

## CHAPTER 4 : FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. An analysis of the data obtained through the think-aloud protocols and the retrospective interview which was guided by the research questions of the study is attempted. The use of comprehension strategies by the respondents of the study was compared in terms of the types of strategies used and the frequency of use. An analysis of the subjects' strategy use as they attempted the same reading task and variations in strategy use according to gender, language proficiency and language background were also identified.

The findings from the study are detailed below.

### 4.1 Subjects' Performance on the IRA

This section attempts to answer the first research question: How do the high and low proficiency ESL students differ in their awareness of reading comprehension strategies?

Table 1 shows the performance of the high and low proficiency ESL comprehenders on the IRA.

Table 1. Subjects Score on the IRA

LPCS		HPCS	
Subject	Score	Subject	Score
1	23	1	28
2	24	2	31
3	27	3	29
4	30	4	32
Total	104		
Average	26		30

Note: LPCS – Low Proficiency Comprehending Subjects

HPCS – High Proficiency Comprehending Subjects

The high proficiency ESL comprehending subjects obtained an average score of 30 whereas the low proficiency ESL comprehending subjects obtained an average score of 26 on the IRA

The subjects' performance on the IRA suggested that their awareness of strategies was quite similar. An analysis of the subjects' strategy awareness in terms of the four categories was not attempted in light of Mc Lain, Gridley and McIntosh's (1991) caution that the IRA is an adequate and acceptable measure of metacognitive reading awareness if it is used as a total score.

**4.2 Subjects Performance on the Reading Tasks**

The analysis of the data in this section attempts to answer the second research question: How do the high and low proficiency ESL students differ in their use of reading comprehension strategies when completing the same task? An analysis of the data was done according to the respondents language proficiency, gender and language background. Additionally an attempt was made to determine the high and low proficiency respondents use of strategies according to types of strategies.

**4. 2.1 Subjects Performance on the Reading Tasks According to Proficiency**

Table 2 below shows the performance of the respondents on two modified cloze passages. The respondents in each group were numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4

Table 2. Subjects Performance on the Cloze Tasks

Student	Passage	Low Proficiency Subjects			Low Proficiency Subjects		
		Score	Passage	Passage	Score	Passage	Passage
			1	2		1	2
1	1	2	2	3	8	8	8
	2	3			8		
2	1	3	3	4	8	8	10
	2	4			10		
3	1	3	3	4	8	8	9
	2	4			9		
4	1	5	5	4	9	9	10
	2	4			10		
Total		28	13	15	70	33	37

The high proficiency informants had a total score of 33 on passage 1 and 37 on passage 2. In contrast the low proficiency informants had a total score of 13 on passage 1 and 15 on passage 2. This indicates that the high proficiency informants scored better on the cloze passages.

**4. 2. 2 Subjects Performance on the Cloze Tasks According the Gender.**

Table 3 below shows the high and low proficiency informants performance on the cloze tasks according to gender.

Table 3 : Subjects Performance on the Cloze Tasks According the Gender.

GENDER					
Low Proficiency Subjects				High Proficiency Subjects	
	Passage	Male	Female	Male	Female
	1	2	3	8	8
	2	3	4	8	9
	1	3	5	8	9
	2	4	4	10	10
Total		12	16	34	36

The high proficiency male and female respondents had much higher scores than the low proficiency male and female respondents. The high proficiency males had a total score of 34 while the low proficiency males had a score of 12. Similarly the high

proficiency female respondents had a higher total score of 36 in comparison to the low proficiency females who had a total score of only 16.

A significant difference in the total scores of the males as compared to the females in both the high proficiency and the low proficiency groups were also obvious. The female respondents scored higher than the male respondents in both the groups. The high proficiency females had a score of 36 in contrast to the males who had a score of 34. Similarly, the females in the low proficiency group had a total score of 16 while the males in the same group had a total score of only 12.

#### 4.2.3 Subjects Performance on the Cloze Tasks According to Language Background

Table 4 below shows the high and low proficiency respondents performance on the cloze tasks according to language background.

