The relationship between test-taking strategies and Iranian EFL learners' performance on reading comprehension tests

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Abstract
Although most researchers have recently considered the role of test-taking strategies as one of the most vital factors in test taking process, it has been ignored by most EFL teachers in educational and academic settings including Iran. Because of the importance of test-taking strategies in EFL learners' performance in tests, this research was set out to examine what strategies Iranian EFL test takers employed in reading comprehension tests. Furthermore, the present paper aimed at finding any possible relationship between test-taking strategies and test takers' performance on reading comprehension tests. Discovering the best predictors of EFL reading test performance among several categories of test-taking strategies was also investigated. To this end, 135 EFL students were chosen based on their availability. All of the students were female, majoring in different fields of study. Three kinds of materials including multiple-choice reading comprehension tests, a questionnaire, and interviews were utilized to investigate the research questions. Data analysis included descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Correlation, and stepwise regression. The results showed a significant, positive, but low correlation between the students' total reading score and planning and also monitoring strategies. Furthermore, planning strategy proved to be a predictor of English reading comprehension test.

Keywords: test-taking strategies, test taking process, EFL learners' performance, reading comprehension tests, academic settings

Introduction

During the past decades, the attention of most researchers has been attracted to test taking strategies. Bachman (1982) argued that in this decade, "strategies" should be taken into account in test taking process because of the influence of SLA research. Indeed, applied linguists and second language acquisition researchers have become keenly interested in what and how the test takers actually do during the test taking process.

Obviously, the tendency towards investigations of test taking strategies originated from students' failures in the test taking process. Although many other factors (subject matter, test takers' physical conditions, testing environment, time of testing, etc.) play roles in learners' performance on test, test taking strategies have considerable importance in test takers' performance.

Some scholars pointed to greater significance of the test taking strategies compared to the other factors. Sweetnam (2003), for example, argued that even the learners who have sufficient familiarity with the subject matter may give poor performance in tests due to the lack of employment of test taking strategies. Dolly and Williams (1986) stated that learners' testing competence as well as their academic performance would be improved by learning test-taking strategies. Low ability learners make specifically profit on acquiring test taking skills resulting in

better performance on tests (cited in Dodeen, 2008, p.410). Some scholars claimed that "students with test-taking skills improved attitudes towards tests, demonstrated lower levels of anxiety, and achieved better results" (Peng, 2005; Perney & Ravid, 1990; Steele & Arth, 1998, as cited in Dodeen, Abdelfattah, & Alshumrani, 2014). Additionally, Vattanapath and Jaiprayoon (1999) noted that learners may change their negative attitudes to positive ones about tests by using test taking strategies.

Test taking strategies can also reduce levels of text anxiety leading to obtaining better scores. Strnad (2003) also argued that low level of stress may assist in learners' performance on tests through motivating them. However, the high level of stress can affect the learners' performance which results in poor performance on tests.

Furthermore, it seems that instruction of test taking strategies can positively affect test takers' performance. Sefcik, Bice, and Prerost (2013) considered test taking as transferable skills. Instruction of test taking strategies make it possible for students to employ the skills in various subjects and in different situations and settings. In fact, the learners can enjoy test taking skills in their practical life in the sense that they can save precious time, give priorities, and work more quickly and appropriately. Accordingly, Ritter and Idol-Maetas (1986) argued that there is a direct relationship between teaching test taking strategies and the result of the test. Test takers exposed to instruction of test taking strategies outperform than other test takers who have not possibly exposure to the teaching of test taking strategies. Instruction of test taking strategies develop self-confidence for students during test taking process. On the contrary, the test taker with a lack of confidence may show poor performance on the test. However, the researchers as English teachers have noticed lack of instruction in domain of test taking strategies particularly in academic EFL settings like Iran. It appears that EFL learners' performance on test will be improved by considering appropriate test taking strategies in curriculum of EFL academic settings. English teachers and researchers can modify the learners' performance on tests by introducing proper tests taking strategies. More specifically, they can direct test takers how to perform more effectively on tests by using appropriate and diverse test taking strategies. It sounds that efforts for introducing, presenting, categorizing and employing test taking strategies have not been sufficient leading to poor performance and disappointing results on tests. Also, despite its importance, research in test-taking strategies has been neglected for a long time. Rather, the researchers have extensively dealt with learning strategies in several recent decades. As such, this study has aimed at exploring the research gap in this area.

