

Beliefs about Reading, Metacognitive Reading Strategies and Text Comprehension among College Students in a Private University

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore whether metacognitive reading strategies or beliefs about reading is a better predictor of text comprehension. 226 Filipino college students in a private university were asked to accomplish a Reading Beliefs Inventory (RBI) (Kara-Soteriou, 2007) and the Survey of Reading Strategies Inventory (SORS) (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002), and then answer a researcher-made reading comprehension test. Results showed that among the three subscales of metacognitive reading strategies, only problem solving strategies correlated positively with text comprehension, with those students who reported to be using this strategy obtaining relatively higher scores in the reading tasks. The findings also show that active beliefs, and not passive beliefs about reading, were positively correlated with text comprehension. Moreover, the results suggest that, over the effects of active views about reading, problem solving reading strategies contributed to text understanding.

Keywords: reading comprehension, metacognitive reading strategies, beliefs about reading

Introduction

Literacy is a crucial issue in almost every country's educational system. While most studies have attempted to focus on elementary school literacy, adolescent literacy must also be given attention because the content that they learn increases and so, literacy demands also surge (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003).

Compared to the traditional view of reading under which a reader simply draws information from the material, the current view describes a reader as an active one - extracting information from more than one text and then synthesizing and making a representation of the text's message (McKeown, Beck, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1992).

Both linguists and cognitive psychologists have taken the liberty of identifying cognitive and affective factors that affect the

reading process. They have emphasized the role of cognitive processes in reading complex materials and the importance of readers' word recognition skills, vocabulary, and critical thinking (Chall and Jacobs, 2003).

The National Reading Panel (2000) articulated three important themes in the field of reading. Firstly, reading involves complex cognitive processes where both vocabulary development and instruction are considered paramount. Secondly, comprehension of a text is an active process which often involves the tapping of one's prior knowledge. Thirdly, teachers should guide learners in using strategies that result in reading success.

One's knowledge of various cognitive strategies that can be used in reading may be maximized if readers do not know when and how to use them. Reading is a multifaceted process. To explain the process of fluent reading, many researchers focus on the two main areas of metacognition namely, metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring (Grabe, 1991).

Metacognitively skilled readers not only construct meaning; they also monitor and evaluate texts that they read (Israel, 2007). They exhibit understanding of what they read for they are conscious of their own mental processes (Gunning, 1996). Metacognition is how one thinks about his or her own thoughts (Harris & Hodges, 1995). Flavell (1979) believed in the feasibility and desirability of increasing both the quantity and quality of learners' metacognitive knowledge through systematic instruction.

Metacognitive knowledge consists of understanding the following: (a) strategies that can be used for different tasks, called declarative knowledge (b) the conditions under which strategies can be used, or procedural knowledge; and (c) the extent to which the strategies are effective, conditional knowledge (Flavell, 1979; Lawrence, 2007). Those who are unable to select appropriate strategies and to monitor their reading have are regarded as novice or passive comprehenders (Garner, 1987, in Alfassi, 1998).

There is a continuing trend on the study of metacognition in the classroom because it is regarded as an integral part of effective reading and reading instruction (Israel, 2007). However, only a few studies have looked into readers' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, strategy use, and reading proficiency (Singhal, 2001).

Research in the area of verbal protocol analysis has guided researchers in their understanding of the reading processes. One of which is Pressley and Afflerbach's (1985, in Israel, 2007) groundbreaking study which explored reading behaviors of good readers. They described expert readers and highly skilled readers as those who use specific metacognitive strategies before, during, and after reading to support them in their comprehension of the texts being read. The researchers noted that the behaviors that good readers use aid them in constructing meaning while reading. These readers exhibited automaticity in making evaluations of texts and in making connections with prior knowledge and experiences. On the contrary, less able readers were described as less proficient in automatically applying metacognitive strategies.

Researchers have also been fascinated by the metacognitive strategies used by of bilinguals. Second language (L2) learners of English readers are said to use metacognitive reading strategies differently from native speakers (Connor, 1984, in Knight, Padron, & Waxman, 1985) for the former processes reading texts in their first language (L1) differently from how they process in their L2.

Carrell (1989) explored the metacognitive awareness of L2 readers on the reading strategies in their L1 and L2, and their relationship between their metacognitive awareness and comprehension in both languages. Subjects were native speakers of Spanish enrolled at an ESL intensive program at a University and native speakers of English of varying proficiency levels who are studying Spanish. They found local reading strategies (e.g. grammatical structures, sound-letter, word meaning, and text details) to be negatively correlated with L1 reading performance. More proficient ESL readers were inclined to be global (i.e. used background knowledge, text gist, and textual organization) or top-down in their perceptions of effective and difficulty-causing reading strategies. Consequently, the Spanish-as-a-foreign language group with lower proficiency levels tended to be more local.