Table 4: Subjects Performance on the Cloze Tasks according to Language Background

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND (Non English Speaking Background)					
Low Proficiency Subjects			High Proficiency Subjects		
	Passage	Male	Female	Male	Female
	1	2	3	8	8
	2	3	4	8	9
Total		5	7	16	17
(English Speaking Background)					
	1	3	5	8	9
	2	4	4	10	10
Total		7	9	18	19

Findings showed that respondents from the high proficiency group with an English speaking background scored slightly better than the respondents from the non-English speaking background. However, the high proficiency female respondents from



both the English speaking background and the non English speaking background scored higher than the male respondents.

Similar findings were observed with the low proficiency respondents. The respondents with an English speaking background scored slightly better than the respondents from the non-English speaking background . The low proficiency female respondents from both the backgrounds scored better than the male respondents. .

### **4.3 Types of Strategies Used by the Subjects**

From the data obtained fifteen strategies types were identified to characterize the strategy use of the subjects of this study. These strategies were then grouped into three categories: a) comprehension enabling strategies; b) comprehension extending strategies; and c) comprehension monitoring strategies. The development of the category types was based on Gagnes' (1985) representation of reading as consisting of four component processes: decoding, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension and comprehension monitoring.

Decoding involves using the printed word to activate word meanings in memory, either through a direct association of the printed word and its meaning or through the letter-sound correspondence. Literal comprehension involves putting activated word meanings together to form propositions. Inferential comprehension involves going beyond the ideas explicitly stated to summarize and/or elaborate on these ideas. Comprehension monitoring involves setting a reading goal, checking to see if it is being reached and implementing remedial strategies when it is not being reached. For each category the criteria which distinguishes the strategy was provided ( see Appendix 3)

However, it should be noted that the decoding processes were not taken into account in this research because the reading ability of the subjects of this study appeared to have progressed beyond the stage where decoding would be a problem.

**4.4 The Frequency and Types of Strategies Used by the High Proficiency and Low Proficiency ESL Subjects**

An analysis of the strategies used by the respondents was carried out..

The strategies used by each group of readers were tabulated and tallied according to strategy type. These strategy types were also ranked in order of frequency. Table 5 and 6 below show the frequency and ranking of the strategies used.

Significant differences in the overall strategy use by the low proficiency and high proficiency respondents were observed. The total number of strategies used by the low proficiency respondents was much higher than the total number of strategies used by the high proficiency respondents. A total of 583 instances of strategy used by the low proficiency respondents was tallied in contrast to only 462 instances of strategy use by the high proficiency respondents. While both groups used all the 15 strategy types, the low proficiency respondents used only 1 instance of the strategy for predicting content.

The ranking of the strategies also revealed some interesting differences. For the high proficiency respondents the highest ranked strategy was inferring words with 90 instances of strategy use representing 19.48% of total strategy use. In contrast, this strategy was ranked fourth for the low proficiency respondents with a total of 76 instances of strategy use which represent 13.04% of the total strategy use. Similarly, the highest ranked strategy for the low proficiency respondents was checking/testing fit with 89 instances of strategy use and a 15.2%. This strategy was ranked fifth for the high proficiency respondents with only 43 instances of strategy use and a 9.31%.

Table 5. The High Proficiency ESL Subjects' Frequency and Ranking of Strategy Use

Rank	Strategy	Frequency	%
1.	Inferring words	90	19.48
2.	Text interpretation	62	13.42
3.	Integrating information	52	11.26
4.	Referencing norms	49	10.61
5.	Checking/Testing fit	43	9.31
6.	Using prior knowledge	40	8.66
7.	Formulating and Eliminating	21	4.55
8.	Paraphrasing	20	4.33
9.	Comments	20	4.33
10.	Rereading	16	3.46
11.	Predicting	16	3.46
12.	Style	10	2.16
13.	Syntax/Punctuation	8	1.73
14.	Questioning	8	1.73
15.	Personalizing	7	1.51
	Total	462	100%