On the other hand, the researchers and practitioners consistently made attempt to focus on the importance of reading comprehension as one of the most essential skills in English learning settings. Indeed, they sought to discover effective techniques through which the learners can read successfully. In spite of different attitudes, they have always tried to contribute readers to comprehend English texts fully. For instance, Carrell (1988) argued that readers in reading process use their background, prior knowledge, and experience to understand the written text; so reading can be defined as "interactive process". However, Johnson (1983) claimed that reading is partly different from reading comprehension. While reading comprehension is regarded synonymous with reading, it is actually a complicated process including conscious and unconscious employment of diverse strategies. Moreover, Veeravagu, et al. (2010) regarded reading comprehension as "a thinking process by which a reader selects facts, information, or ideas from printed materials; determines the meanings the author intended to transmit; decide how they relate to previous knowledge; and judge their appropriateness and worth for meeting the learner's own objectives" (p.206). Employing proper strategies are likely effective methods for improving test takers' performance on reading comprehension tests. By considering the

significance of test taking strategies and also the importance of reading comprehension for EFL learners, the researchers sought to examine the possible test taking strategies in reading comprehension test.

Throughout the past decades, different definitions and classifications have been presented by different scholars. Cohen and Upton (2007), for example, defined test taking strategies as "those test-taking processes which the respondents have selected and which they are conscious of, at least to some degree" (p.211). Moreover, according to Dodeen (2009), test taking strategies are "the cognitive abilities that allow them to undertake any testing situation in an appropriate manner and to know what to do before, during and after the test" (p. 410). O'Malley & Chamot (1990, cited in Sun, 2011, p.15) classified test taking strategies into two main groups: cognitive and metacognitive. They categorized cognitive strategies into 10 subcategories: resources, deduction, translation, grouping, recombination, contextualization, elaboration, note-taking, inferencing, and summarizing. While metacognitive strategies were classified to 3 subcategories: planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation. Nevertheless, all the different perspectives, definitions, and even studies have had something in common. The purpose of all studies have been to find out the possible solutions for better performance on test taking process. For example, Kashkuli, Barati, and Nejad Ansari (2015) carried out a study to explore test taking strategies employed by Iranian undergraduate EFL students. By taking a proficiency test, participants were classified into three main categories: high-ability, intermediate, and low test takers. The instruments used in the study included two reading passages as well as two questionnaires including four kinds of test taking strategies. The findings indicated that high ability and intermediate test takers responding to Inference items used more evaluation strategies than low ability test takers. However, low ability group employed test-wiseness strategies more than high ability and intermediate groups.

Besides, Pour-Mohammadi and Zainol Abidin (2012) conducted a study on a possible effect of test taking strategies instruction on test performance improvement of reading comprehension. To this aim, the participants were divided into two groups: experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught test taking strategies used in reading comprehension tests. The control group normally received no instruction. Post-test results revealed that the instruction was effectual because the experimental group had a better performance than control group. More specifically, tests takers in experimental group showed a significant improvement on the scores of reading comprehension compared with control group.

Additionally, Shafiei Ebrahimi (2012) carried on a research to explore the employment of cognitive strategies by Iranian good and poor students while reading a text. More specifically, four good and four poor readers were selected for attending in an interview. Moreover, a questionnaire and think aloud were the other instruments used in this study. The results indicated that good readers mostly employed skimming strategy and resorted to their prior knowledge. The poor readers, however, used strategies including, translating into Persian, paraphrasing, and looking unfamiliar words up in dictionary.

Phakiti (2003) pursued an investigation into the relationship of cognitive and metacognitive test taking strategies employment to reading achievement test performance. The subjects in the study involved 384 Thai university students including both males and females. In the study, the participants were divided into three main levels of success: highly successful, moderately successful, and unsuccessful. Instruments of the investigation were reading comprehension test, cognitive and metacognitive questionnaire, and retrospective interview. Four highly successful and four unsuccessful students were chosen for interview. Data analysis reported that there was a positive relationship of employment of cognitive and metacognitive test

taking strategies to the reading test performance. Furthermore, the results indicated that highly successful test takers utilized significantly metacognitive strategies more frequently than the moderately and unsuccessful test takers. The moderately successful test takers also showed higher use of metacognitive strategies than unsuccessful test takers.

