the text
12	Global Reading Strategy	I read important details and try to omit irrelevant details.
13	Problem-Solving Strategy	I think about the text while reading
14	Global reading Strategy	I notice at once the boldface and italics to identify important information
15	Global reading Strategy	I analyze and evaluate the material of the text.
16	Global reading Strategy	I check my understanding when difficult concept arises
17	Global reading Strategy	I try to guess what the text is about
18	Support reading strategy	I ask WH questions myself if I don't get through the text
19	Global reading Strategy	I always check my guesses about the text

8.1.1 Total Meta-Cognitive Strategies Used by Urban Students

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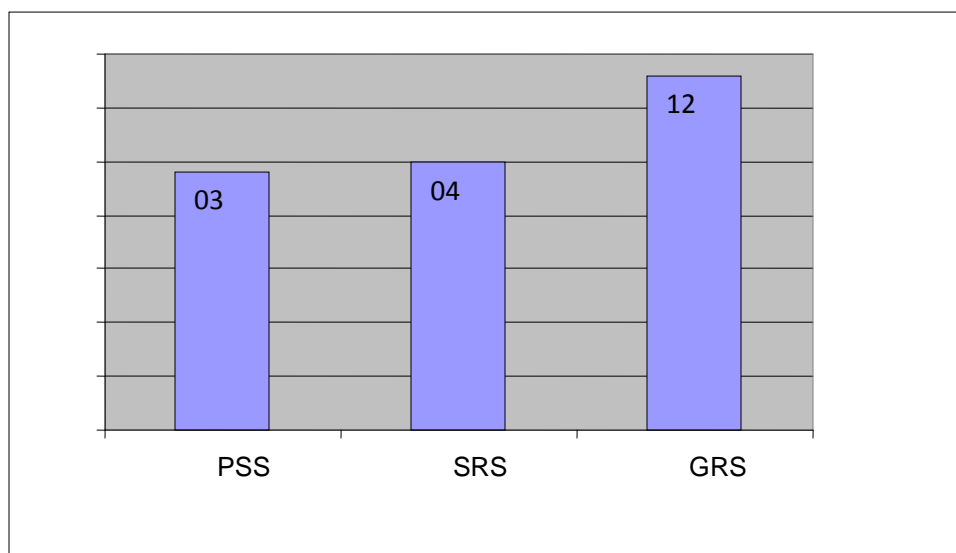
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Total Meta-Cognitive strategies used	19
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GRS	Global Reading Strategy	12
PSS	Problem-Solving Strategies	03
SRS	Support Reading Strategies	04

Discussion/Analysis

The teachers of NUML apply the communicative approach, and they strongly believe that the best way to develop students' English language skills is to immerse them in an all-English environment in which they hear, repeat, read and write English only. They get an opportunity to analyze and evaluate the text. The data indicates that urban students apply Global Reading strategy very often. It shows that they direct their own learning process. They have an ability to adjust themselves to their own learning processes. They have a clear concept of self-regulation. They can monitor their own learning without external guidance. They always maintain and make use of these strategies on their own. They

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select, employ, monitor, organize and evaluate the usage of these strategies effectively. After reading a text, students usually question themselves about the concepts discussed in the text. Learners' cognitive goal is to get through the text. They apply Self-questioning to comprehend the text strategy; it is supporting reading strategy. If the learner thinks that he cannot answer his own questions, or that he does not understand the text, he must then determine what needs to be done to ensure that he meets the cognitive goal of understanding the text. It happens very often in the language class that learners re-read the text with the aim of being able to answer the questions. Global reading strategy helps them to meet the cognitive goal of comprehension. All of these strategies are sequential processes, and help to regulate and formulate learning. Students plan and monitor cognitive activities, and check the outcomes of those activities.

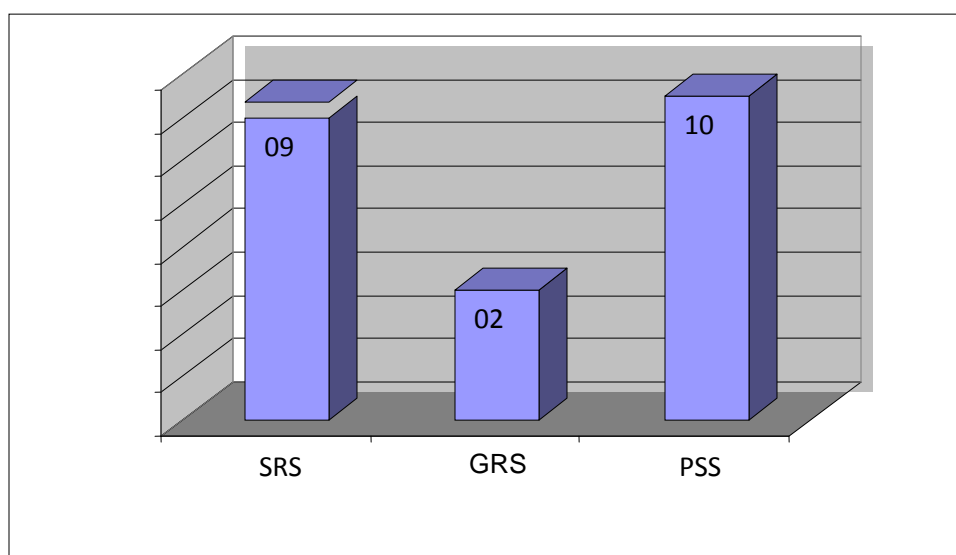
8.2 Meta-Cognitive Reading Strategies used by Rural Students