Table 6. The Low Proficiency ESL Subjects' Frequency and Ranking of Strategy Use

Rank	Strategy	Frequency	%
1.	Checking/Testing fit	89	15.28
2.	Comments	83	14.20
3.	Questioning	81	13.90
4.	Inferring words	76	13.04
5.	Formulating and Eliminating	75	12.86
6.	Rereading	64	10.97
7.	Referencing norms	34	5.83
8.	Syntax /Punctuation	22	3.77
9.	Text interpretation	15	2.57
10.	Style	14	2.40
11.	Personalizing	9	1.37
12.	Integrating information	8	1.37
13.	Paraphrasing	7	1.20
14.	Using prior knowledge	5	0.86
15.	Predicting	1	0.17
	Total	583	100%

#### 4.5 Subjects' use of Strategy according to Strategy Category

Tables 7 and 8 below detail the frequency of strategy use according to the three categories of comprehension enabling, comprehension extending, and comprehension monitoring strategies.

Table 7. The Low Proficiency ESL Subjects' Strategy Use According to Strategy Category.

Strategy category	Frequency	% of total strategy use
<u>Comprehension enabling strategies</u>		
Checking/Testing fit	89	
Inferring words	76	
Formulating and Eliminating	75	
Rereading	64	
Referencing norms	34	
Syntax/Pronunciation	22	
Style	14	
	374	64.15%
<u>Comprehension extending strategies</u>		
Text interpretation	15	
Personalizing	9	
Integrating information	8	
Paraphrasing	7	
Using prior knowledge	5	
Predicting	1	
	45	7.71%
<u>Comprehension monitoring strategies</u>		
Comments	83	
Questioning	81	
	164	28.1%

Table 8. The High Proficiency ESL Subjects' Strategy Use According to Strategy Category.

Strategy category	Frequency	% of total strategy use
<u>Comprehension enabling strategies</u>		
Inferring words	90	
Referencing norms	49	
Checking/Testing fit	43	
Formulating and Eliminating	21	
Rereading	16	
Style	10	
Syntax/Pronunciation	8	
	237	51.3%
<u>Comprehension extending strategies</u>		
Text interpretation	62	
Integrating information	52	
Using prior knowledge	40	
Paraphrasing	20	
Predicting	16	
Personalizing	7	
	197	42.64%
<u>Comprehension monitoring strategies</u>		
Comments	20	
Questioning	8	
	28	6.06%

#### 4.5.1 Subjects' Use of Comprehension Enabling Strategies

Comprehension enabling strategies are those strategies the subjects use in order to derive the literal meaning contained in the text. Table 7 shows that 64.15% (237 instances of strategy use) of low proficiency respondents total strategy use comprised of comprehension enabling strategies while the high proficiency respondents use of these strategies comprised only 51.3% of total strategy use (Table 9). Comparatively, the high proficiency respondents' use of these strategies was less frequent than the low proficiency respondents. This reveals that the readers differed in their frequency use

these strategies. For the high proficiency respondents the highest ranked strategy was inferring words with 90 instances of use; 19.48%, followed by text interpretation 62 instances of use; 13.42% and integrating knowledge with 52 instances of use; 11.26%(Table 7). The low proficiency respondents' highest ranked strategy was checking/testing fit with 89 instances of use; 15.28% followed by comments, 83 instances of use; 14.20% and questioning with 81 instances of use, 13.9%. While the strategies of inferring words, text interpretation and integrating information were ranked first, second and third for the high proficiency respondents these strategies were ranked forth, ninth and twelfth for the low proficiency respondents. Though the types of strategies discussed above are used to deduce words to complete the cloze blanks they differ in one aspect.