As mentioned above, test taking strategies and its relation to reading comprehension test were investigated by different researchers with different attitudes towards test taking strategies. However, there is still a long way to scrutinize the different test taking strategies used by different test takers as well as their effects on test performance. Indeed, a little has been done in some parts of test taking strategies domain. For example, the researchers found not many studies focusing on identifying which test taking strategies would be the best predictor of reading comprehension test. Although a variety of studies on different test taking were conducted in academic and educational settings of Iran, a comprehensive study and in-depth interviews on test takers' strategies have been considered as a necessity.

Therefore, the researchers believe that the results of this study can help to identify difficulties the test takers encounter while taking the test. The findings of this investigation probably show which strategies should be more focused or taught effectively due to the lack of employment of these strategies in test taking process. Accordingly, the general aim of the current study is to investigate different test taking strategies employed by EFL learners in English reading comprehension tests. A possible relationship between test taking strategies and test takers' performance on reading comprehension tests is also examined. Another specific aim of the present study includes discovering the best predictor (among diverse test taking strategies) of performance on reading comprehension tests. To this end, the current study addressed the following questions:

Q1. What test taking strategies do the Iranian EFL learners use in taking EFL reading comprehension tests?

Q2. Is there any relationship between test taking strategies and performance on EFL reading comprehension tests?

Q3. Of different subcategories of cognitive and metacognitive test-taking strategies, which one is the best predictor of EFL reading comprehension test performance?

Methodology

Participants

To collect the required data, 135 EFL students at BA level from Technical/Vocational University of Kashan were chosen based on their availability. All learners were female, majoring in different fields of Electronics, Computer science, Architecture, Accounting, and Hotel Management. All of the subjects were Persian native speakers and ranged in age from 19 to 21.

Measurement instruments

Three kinds of materials were used in the present study. They included reading comprehension tests, test taking questionnaire, and retrospective interview.

Multiple-choice reading comprehension test was designed by Technical University's teachers in Kashan. It comprised ten passages with the topics of *food, business, and mysteries.* It is worthy to mention that the topics of reading comprehension tests were pertinent to the topics taught during the semester. English passages were followed by multiple-choice items. The aim of developing reading comprehension tests was to estimate the test takers' competence in reading comprehension and more specifically in understanding *main ideas, vocabularies, details, and references*. Cronbach's alpha formula was also used for checking the reliability of reading

comprehension tests. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient turned out to be .86 which is high enough. Furthermore, two English language qualified experts checked the content validity through content analysis. Based on their analysis, some passages and their items were amended.

Test taking questionnaire borrowed from Phakiti (2003) included items of both cognitive and metacognitive strategies. More specifically, items of questionnaire were comprised of comprehending and retrieval statements as cognitive strategies as well as monitoring and planning as metacognitive ones. In order to gain a clear understanding of different items in questionnaire, the researchers translated the questionnaire into Persian. Afterwards, the Persian questionnaire was checked and revised by two professional experts to make sure that the translations were accurate. The questionnaire was also piloted with other similar students taking the course of General English in the same university. Indeed, the reliability of questionnaire was checked through Cronbach's alpha formula. The reliability estimate was as high as .92. Consequently, no item in questionnaire was eliminated. It is noteworthy that a 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire was used. The options in the questionnaire involved 1(Never), 2(Sometimes), 3(Often), 4(Usually), and 5 (Always), respectively.

Retrospective interviews were carried out in order to gather supplementary and detailed information concerning the quantitative results. In fact, quantitative results seem to be justified more appropriately and precisely by information obtained from interviews. Thirty interviewees attended in three group interview. The interviewees were asked Persian questions about how to perform test taking process and what strategies they employed in the reading comprehension tests. An interview procedure took about 10 minutes for each interviewee.