S. No	Strategies	Statements
1	Global Reading Strategy	When I read, I have a purpose in mind
2	Support Reading Strategies	I take notes during reading
3	Support Reading Strategies	I usually summarize the text after reading
4	Problem-Solving Strategies	When I lose concentration ,I always try to be on the track .
5	Support Reading Strategies	I highlight information in the text
6	Support Reading Strategies	I look up difficult words from dictionary
7	Support Reading Strategies	I re-paraphrase the concepts while reading
8	Problem-Solving	. I infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.

	Strategies	
9	Global Reading Strategy	I develop my thinking skills for good understanding of the text.
10	Support Reading Strategies	. When I don't understand the text I read aloud
11	Problem-Solving Strategies	I don't read without purpose
12	Problem-Solving Strategies	. I read carefully each and every word for better understanding
13	Support Reading Strategies	I like to discuss the text with peers to check Understanding
14	Problem-Solving Strategies	I adapt the text according my speed
15	Problem-Solving Strategies	If text becomes difficult, I give proper attention
16	Problem-Solving Strategies	I think about the text while reading.
17	Problem-Solving Strategies	I try to visualize information while reading.
18	Support Reading Strategy	I read again and again to find out the relationship among ideas
19	Global Reading Strategy	I try to guess what is text about
20	Problem-Solving Strategies	I re-read the text if it becomes difficult
21	Support Reading Strategies	I ask WH questions myself if I don't get through the text

8.2.1 Total Meta-Cognitive Strategies Used by Rural Students

Total Meta-Cognitive strategies used	21
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GRS	Global Reading Strategy	02
PSS	Problem-Solving Strategies	10
SRS	Support Reading Strategies	09

Discussion/Analysis

The result showed that rural students apply Problem Solving Strategies and Support Reading Strategies very often as compared to Global reading strategy. These two strategies helped them to overcome knowledge gaps; therefore the intensity of the usage of Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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problem solving and supporting strategies by Rural students were noticed higher than that of Urban students. While using these strategies they have to compensate for limitations in their language. Usually Rural students are overwhelmed by new experiences, such as learning English language, starting the new place or being in a new classroom with different class fellows. As rural students apply supporting reading strategy, so the use of bilingual dictionaries is very common among them. They develop volitional control over various cognitive routines related to problem solving and they have an ability to monitor their understanding and progress. They have good recognition of their goals, and they can clarify their misunderstanding when they have a problem in comprehending the text. They usually have awareness of the text because they re-read the text, rephrase it and the students whose meta-comprehension is good, means that they have conscious control over their understanding. They look for topic sentence, find the relationship between ideas, relate different parts for comprehension and relate the new information to prior knowledge. They read carefully each and every word for better understanding and discuss the text with peers to check their understanding. If the text becomes difficult, they give proper attention and adapt the text according to their speed.

8.3 The common strategies used by both type of Students

S. No	Strategy	Statement
1	Problem-Solving Strategy	When I lose concentration, I always try to remain on track
2	Problem-Solving Strategy	I think about the text while reading
3	Global Strategy	When I read, I have a purpose in mind
4	Global Strategy	I develop my thinking skills for good
5	Global Strategy	I try to guess what the text is all about
6	Support Reading Strategy	I usually summarize the text after reading