In a more recent study, Xianming (2007) studied the metacognitive awareness of 74 freshmen college students by asking them to accomplish the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies (MARSIS) questionnaire (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002), conducting interviews, and through passive participant observation. Results revealed that there was a moderate use of the strategies. The

researcher identified the most commonly used ones namely, reading, encircling and underlining, translating, and knowing the questions to be answered prior to reading.

In the local context, Mante (2009) sought to identify factors that affect Filipino bilingual high school students' reading comprehension in English. The objective of her paper was twofold; first was to determine and measure the participants' dimensions of motivation to read, and second was to identify the relationships between the participants' motivation to read in English, their reading comprehension and their use of metacognitive reading strategies when reading in the same language. Results were not conclusive as to whether reading motivation or use of metacognitive reading strategies, affect reading comprehension more for there was no single predictor of the reading test scores.

Apart from metacognition, researchers in the field of reading have also acknowledged the role of readers' beliefs, not only in school achievement, but also in text comprehension (Law, Chan, & Sachs, 2008; Linderholm & Wilde, 2010).

Due to the move from the traditional/passive to a more active view of reading, (Kara-Soteriou, 2007) argued that two broad categories of beliefs about reading may be proposed namely, The More Passive Beliefs which are more or less consistent with the passive view of reading, and the More Active Beliefs which are in accordance to the active view of reading. A Reading Beliefs Inventory was used to examine fourth and sixth graders' active and passive beliefs about reading and their relation to grade level, gender, and reading comprehension. After calculating reading comprehension scores on the Degrees of Reading Power test, data revealed that students with high reading comprehension had statistically lower scores on passive beliefs than the average and low reading comprehension students.

In a study by Logan and Johnston (2009), gender differences in the relationship between reading ability, frequency of reading and attitudes and beliefs relating to reading and school were explored. Two hundred and thirty-two 10-year-old children (117 males and 115 females) completed a reading comprehension test and a questionnaire that explores frequency of reading, attitude to reading, attitude to school, competency beliefs and perceived academic support (from peers and teacher). Girls tended to have better reading

comprehension, read more frequently, and have a more positive attitude to reading and school. However, greater gender differences were found in attitudes and frequency of reading than in reading ability. They also reported that reading ability correlated with both boys' and girls' reading frequency and competency beliefs. Consequently, only boys' reading ability was associated with their attitude to reading and school. Their study noted that it is in the relationship between factors, rather than solely in the factors themselves, where we can primarily find gender differences.

In the Philippine context, Aunario (2004) found a positive and moderate relationship between reading attitude scores and short story scores through the use of a validated questionnaire that is based on Mathewson's and McKenna's models of reading attitude acquisition. She reported a significant difference in attitudes toward reading between young and older elementary HS students, between male and female participants, and between those with high and low reading achievement in the different subscales of the said questionnaire.

These studies have highlighted three important points about reading. First is that both successful and unsuccessful bilingual readers make use of strategies when they read; successful ones, however, use better and more appropriate strategies, whereas the others tend to rely on basic and decoding strategies. Secondly, readers employ different strategies when reading L1 and L2 texts. Another is that readers' beliefs about reading can affect reading comprehension. Finally, gender may be a factor in determining the role of one's reading attitude to reading ability.

Most of the research reviewed was done in Western contexts, with few empirical studies looking into how beliefs about reading and metacognitive strategies awareness contribute to comprehension in the Filipino cultural context. Consequently, this research aims to identify which factor, beliefs about reading or metacognitive strategies, is a better predictor of Filipino college students' text comprehension.

Since researchers have argued that students who hold passive beliefs about reading would tend to show limited understanding of the nature and purposes of reading, (He, 2007; Kara-Soteriou, 2007), the present author believes that active beliefs in reading will be a good predictor of text comprehension. Metacognitive awareness, on the other

hand, should also be a good predictor of reading comprehension, primarily because it leads to successful construction of meaning (Shih, 1992). However, if we look at Mante's (2009) research involving Filipino bilingual high school students, metacognitive reading strategies were not a predictor of reading comprehension. It was therefore the aim of this exploratory study to confirm which factor would greatly influence text comprehension of college students.