Procedure

As the first step, reading comprehension test was given as the final exam. The participants were requested to reply to the multiple-choice questions as well as a 35-item questionnaire. The test takers got a thorough briefing on how to answer the questions and how to respond to the questionnaire before the test administration. Afterwards, 30 test takers were randomly selected and interviewed. The interviewees' reports and descriptions were noted down and translated in English. Finally, some cognitive and metacognitive test taking strategies were identified after inspecting the interviews.

Data analysis

After the required data collected via the instruments explained, they were subjected to several analyses including Pearson Product Correlation, stepwise regression, ANOVA and descriptive statistics. Moreover, qualitative data analysis was done to obtain extra information pertinent to the research questions. In other words, the data gathered from interviews may complement the results of the research from the quantitative section.

Results

As the normality assumptions indicated that the data were normal, parametric statistics were used to analyze the data quantitatively. The descriptive statistics for employment of different items in taking English reading comprehension test by the test takers are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Used Diverse Items in Reading Comprehension Test*

		Main Idea	Reference	Detail
Vocabulary	**MARK**			

	Mean	6.17	6.79	5.50	10.96 29.42
	Std. Deviation	2.380	2.457	2.476	4.756 9.609

As displayed in Table 1, the best performance was on vocabulary items in reading comprehension test. More specifically, the best performance was on vocabulary, main idea, reference, and detail items, respectively. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics for use of test taking strategies in English reading comprehension test are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Use of Test Taking Strategies in Reading Comprehension Test*

	Comprehending	**Retrieval**	**Planning**		**Monitoring**	**Cognitive**	**Metacognitive**
Mean	21.95	12.18	46.18		29.91	67.99	153.66
Std. Deviation	4.689	3.255	12.040	7.009	14.708	36.244	

As pointed out in Table 2, planning strategy was the most used strategy in reading comprehension test. The most used strategies to the least used strategies were planning, monitoring, comprehending, and retrieval, respectively. In general, metacognitive strategies were used more frequently than cognitive strategies.

Table 3 also presents the results of relationship of four cognitive and metacognitive test taking strategies with performance of the test takers on EFL reading comprehension test items.

Table 3. *Correlations between Cognitive and Metacognitive Test Taking Strategies and Test Takers' Performance on Reading Comprehension Test*

		Comprehending			**Retrieval**	**Planning**	**Monitoring**	**Cognitive**	**Metacognitive**
Main Idea	Pearson Correlation	.195*	.090	.190*	.148	.153	.178*		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	.307	.030	.092	.083	.043		
	N	135	135	135	135	135	135		
Reference	Pearson Correlation	0.163	.094	.170	.206*	.139	.197*		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.063	.289	.053	.018	.115	.025		

	N	135	135	135	135	135	135	135	135	135
Detail	Pearson Correlation	-.015	.005	.150	.126	-.005	.144			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.865	.959	.089	.154	.957	.101			
	N	135	135	135	135	135	135			
Vocabulary	Pearson Correlation	.163	.102	.185*	.153	143	.178*			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.065	.250	.035	.081	.104	.043			
	N	135	135	135	135	135	135			
Total Mark	Pearson Correlation	.165	.097	.220*	.197*	.142	.218*			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.060	.272	.012	.025	.107	.013			
	N	135	135	135	135	135	135			

Note *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results in Table 3 showed that correlation between item of main idea and comprehending strategy was significant, positive, and partly low (0.195). Moreover, a significant, positive, and rather low correlation existed between item of main idea and planning strategy (0.19). The correlation between item of main idea and metacognitive test taking strategies was also significant, positive, and low (0.17). In addition, Table 3 showed a significant correlation between reference item and monitoring strategy (0.20) which was partly low. In terms of general test taking strategies (cognitive and metacognitive), a significant and positive correlation existed between reference item and metacognitive test taking strategies. However, no correlation between item of detail and four test taking strategies has been observed. Furthermore, the correlation between vocabulary item and planning strategy was significant, positive, and low (0.18). Similarly, a significant, positive, and low correlation between vocabulary item and metacognitive test taking strategies was found (0.17). Finally, a significant, positive, and rather low correlation existed between total mark and planning (0.22) and monitoring strategies (0.19). Likewise, the correlation of total mark with metacognitive test taking strategies was significant, positive, and rather low (0.21).