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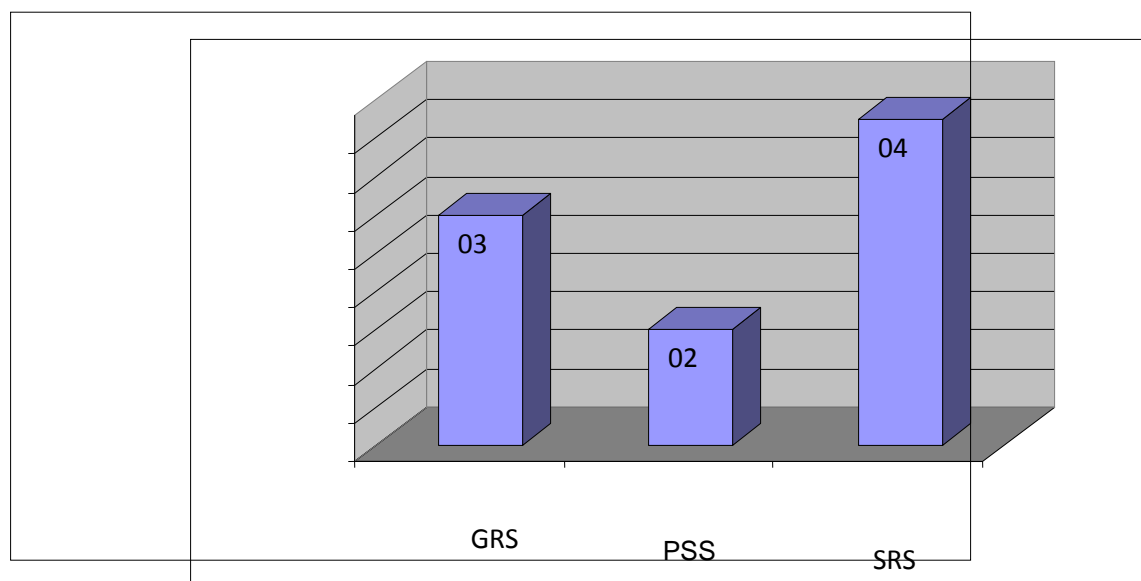
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7	Support Reading Strategy	I highlight information in the text.
8	Support Reading Strategy	I re-phrase the concepts while reading
9	Support Reading Strategy	I ask W/H questions myself If I don't get through the text

GRS	Global Reading Strategy	03
PSS	Problem-Solving Strategies	02
SRS	Support Reading Strategies	04

8.3.1 Similar Learning strategies used by both types of Students.



Discussion/Analysis

The results of the study showed that both groups display almost similar learning strategies. Regarding the differences between both groups, urban students used Global Reading Strategies more often than rural students. Both Rural & Urban learners develop their thinking skills for good understanding of the text. The research findings suggested that some learning strategies, such as Problem Solving Strategies and Supporting Reading Strategies were most commonly used by Rural Learners. However it was noticed that rural students were also frequent users of Support reading strategies. They use various kinds of reference material such as using dictionaries to re-phrase the concepts while reading. In fact, it is most commonly used learning strategy at Certificate level by both categories of students. The findings also indicated that students applied different strategies consciously or unconsciously to encounter problems during reading. The last was the usage of problem solving strategies, which was reported highest among rural learners. Majority of the rural learners applied problem-solving strategies for performing different activities in the language classroom. Learners faced different challenges in language classroom it is almost like a problem-solving academic atmosphere. Students from rural areas were the highest users of the Problem solving strategies because they wanted to find the easiest way to handle difficult task in the class.

9. Conclusion

The researcher has explored the differences of learning strategies between Urban & Rural students. Learning strategies have a great importance in language classes and play a pivotal role in second language teaching methodology as well. Students can develop better learning with proper instructions. They can monitor their performance and identify their learning issues with the help of teacher's teaching methodology.

Being a language teacher, the researcher believes that it is our duty to create awareness in our students of these learning strategies through explicit-implicit instructions, because students belonging to urban area have different learning styles to those who are having rural background. Students from rural area do not have good exposure, and their rural educational system does not offer any advanced courses. They do not have specialized trained teachers and they still follow old grammar translation method. They have very unsupportive academic environment which hinders their process of learning. As the data revealed that in reading class they did not apply advanced meta cognitive strategies instead they applied problem solving strategy and supportive reading strategy. Good training and proper class room management would be beneficial for such students to learn and apply Global reading strategies, which is more advanced than other two strategies; it would help students to conceptualize the text in a proper manner.

10. Classroom Implications &Future Research

Based on the findings the following guidelines are offered for teachers.

1. Teachers must devote instructional time to students through direct strategy.
2. Teachers can help students as they read in order to determine students' strengths and weaknesses in terms of strategy use.
3. Teachers must present proper strategies
4. Strategies learning/training should be the part curriculum.
5. Teachers must give an opportunity to the students to practice strategies.

The classrooms can become an ideal classrooms if strategy instruction wholly-intertwined with content-areas. Moreover, teachers should lead their students' attention towards all aspects of meta-cognitive strategies. Introducing new skills, teaching meta-cognition and giving students practice at applying them - improves students' learning in

the language classroom as well as securing good grades in examination. All learners have diverse learning strategies, all of them learn at different rates and level; and they have varying socio-economic backgrounds. The teachers should not expect the same results from every student because of their diverse intellectual strengths. Teachers should develop their own model that targets the diversity issues of language class. The teaching methodologies applied in language classrooms should incorporate the learning styles of both rural & urban students.

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