Framework

Comprehension or reading strategies show how readers perceive a task, steps they take to understand and make sense of what they read (Singhal, 2001). Likewise, these strategies are used by readers to enhance reading comprehension and conquer comprehension failures. Skilled readers automatically use conceptual knowledge (content schemata), text-structure knowledge (formal schemata), and knowledge about text-processing strategies to successfully construct meaning (Shih, 1992).

In the sociocognitive framework (Vygotsky, 1978), reading takes place in a sociocultural context where cognitive conditions (i.e. knowledge of language or teaching strategies) and affective conditions (i.e. motivation to read and motivation to engage students) are imperative in influencing learners' decisions (Kara-Soteriou, 2007). An aspect that we are especially concerned about in this paper is the affective condition which fosters self-assessment, self-awareness, and metacognition, by allowing readers to own their reading experiences (Biancarosa & Snow, 2007).

According to Kara-Soteriou (2007), some readers hold active beliefs and consider that it is possible to question the author, or that one's reading purpose, the type of text, and the context of instruction when trying to understand a text. This is the more active beliefs category which is related to the notions of interaction and transaction. Some readers, on the other hand, exhibit a passive acceptance of the writers' or the texts' ideas. These passive beliefs are translated to a group of beliefs that are consistent with the transmission and translation notions of reading. Since reading is an active process, learners who are confined to passive beliefs might have difficulty comprehending texts.

The focus of this exploratory study is on how beliefs about

reading and metacognition affect reading comprehension. To comprehend a text, one should be able to use context to recognize meaning of words, find main ideas, and locate important information (Duffy, Roehler, Meloth, Vavrus, Book, Putnam, & Wesselman, 1985).

Methodology

Participants

A total of 226 subjects, all undergraduate students of De La Salle University (DLSU) ranging in age from 16-22 years old (mean age = 17.70), participated in this study. All were native speakers of Tagalog. Those who reported another Philippine language as their L1 were removed from the sample. The sample consisted of 113 males and 113 females.

Instruments

The present study utilized three research instruments (1) a Reading Beliefs Inventory (RBI) that was developed by Kara-Soteriou (2007); (2) the Survey of Reading Strategies Inventory (SORS) (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002); and (3) Reading Comprehension Test.

The RBI was designed to assess whether readers have a passive or active view of reading. After using an orthogonal factor solution with principal component analysis, the questionnaire consisted of 15 items, 9 statements with respect to more passive views of reading, and 6 with respect to more active views of reading. Each item was rated based on a 5-point Likert-type scale (see Appendix A).

The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS), on the other hand, was selected to identify bilingual students' metacognitive awareness and use of reading strategies. It was adapted from the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSIS) and was designed to measure three categories: Global Reading Strategies, Problem Solving Strategies, and Support Strategies. (See Appendix B). Global Reading Strategies focus on how students monitor their reading. Problem Solving Strategies cover how learners resolve reading problems. Finally, Support Strategies include possible techniques that can help readers.

The researcher created an online survey where they can answer both questionnaires and two reading comprehension tests. Two texts

were chosen for the subjects to read – Text 1 was about the role of literature in the classroom (556 words), and Text 2 was about the shoe industry in Marikina, Philippines (734 words). According to the Flesch Reading Ease Readability Formula, Text 1 is considered difficult (47.235) and Text 2 is fairly difficult (50.49), meaning both are considered appropriate for college students. To measure reading comprehension, eight questions multiple choice questions were constructed by the researcher. The multiple choice questions criteria by Wolf (1993, in Brantmeier, 2003) was followed in order to address the limitations of the said assessment tool: (1) all items should be passage dependent; (2) some of the items should require the reader to make inferences; and (3) correct responses could not be determined by looking at the other questions. The items target both the literal and interpretative levels of reading comprehension. There are three choices, with only one correct answer and two distracters which are also plausible answers. The creation of the comprehension test was deemed critical by the researcher for the choice of assessment task affects a reader's performance in a reading comprehension test (Brantmeier, 2003).

Analyses

The study employed quantitative research methods. The former was useful in the analysis of the factors that predict text comprehension. The Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis with forward step was used to determine whether the components of metacognitive reading strategies and beliefs about learning significantly predict text comprehension.

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables included in the study.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviation of Metacognitive Reading Strategies and Beliefs about Reading

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	226	7.7	1.31
Global	226	3.63	0.55
Problem Solving	226	3.91	0.54
Support	226	3.25	0.66
Passive	226	3.28	0.55
Active	226	3.87	0.56
Text Comprehension	226	9.68	3.06

The mean score of 226 participants for problem solving strategies was 3.91 and obviously scored the highest among the factors of metacognitive reading strategies. Its standard deviation is 0.54, indicating that the scores obtained were near to each other. With regard to views about reading, the 226 participants reported more active views, obtaining a mean score of 3.87 and a standard deviation of 0.56.