Strategies such as inferring words, text interpretation and integrating information require the reader to be more specific in using clues from the text, on the contrary, strategies like checking fit, comments and questions are less specific strategies. The use of such strategies indicates that the reader may sometimes have resorted to guessing an answer. These findings indicate that the low proficiency respondents tend to use the less precise, more generalized and less effective strategies more often than the high proficiency respondents. Besides, the low proficiency respondents' most frequently used strategy of testing fit could be used in assisting the subjects to decide whether to accept or reject alternatives while attempting the cloze blanks.

The use of the rereading strategy also shows a significant difference between the two groups of readers. While this strategy is ranked sixth for the low proficiency respondents with 64 instances of strategy use; 10.97%, it is ranked tenth for the high proficiency respondents with only 16 instances of strategy use; 3.46%. Re-reading is a strategy that is often used to overcome comprehension failure, thus it may be indicative

that the low proficiency respondents experienced difficulty in comprehending the text than the high proficiency respondents.

#### 4.5.2. Subjects Use of Comprehension Extending Strategies

Comprehension extending strategies enable the reader to go beyond the ideas explicitly stated in the text, thus developing a deeper and more extensive understanding of the text. A striking difference was noticed in the readers' use of these strategies.

The high proficiency respondents' use of these strategies accounted for 42.64% ; 197 instances of strategy use as compared to only 7.71%; 45 instances of total strategy use of the low proficiency respondents. That is almost six times more often than the low proficiency respondents use of strategy.

The frequency and ranking of these strategies also showed marked differences. While these strategies occupied the last ranks on the preference list of the low proficiency respondents their ranking was fairly distributed for the high proficiency respondents.

Differences were also significant in the readers' use of the text interpretation and integrating information strategy. The strategy of text interpretation which recorded 62 instances of use; 13.42% and integrating information with 52 instances of use; 11.26% ranked second and third for the high proficiency respondents. However, these two strategies ranked ninth and twelfth for the low proficiency respondents (Table 6 and 7). While these strategies made up 24.68% of high proficiency respondents' total strategy use, they accounted for only 3.84% of low proficiency respondents' total strategy use. This shows, the high proficiency respondents used these two strategies almost eight times more often than the low proficiency respondents.

The more frequent use of these strategies by the high proficiency respondents suggests that they were probably more successful than the low proficiency respondents

in establishing text relationships thus helping them develop more complete and cohesive representation of texts. The low proficiency respondents' understanding of the text was likely limited to the literal level.

Similar differences were also found in the respondents' use of the prior knowledge strategy. For the high proficiency respondents this strategy ranked seventh with a frequency of 40 instances of strategy use representing 8.66% of total strategy use. On the contrary this strategy was ranked fourteenth and comprised only 5 instances of strategy use with a 0.86% of total strategy use. It is probable than to assume that the high proficiency respondents were better in linking prior knowledge and text information than the low proficiency respondents.

#### **4.5.3 Subjects' use of Comprehension Monitoring Strategies**

The two groups of respondents also differed in their use of the comprehension monitoring strategies. For the low proficiency respondents the two strategies of comments and questioning were ranked second and third with 83 instances of strategy use; 14.20%; and 81 instances of strategy use; 13.90% (Table 7). However, these strategies were ranked ninth and fourteenth for the high proficiency respondents with 20 instances of strategy use; 4.33% and 7 instances of strategy use, 1.51% respectively. While these strategies made up 28.10% of total strategy use of the low proficiency respondents it made up only 5.84% of total strategy use of the HPCS. The low proficiency respondents' use of comprehension monitoring strategies was five times more frequent than the high proficiency respondents.

Thus it can be concluded that strategy use by the high and low proficiency respondents showed some significant differences. While the low proficiency respondents tend to use comprehension enabling and comprehension monitoring strategies more often than the high proficiency respondents, the high proficiency respondents used



comprehension extending strategies more frequently than the low proficiency respondents.

#### **4.6 Subjects' Use of Strategy according to Gender and Language Background**

The analysis of data in this section attempts to answer the third research question, that is : How do the use of reading strategies relate to the variables of gender, language proficiency and language background ? Additionally, an attempt was made to determine whether any significant interaction could be detected between the independent variables.