Moreover, stepwise regression was used to determine the best predictors among different subcategories of cognitive and metacognitive test-taking strategies for total mark. The results of stepwise regression are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. *Summary of Stepwise Regression of Strategies on Total Mark*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	β		
(constant)			**21.169**		**3.333**
6.351	**.000**				
Planning		**.178**	**.070**		**.220**
2.546	**.012**				

As shown in Table 4, standard regression coefficient of planning strategy was direct and significant (β = 0.22, t = 2.546, P = 0.012).

Furthermore, Table 5 presents the summary of ANOVA for significance of strategies regression on total mark and different items of reading comprehension test.

Table 5. *ANOVA Results for Significance of Regression on Total Mark and Different Items of Reading Comprehension Test*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total Mark	**Regression**	**591.833**	**1**	**591.833**	**6.484**	**.012[b]**
	Residual	**11682.937**	**128**	**91.273**		
	Total	**12274.769**	**129**			
Dependent variable: Main Idea	**Regression**	**28.227**	**1**	**28.227**	**5.048**	**.026[b]**
Predictors: Comprehending	**Residual**	**715.742**	**128**	**5.592**		
	Total	**743.969**	**129**			
Dependent variable: Reference	**Regression**	**33.428**	**1**	**33.428**	**5.700**	**.018[b]**
Predictors: Monitoring	**Residual**	**750.695**	**128**	**5.865**		
	Total	**784.123**	**129**			
Dependent variable: Detail	**Regression**	**44.803**	**4**	**11.201**	**1.814**	**.130[b]**
Predictors: Planning	**Residual**	**771.689**	**125**	**6.174**		
	Total	**816.492**	**129**			
Dependent variable: Vocabulary	**Regression**	**101.890**	**1**			

101.890	**4.559**	**.035[b]**			
Predictors: Planning			**Residual**	**2861.002**	
128	**22.352**				
			Total	**2962.892**	**129**

As can be seen in Table 5, R^2 coefficient was significant (R^2 =0.48, $F_{(1.28)}$ =6.484, P= 0.12).

Table 6 also displays the summary of regression coefficients in strategies regression on total mark.

Table 6. *Summary of Regression Coefficients in Strategies Regression on Different Strategies*

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	Std. Error	β		
(constant)	**4.026**	**.997**			
4.040 .000					
Comprehending	**.100**	**.044**		**.195**	
2.247 .026					
(constant)	**4.581**	**.934**			
4.903 .000					
Monitoring	**.073**	**.030**		**.206**	
2.387 .018					
(constant)	**5.076**	**1.115**			
4.551 .000					
Comprehending	**-.083**	**.065**		**-.155**	**-1.278**
.204					
Retrieval	**-.119**	**.100**		**-.154**	
-1.192 .236					
Planning	**.056**	**.035**		**.270**	
1.630 .106					
Monitoring	**.037**	**.057**		**.102**	
.637 .525					
(constant)	**7.499**	**1.650**			
4.546 .000					
Planning	**.074**	**.035**		**.185**	**2.135**
.035					

As displayed in Table 6, the results of standard regression coefficient indicated that no strategy had a significant contribution to reading comprehension. In other words, no predictors could increase R^2 significantly.

Moreover, Table 7 reports the results of stepwise regression of strategies on items of main idea, reference, and vocabulary.

Table 7. *Summary of Stepwise Regression of Strategies on Different Items of Reading Comprehension Test*

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Dependent variable: Main Idea	**.195[a]**	**.038**	**.030**	**2.365**
Predictors: Comprehending				
Dependent variable: Reference	**.206[a]**	**.043**	**.035**	**2.422**
Predictors: Monitoring				
Dependent variable: Vocabulary	**.185[a]**	**.034**	**.027**	**4.728**
Predictors: Planning				

Table 7 revealed that best predictors for *main idea*, *reference*, and *vocabulary* items were *comprehending*, *monitoring*, and *planning* strategies, respectively. More specifically, comprehending strategy proved to be a predictor of main idea item (R^2=0.038). A predictor of reference item was monitoring strategy (R^2= 0.043). Finally, planning strategy proved to be a predictor of vocabulary item (R^2= 0.034). No strategies found to be a predictor of detail item. Thus, no result was presented for detail item in Table 7.