Zero order correlations were conducted to determine the statistical relationship of text comprehension to the factors metacognitive reading strategies and beliefs about learning (see Table 2).

As expected, there was a strong positive association between global reading strategies and problem solving strategies ($r = .71$, $p < .05$), and between global reading strategies and support strategies ($r = .65$, $p < .05$). There was also a strong positive correlation between problem solving strategies and support reading strategies ($r = .48$, $p < .05$). We can also see that passive belief about reading is significantly correlated with active views about reading. All subscales of metacognitive reading strategies are positively correlated with the two subscales of beliefs about learning.

A small but significant correlation was found between problem solving strategies ($r = .15$, $p < .05$) and text comprehension, and active views about reading ($r = .07$, $p < .05$) and text comprehension. On the other hand, text comprehension was found to be negatively correlated with support reading strategies ($r = -.14$, $p < .05$) and passive beliefs about reading ($r = -.14$, $p < .05$).

Table 2

Zero-order Correlations for Metacognitive Reading Strategies, Beliefs about Reading, and Text Comprehension

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
(1) Age	--						
(2) Global Reading Strategies	-.02	--					
(3) Problem Solving Reading Strategies	-.02	.71**	--				
(4) Support Reading Strategies	-.08	.65**	.48**	--			
(5) Passive Beliefs About Reading	-.05	.42**	.28**	.39**	--		
(6) Active Beliefs About Reading	-.16*	.54**	.48**	.34**	.57**	--	
(7) Text Comprehension	.06	0.08	.17*	-.14*	-.14*	.13*	--

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

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Stepwise multiple regression analyses were carried out to identify the variables that predicted text comprehension. Since the literature does not specify the entering sequence of the predictors into regression models, the present study used the stepwise technique rather than hierarchical methods. In order to determine which variable will be included in the analyses of text comprehension, Hierarchical Multiple Regression was run. Only four variables were significant predictors of text comprehension, namely, problem solving reading strategies, support reading strategies, passive beliefs about reading, and active beliefs about reading.

Table 3
Stepwise multiple regressions on metacognitive reading strategies and beliefs about reading

Model		B	SE	β	T	Sig.
1	Constant	11.83	1.02		11.64	0.000
	Support Reading Strategies	-0.66	0.31	-.14	-2.16	0.032
2	Constant	8.49	1.50		5.66	0.000
	Support Reading Strategies	-0.99	0.32	-.21	-3.09	0.002
	Active Beliefs About Reading	1.14	0.38	.21	2.99	0.003
3	Constant	9.65	1.51		6.40	0.000
	Support Reading Strategies	-0.72	0.32	-.15	-2.21	0.028
	Active Beliefs About Reading	1.86	0.43	.34	4.32	0.000
	Passive Beliefs About Reading	-1.48	0.44	-.27	-3.35	0.001
4	Constant	7.25	1.66		4.37	0.000
	Support Reading Strategies	-1.16	0.35	-.25	-3.33	0.001
	Active Beliefs About Reading	1.32	0.46	.24	2.90	0.004
	Passive Beliefs About Reading	-1.35	0.44	-.24	-3.11	0.002
	Problem Solving Reading Strategies	1.41	0.44	.25	3.19	0.002

Note. $R^2 = .02$ for Step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .05$ for Step 2; $\Delta R^2 = .09$ for Step 3; $\Delta R^2 = .13$ for Step 4

It can be gleaned from Table 3 that the model that emerged as the most significant is Model 4 [adjusted $R^2=0.13$; $F(221, 225) = 9.196$, $p < .00$], with four predictors accounting for 14.3% of the variance.

The strongest predictors of text comprehension in this model are problem solving strategies [$\beta = .25$, $SE = .44$, $t = 3.19$, $p < .00$], followed by active beliefs about reading [$\beta = .24$, $SE = .46$, $t = 2.90$, $p < .00$].

Discussion

The present study investigated the relations between metacognitive reading strategies, beliefs about reading, and text comprehension. In particular, it aimed to determine which variable will be a better predictor of college students' overall comprehension. The findings somehow support the researcher's hypothesis, for only problem solving strategies correlated positively with text comprehension, with those students who reported to be using this strategy obtaining higher scores in the reading tasks. The findings also show that active beliefs, and not passive beliefs about reading, were positively correlated with text comprehension. In addition, the results suggest that, over the effects of active views about reading, problem solving reading strategies contributed to text understanding.