##### **4.6.1 Subjects Strategy Use According to Gender**

Tables 9 and 10 show the male and female subjects' use of strategy according to gender and language background.

The results demonstrated a significant relationship to gender. Overall strategy use between males and females showed greater strategy use by females as compared to the males .The female respondents recorded 600 instances of strategy use as compared to the male respondents who recorded only 445 instances of strategy use 600

Significant differences were observed in strategy use between the male and female respondents. All strategies were used more often by the female respondents than the male respondents . However, significant differences were observed in the strategy of inferring words, checking fit, rereading, formulating and eliminating, Integrating information, text interpretation, using prior knowledge, questioning, and comment .

In the comprehension enabling strategy the overall strategy use by the females was much higher than the male respondents use of this strategy. The female respondents recorded 343 instances of this strategy use in contrast to the males who

recorded 268 instances of use . However the high proficiency females recorded a lower instance of strategy use, 134 instances, in comparison to the low proficiency females who recorded a 209 instance of use. Similarly, the high proficiency males recorded a lower instance of strategy use, 103 instances, than the low proficiency males, 165 instances. The low proficiency males and female respondents tended to use this category of strategies more often than the high and low proficiency male and female respondents.

In the comprehension extending category the females recorded a 152 instance of total strategy use as compared to the males who recorded only 60 instances of strategy use. However, the high proficiency male and female respondents recorded a higher instance of strategy use than the low proficiency male and female respondents. Thusm it is evident that the high proficiency male and female respondents used this strategy more often than the low proficiency male and female respondents.

In the comprehension monitoring strategy the females recorded a higher instance of strategy use , 105 instances in comparison to the male respondents who recorded only 87 instances of the strategy . However, the low proficiency male and female respondents recorded a higher strategy use than the high proficiency male and female respondents in this category .

From the above findings we can draw conclusions that the female respondents tend to use more strategies than the male respondents in reading comprehension. The female subjects tend to use the affective strategies more frequently than the males. Results also show that the female respondents paid greater attention to the comprehension monitoring strategies. While the low proficiency male and female respondents tend to use the comprehension enabling and monitoring strategies more often; the high proficiency male and female subjects respondents tend to use the comprehension extending strategy more often in this study.

Table 9. Strategy Use According to Gender and Language Background (Male)

Strategy	High Prof.		Low Prof.		Frequency	%	Ranking	
	-	+	-	+			Category	Overall %
1. Comprehension Enabling	5	3	16	17	41	15.30	3	9.21
2. Rereading	6	4	17	13	40	14.92	4	8.99
3. Formulating & Eliminating	22	18	16	21	77	28.73	1	17.30
4. Inferring words	2	1	5	4	12	4.48	6	2.70
5. Syntax / Punc.	12	8	18	19	57	21.27	2	12.81
6. Checking / Testing Fit	10	9	5	7	31	11.57	5	6.97
7. Referencing Norms	2	1	3	4	10	3.73	7	2.25
8. Style	59	44	80	85	268	100%		60.23
Total								
9. Comprehension Extending	2	4	0	1	7	7.78	5	1.57
10. Predicting	12	11	1	3	27	30.00	1	6.07
11. Integrating Inf.	0	1	1	3	5	5.56	6	1.13
12. Personalising	2	3	2	2	9	10.00	4	2.02
13. Paraphrasing	8	12	2	2	24	26.67	2	5.39
14. Text Interpretation	8	9	0	1	18	20.00	3	4.04
15. Using Prior Knowledge	32	40	6	12	90	100%		20.22
Total								
16. Comprehension Monitoring	5	3	24	18	50	57.47	1	11.24
17. Comments	0	2	18	17	37	42.53	2	8.31
18. Questioning	5	5	42	35	87	100%		19.55
Total								
Total no. strategy instances	96	89	128	132	445			100%

Note: + English speaking background  
- Non English speaking background

Table 10. Strategy Use According to Gender and Language Background (Female)