Discussion

As cited previously, there was a significant correlation between main idea item and comprehending as well as planning strategy. Apparently, test takers tended to use comprehending strategy to answer the items of main idea. More specifically, prior knowledge, translation, note-taking, and underlining strategies as comprehending strategies were probably used to select the most appropriate main ideas. Furthermore, planning strategy could help the test takers for finding the best main ideas through different possibilities. For example, one interviewee reported that *I answered the main idea items as the last ones. By answering and completing the other items, I gained a better concept and reached the main idea more effectively and easily.* Indeed, the test takers planned how to get the main idea.

Moreover, there was a significant correlation between reference item and monitoring strategy. One possible reason for employment of monitoring strategy for reference items might be in situations where test takers check and monitor the previous sentence or sentences to find the proper referent.

One interviewee, for example, stated that "after reading the reference questions, I referred to the passage where the pronoun (reference) was bold and italicized. Then I checked and scrutinized the whole sentence which included the pronoun. More specifically, I checked the sentence carefully from the beginning to the end. In order to find the proper referent, I occasionally started monitoring from the beginning of paragraph especially if the pronoun was in the middle of paragraph". It was probably monitoring strategy which could assist test takers to recognize the best referent. Vocabulary item also had a correlation with planning strategy. It seems that most test takers preferred to employ planning strategy for responding to vocabulary

item. According to reports in interviews, some test takers seemed to take a glance at items of vocabulary as the first step, then they skimmed the passage.

For instance, one test taker in her interview uttered that "I intended to peek at the questions and then to read the passage. I found this strategy so helpful particularly for vocabulary items. In other words, I preferred to glimpse at the vocabulary questions. If I knew the meaning of the words, I could select the best alternative. However, I often referred to the passage to ensure my choice was the best one". That is, by adopting planning strategy, test takers devoted their time for necessary vocabularies in the passage. Perhaps, they ignored and skipped the other words irrelevant to vocabulary items. Generally, all items except detail had significant correlations with metacognitive test taking strategies whereas no significant correlations existed between all mentioned items and cognitive test taking strategies. One explanation would be unfamiliarity with cognitive strategies. The test takers were not probably familiar enough with different cognitive strategies compared to metacognitive strategies. Perhaps, if the teachers attracted the learners' attention sufficiently to diverse test taking strategies including cognitive strategies, the relationship between cognitive strategies and test takers performance could be significant.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, planning strategy found to be a predictor of English reading comprehension test. Thus, planning strategy as one subcategory of metacognitive strategy seems to have positive effect on test takers' performance during test taking process. Apparently, if learners implemented the planning strategy more effectively, more desired results from the exam would be achieved. On the other hand, according to the findings, R^2 was significant but low. The results may indicate that although planning strategy proved to be a predictor of reading comprehension test, R^2 has not been high enough. It sounds that if diverse and more organized strategies were taught more efficiently over the courses of English language acquisition, the test takers would perhaps employ this particular strategy more widely. In other words, English language teaching and learning curriculum needs to focus specifically on planning strategy resulting in more effective performance on test taking process. By learning planning strategy in more organized and more efficient way during the course of acquisition, the learners could benefit considerably from the planning strategy leading to a stronger and more flawless performance on their reading tests. Furthermore, based on the reports in interviews, most test takers employed planning (about 75%) strategy in their reading tests. Compared to the other strategies (translating, note-taking, underlining, self-management, inferencing, monitoring, prior knowledge), the planning strategy was most-employed strategy. That is, the results from interviews also confirmed the previous findings.

For example, one interviewee expressed that "for main idea item, I knew that the details were not important but the general message of author was more significant. Therefore, I omitted the alternatives which dealt with details and chose the best option". Another interviewees reported that "main idea seemed to be easier than other items, because I grasped a general concept while reading the passage. Then I took a look at options and selected the one which was closer to the author's purpose". These two examples implied use of planning strategy for choosing the desired option.

Finally, based on the results, the best predictor of main idea item was comprehending strategy. Monitoring was also found to be the best predictor of reference item. Moreover, planning strategy proved the best predictor of vocabulary item. That is, all items could be predicted by one particular strategy except item of detail. One explanation for not predicating item of detail may lie in the fact that test takers found detail item more difficult than other ones. Test takers, perhaps, employed different strategies for responding to the item of detail like other items. However, employing strategies for detail item did not probably work as effectively as

other items. Probably, because the items of factual information (detail item) need more meticulous and special attention for analysis, the test takers should have implemented more effective and coherent strategies for this particular item. It was likely that the lack of appropriate strategy use for item of detail led to inefficiency of strategies for predicting the item of detail. Additionally, reports of some interviewees confirmed that they found the item of factual information too problematic to respond. For instance, one interviewee stated that *the most difficult item to reply was factual information item for me because the alternatives in this special item were too similar to choose. I was not able to choose the most appropriate option. Finally, I resorted to chance for selecting one option.* Seemingly, the test taker was scarcely able to use a proper strategy to select the best alternative. Incapability in employment of an appropriate strategy seemed to result in choosing one option accidentally.

Conclusion

The present research was an attempt to investigate what strategies test takers used in reading comprehension tests. Moreover, exploring any relationship between test taking strategies and test takers' performance on reading comprehension tests was another aim of the study. The study also examined the best predictors of reading comprehension test performance among test taking strategies. The study demonstrated a significant correlation between total mark and planning as well as monitoring strategies. Also, planning strategy proved to the best predictor of English reading comprehension test. The findings of the present study emphasized the significance of test taking strategies especially on test takers' performance. According to the results of the current study, the test takers found the detail item as the most challenging item. Not only should teachers instruct diverse cognitive and metacognitive strategies to EFL learners, but also they should provide opportunities for learners to expose problematic situations like detail items. Teachers can direct the students towards adopting proper strategies in order to overcome the challenges during test taking process. The findings of the study also revealed that planning strategy can play a vital role in the performance of test takers. By focusing on how to plan during the test process, the test takers will probably perform better. EFL teachers, particularly, should make attempt to include the test taking strategies as one of inseparable parts of teaching and learning curriculum.

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AppendixA
One Sample of Reading Comprehension Tests
Chocolate

What is your favorite way to enjoy chocolate? Is it a hot drink on a cold day? Is it a piece of a good chocolate bar? You, probably, like the taste of chocolate ice cream. Is your favorite dessert a piece of cake with lots of chocolate **chip**s? Chocolate is one of the world's favorite desserts.

Chocolate comes from the cacao tree which is native to Mexico Central America and South America. People have been using the cacao tree to make chocolate for at least 3000 years. In ancient times, chocolate was not sweetened. **It** was a bitter drink. Today, we like our chocolate sweetened. We like chocolate with sugar added to it. Chocolate has become one of the most **popular** foods in the world.

1.The main idea of the passage is that ……..
a) people have been eating or drinking chocolate for a very long time.
b) chocolate has always been sweetened
c) over the years, people used chocolate in many different ways
d) chocolate can be used in different cakes.

2.According to passage, how do people have chocolate these days?
a) with a sweet taste
b) as a bitter drink
c) semi bitter
d) with milk

3.The word "popular" in line 9 could best be replaced by ……
a)sweetened
b) famous
c) bitter
d) ancient

4. The word "chip" in line 3 is closest in meaning to ……
a) taste
b) butter
c) sugar
d) slice

5.The pronoun "it" in line 7 refers to ……
a) ancient time
b) cacao tree
c) chocolate
d) dessert

Appendix B

Test-taking Strategies Questionnaire

هدف از این پرسشنامه بررسی راهبردهای مورد استفاده شمادر آزمون میباشد. تمامی پاسخهای شما محرمانه بوده وبرای اهداف پژوهشی مورد استفاده قرار خواهد گرفت. لطفا جملات زیر را به دقت بخوانید و مشخص کنید که در طول آزمون از چه راهبردهایی استفاده کرده اید. برای هرجمله یکی از گزینه های ۱تا ۵ را انتخاب نمایید(۱=هرگز.۲=بعضی اوقات. ۳=غالبا. ٤=عموما. ٥=همیشه)

5	4	3	2	1	ایده شما
5	4	3	2	1	درطول امتحان یادداشتهای کوتاهی مینوشتم یازیرایده های اصلی خط میکشیدم.
5	4	3	2	1	۲-متنها را به فارسی ترجمه کردم.