Strategy	High Prof.		Low Prof.		Frequency	%	Ranking	
	-	+	-	+			Category	Overall %
1. Comprehension Enabling								
1. Rereading	4	4	14	17	37	11.37	5	65
2. Formulating & Eliminating	6	5	24	21	56	16.33	3	93
3. Inferring words	24	26	20	19	89	25.95	1	14.8
4. Syntax / Punc.	3	2	6	7	18	5.25	1	30
5. Checking / Testing Fit	13	10	25	27	75	21.87	2	125
6. Referencing Norms	16	14	10	12	52	15.16	4	8.7
7. Style	3	4	3	4	14	4.08	7	2.3
Total	69	65	102	107	343	100%		57.2
Comprehension Extending								
8. Predicting	6	4	0	0	10	6.58	6	1.7
9. Integrating Inf.	15	14	1	3	33	21.71	2	5.6
10. Personalising	3	3	2	3	11	7.24	5	1.8
11. Paraphrasing	8	7	1	2	18	11.84	4	3.0
12. Text Interpretation	20	22	5	6	53	34.87	1	8.8
13. Using Prior Knowledge	10	13	2	2	27	17.76	3	4.5
Total	62	63	11	16	152	100%		25.4
Comprehension Monitoring								
14. Comments	7	5	20	21	53	50.48	1	8.8
15. Questioning	3	3	25	21	52	49.52	2	8.7
Total	10	8	45	42	105	100%		17.4
Total no. strategy instances	141	136	158	165	600			100%

Note: + English speaking background  
 - Non English speaking background

#### **4.6.2 Subjects Use of Strategy According to Language Background**

The findings in this study suggest that respondents with an English speaking background tend to use more strategies than respondents from a non English speaking background. The overall strategy use by respondents from an English speaking background recorded a total of 552 instances of strategy use while respondents from a non English speaking background recorded a total of 523 instances of strategy use. However, the female respondents showed a greater instance of strategy use than the male respondents. The male respondents from an English speaking background recorded 221 instances of strategy use in comparison to the female respondents from a similar background who recorded 301 instances of strategy use. Similarly, the male respondents from a non-English speaking background recorded 224 instances of strategy use in comparison to the female respondents who recorded 299 instances of strategy use.

A comparison of the female respondents showed that the female respondents from an English background recorded a strategy instance of 301 against females from a non- English speaking background who recorded a strategy instance of 299. However, the male respondents from a non English speaking background showed a higher instance of strategy use, 224 instances, than the males respondents from an English speaking background who recorded 221 instances of strategy use. The differences were however minimal.

In the comprehension enabling strategies the male respondents from an English speaking background used more strategies than the male respondents from the non English speaking background .They recorded 128 and 112 instances of strategy use respectively. However, the female respondents from both the backgrounds recorded only one extra usage of strategy. The strategy instance was 171 for the females from the

non- English speaking background and 172 for the females from the English speaking background. In overall strategy use the male and female respondents from the non English speaking backgrounds used more strategies, 284 instances, in comparison to the respondents from the English speaking background who used 229 instances of strategy use in this category of strategies.

In the comprehension extending strategies the male and the female respondents from an English speaking background recorded a higher instance of strategy use, 130 instances, in comparison to the male and female respondents from a non English speaking background who recorded 111 instances of strategy use. The female respondents, however, used significantly more strategies than the male respondents. The female subjects recorded 151 instances of strategy in comparison to the male respondents who recorded only 90 instances of strategy use.

In the comprehension monitoring strategies the male respondents from an English speaking background used more strategies, 40 instances, than the male respondents from a non- English speaking background who recorded 31 instances of strategy use. However, the female respondents from an English speaking background used lesser strategies, 50 instances, in comparison to the female respondents from a non English speaking background who recorded 55 instances of strategy use.