۳-از تصاویر یا عنوان متنها برای کمک به درک مطلب استفاده کردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۴-از دانش ساختار و گرامر انگلیسی برای درک متن، استفاده کردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۵-وقت بیشتری روی سوالات مشکل گذاشتم.	1	2	3	4	5
۶-سعی کردم متنها و سوالات را صرف نظر از دانش لغوی خودم درک کنم.	1	2	3	4	5
۷-سعی کردم موضوعات و ایده های اصلی را با خواندن سریع متن برای رسیدن به ایده کلی یا برای یافتن اطلاعات خاص پیدا کنم.	1	2	3	4	5
۸-برای درک بهتر،چندبارمتنها و سوالها را خواندم.	1	2	3	4	5
۹-از دانش قبلیم برای کمک به درک آزمون، استفاده کردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۰-سعی کردم قسمتهای ساده و سخت آزمون را مشخص نمایم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۱-قبل از شروع امتحان، به بارم های هر قسمت نگاه کردم تا نمره هر قسمت را ارزیابی کنم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۲-قبل از شروع امتحان،مشخص کردم کدام قسمتها مهمتر از بخشهای دیگر بودند.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۳-هنگام شروع آزمون، برنامه ریزی کردم که چگونه سوالها را کامل کنم و این برنامه ریزی را دنبال کردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۴-از اینکه دراین امتحان چه کاری انجام میدهم وچگونه انجام میدهم آگاه بودم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۵-در هنگام تکمیل سوالات، عملکرد و پیشرفت خودم را بررسی میکردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۶-تلاش کردم نکته های اصلی متن داده شده و گزینه ها را شناسایی کنم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۷-قبل از جواب دادن به سوالات آزمون،به معانی آنها فکر میکردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۸-آز اینکه کدام راهبرد را بکار برم و چگونه و چه موقع از آن استفاده کنم،آگاه بودم.	1	2	3	4	5
۱۹-هنگامیکه اشتباهی پیدا میکردم فورا آنرا تصحیح میکردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۰-از خودم میپرسیدم چگونه سوالات امتحان و متن های داده شده به چیزهایی که من از قبل میدانستم مرتبط هستند.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۱-مشخص کردم کدام سوالات را باید انجام دهم.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۲-از نیاز برای برنامه ریزی در خصوص هر اقدام آگاه بودم.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۳- زمان باقی مانده آزمون را برای سوال های حل نشده در نظر داشتم.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۴-تلاش کردم قبل از پیدا کردن جوابها، سوالات را به اندازه کافی درک کنم.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۵- از آنچه که باید انجام میدادم و نحوه انجام آن مطمئن شدم	1	2	3	4	5
۲۶-از فرایند فکر کردنم آگاه بودم.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۷-پیشرفت خودم را جهت کامل کردن سوالات،به موقع، دنبال میکردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۸- استراتژی های چندگانه تفکر را برای کمک به پاسخگویی سوالات بکار گرفتم.	1	2	3	4	5
۲۹-از روشن کردن و مشخص کردن هدف و از نحوه رسیدن به آن مطمئن بودم.	1	2	3	4	5
۳۰-ازدرستی راهبرد های انتخاب شده پیش از پاسخگویی به سوالات،آگاه بودم.	1	2	3	4	5
۳۱-همانطور که در طول آزمون پیش میرفتم، صحت و دقت خودم را چک میکردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۳۲-اطلاعات مرتبط برای کمک به درک متن و جواب دادن به سوالات را انتخاب کردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۳۳-تعیین کردم که چگونه آزمون را حل تکمیل کنم.	1	2	3	4	5
۳۴-قبل از دادن برگه ام جواب ها را با دقت بررسی کردم.	1	2	3	4	5
۳۵-در مورد نحوه تکمیل آزمون ،فکر کردم.	1	2	3	4	5

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