In overall strategy use the male respondents from an English speaking background tended to use more strategies, 220 instances, than males from a non English speaking background, 181 instances of strategy use. Female respondents from both backgrounds tended to use an almost equal number of instances of strategy use , Female respondents from an English speaking background recorded 299 instances of strategy use while female respondents from a non - English speaking background recorded a 300 instance of strategy use. However, findings also showed that female subjects from both backgrounds tended to use more strategies than the male subjects

from both the backgrounds. The females recorded a total of 599 instances of strategy use in comparison to the males who recorded only 401 instances of strategy use.

#### 4.7 The Nature of Strategy Use with Verbal Reports

A comparison of strategy use by the high proficiency comprehending respondents, and the low proficiency comprehending respondents as they worked on the same reading task was carried out to determine the similarities and differences in the application and regulation of reading strategies.

The comparison of strategy use was obtained through the 'think-aloud' type of retrospection as the respondents completed the blanks on the passage entitled "Adopted" (Appendix 1). The two groups of respondents showed marked differences in their approaches to the reading tasks. The high proficiency respondents, began the reading task by reading the title and commenting on it, to evoke relevant thoughts and memories. (*This passage is about adoption, maybe someone was adopted has different parents now*). Three of the high proficiency respondents paused after the comment. This possibly was an attempt to reflect and activate expectations of possible events in the text. This strategy of anticipating content is important as it foster the interactive aspect of reading and is the precursor to the testing of expectations and hypotheses in reading. It also enhances the interaction between the reader and the text. On the other hand only two of the low proficiency respondents read the title. They did not pause or comment after reading the title. The other two low proficiency respondents proceeded immediately to read the text and attempt the first blank.

A comparison of the two groups was also done as they attempted the blanks on the cloze passage during the think-aloud.

Please note:

**LPCS** refers to the high proficiency respondents

**HPCS** refers to the low proficiency respondents

### **Blank 1**

While reading and working to overcome the comprehension difficulties posed by the cloze blanks both the high and the low proficiency respondents were able to deduce the answer for the first blank without much difficulty. Both the groups of readers used the clue offered by the phrase "I was adopted".

### **HPCS**

*I found out by accident that I was adopted (pause). I was adopted, I knew by accident, old family friend casually mentioned it. I knew only when it was mentioned.*

### **LPCS**

*I was adopted when an old family friend visited my seriously ill mother.*

However, the readers differed in the manner in which they responded to the text. The HPCS clarified and extended their understanding of the text by reading the whole sentence twice. The LPCS attended exclusively by resolving to the comprehension difficulty posed by the blank. They did not read the sentence in full neither did they consider the wider context around the blank. Although they were able to provide the correct answer it is evident that they guessed the answer as they did not rationalize the deduction.

### **Blank 2**

Both the groups of readers deduced the answer for blank 2 by using the clue offered by the phrase "Took her to the hospital ----for a drink."

### **Blank 3**

The HPCS were able to provide the correct answer for this blank because they were able to integrate and interpret the text effectively while solving the comprehension difficulties. The integration of the text resulted in a more coherent and declarative representation of ideas. This was evident from the retrospective data obtained. .... I go



*back to the line before this. I was adopted .... Nobody told me about it. If I know from someone , surely I feel bad. Er.....er so imagine how I feel.*

Through the integration and summarization process they were able to connect two or more propositions together to help them build a coherent meaning representation. Elaborating further added to this meaning by bringing prior knowledge to bear on it.

The LPCS attended exclusively by resolving to the comprehension difficulty posed by the blank and were unable to fill in the blank. They expressed frustration at being unable to get the answer.... *"Hm...don't know what is this."*

#### **Blanks 4 and 5**

The HPCS tried to develop a clear representation of the text by establishing links between text propositions. They activated ideas from the previous phrases and sentences and then reasoned out with these propositions in memory. In blank 4 – *I asked my brother repeatedly.....many times .....have to ask many times becous he not willing to give / tell .... Give answer Er.... unwilling. Not willing to tell.... Him he reluctant.*

The HPCS reread the sentence twice eliminating one alternative. They were able to do this because they were able to use text combinations with prior knowledge. However, the LPCS made no attempt to link previous text to the comprehension difficulty posed. They tended to focus only on localized context around the blank. Since they did not consider the wider context around the blank they missed clues in the text.

Similarly in Blank 5 apart from the initial reading of the text, The LPCS did not consider the wider context around the blank and again missed clues in the context. Although they managed to deduce a word for this blank they failed to give the correct tense form. *"He telling me that"* they did not notice that the tense form was wrong probably because they focused on only resolving the blank. However, though they were able to comprehend the text and correctly decipher what was needed to complete the

blank they were unable to come up with a right word. This is most likely due to their low language proficiency.

### **Blanks 6 and 7**

The HPCS were able to deduce the correct words for these blanks because their interpretation of the text helped them to develop a clear representation of the text. Besides, their language proficiency could have been a contributing factor in their being able to deduce the correct answer:

#### **Blank 6**

*I could not ask my mother anything as she was .....ill / dying.....maybe I don't want to ask .....I did not / .....could not er.....2<sup>nd</sup> sentence .....she was seriously ill, that means very ill. She was dying.*

#### **Blank 7**

*I thought of how ..... utterly loving and giving cannot be loving, already used. My mother protects me mothers are protective, caring.*

By formulating and eliminating alternatives and by using prior knowledge which was related to the text the HPCS were able to fill in the blanks with the most appropriate answers. The LPCS on the other hand encountered much difficulty in getting the correct words because they limited themselves to localized context and deprived themselves of leading clues. Though they did attempt to formulate and eliminate alternatives it is evident they were trying to guess words. Two of the LPCS while rereading the text were able to deduce the right word by taking account of the information contained in the text subsequent to the blank.

### **Blank 8, 9 and 10**

The HPCS with their ability to use text combinations with prior knowledge, and their ability to interpret text were able to deduce the right words for these blanks.

The LPCS on the contrary, left the blanks on the first attempt and returned on the second attempt.

However, they persisted with the strategy of formulating and illuminating alternatives. The frequency of these attempts and their tendency to focus on limited context reinforces the impression the they were guessing, for Example blank 9, the two alternatives ....I know / aware I never told her I knew the .... Story/ Happening appears to be guesses since they are not related to the context.

#### **Blank 10**

While rereading the LPCS deduced the exact word. The retrospective data below shows that they deduced the correct word by taking account of the information contained in the text subsequent to the blank and by using prior knowledge.

*I held her hand and softly ....into her ear ....tell something softly ....whisper. She is sick, in hospital, I must tell softly.*

In summary, marked differences were seen in both the groups of respondents while approaching the task and while attempting the task. While approaching the task the HPCS anticipated content, reflected and activated expectations. The LPCS on the contrary did not pause to reflect or anticipate content. While attempting the task the HPCS deduced words for the blanks by using clues offered in the phrases and sentences. They interpreted the text more often used text combinations with prior knowledge, and established links between propositions. The HPCS also formulated and eliminated alternatives, which were related to the text, based on their interpretations. These strategies helped them to develop a clearer representation of the text. The LPCS on the other hand seldom linked previous text events but localized their difficulties around the blank most of the time. Their frequent use of the strategy of formulating and eliminating reinforces the impression that they were guessing many of their answers.

In summary, the analysis of the reading comprehension strategies revealed that some significant differences in strategy use by high and low proficiency respondents does exist; and that the variables of proficiency, gender and language background are related to strategy use. The low proficiency respondents tend to use comprehension enabling and comprehension monitoring strategies more frequently than the high proficiency respondents. The high proficiency respondents used comprehension extending strategies more frequently than do the low proficiency respondents. The female respondents tend to use more strategies than the male respondents. The male and female respondents from an English speaking background tend to show greater use of strategies than respondents from a non English speaking background.

A comparison of strategy use through the think aloud protocols showed that high proficiency and low proficiency respondents differed significantly in their approaches to the same reading task.

From the summary above we can further conclude that variations in strategy use are related to gender, language proficiency and language background.