These findings suggest that perhaps, the metacognitive knowledge of the participants in the study is limited to declarative knowledge only. In other words, they reported what skills they knew and which were taught to them, but have failed to incorporate the strategies in order to address problems they encountered during the reading task.

The present study's findings did not fit with Mante's (2009) findings with Filipino high school students, where neither reading motivation nor the use of metacognitive reading strategies was a predictor of the reading test scores. Contrary to Logan and Johnston's (2009) research where boys' reading ability was associated with their attitude to reading, gender did not play a significant role in the present study. In addition, age only had a negative significant correlation with active beliefs about reading, suggesting that as one gets older, one's active beliefs about reading tends to weaken.

In this study, it was also highlighted that problem solving strategies, active beliefs about reading, passive beliefs about reading, and support strategies accounted for 14.3% of the variance; but what about the 85.7%? One factor that can possibly account for the majority of the variance is prior knowledge (Spires & Donley, 1998). Constructivists describe the reader as active, extracting information

and making a representation of the text's message to comprehend (McKeown, Beck, Sinatra, & Loxterman, 1992). Readers' knowledge base is regarded as a "powerful, pervasive, individualistic, and modifiable" tool (Alexander & Fox, 2004, p.42) that is advantageous when undertaking a reading task. In order to comprehend, a reader with low prior knowledge will primarily depend on the information that is explicitly written on the text. (McNamara, 2001). After all, Carrell (1989) found more proficient ESL readers to be global (i.e. used background knowledge, text gist, and textual organization) or top-down in their perceptions of effective and difficulty-causing reading strategies.

The findings reported in this study report the factors that predict reading comprehension among Filipino college students in a selected university. The present research has probed which factor, whether metacognitive reading strategies or beliefs about reading, is a better predictor of text comprehension. Results showed that among the three subscales of metacognitive reading strategies, only problem solving strategies correlated positively with text comprehension, with those students who reported to be using this strategy obtaining relatively higher scores in the reading tasks. The findings also show that active beliefs, and not passive beliefs about reading, were positively correlated with text comprehension. Moreover, the results suggest that, over the effects of active views about reading, problem solving reading strategies contributed to text understanding.

In the light of the present study, it would be interesting to add other factors that may possibly contribute to reading comprehension. Another point to take into account is the age of the participants. It would also be fascinating to include subjects from other universities and subjects with a lower age range. Many possibilities were presented in this research with regard to how bilinguals process and comprehend texts in their second language. This is one proof that working with bilinguals is a difficult but enthralling enterprise (Grosjean, 1998).

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Appendix A

Reading Beliefs Inventory RBI

Directions: Listed below are statements about what people do when they read academic or school-related materials such as textbooks or library books. Five numbers follow each statement (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and each number means the following:

- 1 means "I never or almost never do this."
- 2 means "I do this only occasionally."
- 3 means "I sometimes do this" (about 50% of the time).
- 4 means "I usually do this."
- 5 means "I always or almost always do this."

After reading each statement, circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that applies to you using the scale provided. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to the statements in this inventory.

(1) I believe that it is important to predict what will happen while reading a story.

1 2 3 4 5

(2) When I read, I should simply get the information from the reading passage.

1 2 3 4 5

(3) For me, the main purpose of reading is to learn new information.

1 2 3 4 5

(4) When I read, it is important to imagine how I would feel if I were the character.

1 2 3 4 5

(5) Books can have different meanings for different people.

1 2 3 4 5

(6) I believe that most books mean exactly what they say.

1 2 3 4 5

(7) It is important to think about the author's reasons for writing the book.

1 2 3 4 5

(8) When I think about a book, I should try to "stick" to what the author says.

1 2 3 4 5

(9) When I read, I should focus on how I feel about the information as much as on what I learn.

1 2 3 4 5

(10) It is important to judge whether the behavior of the characters is good or bad.

1 2 3 4 5

(11) When I read, it is important to think about what the author says I should learn.

1 2 3 4 5

(12) Knowing what the characters did in a story is usually enough to understand the story.

1 2 3 4 5

(13) When I read, I should think about why the characters did things.

1 2 3 4 5

(14) When I read, it is important to think about what I want from the book.

1 2 3 4 5

(15) I believe that it is easier to understand a reading passage if we memorize some of the information in it.

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

The Survey of Reading Strategies Inventory (SORS)

Directions: Listed below are statements about what people do when they read *academic or school-related materials* such as textbooks or library books.

Five numbers follow each statement (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and each number means the following:

- 1 means "I **never or almost never** do this."
- 2 means "I do this **only occasionally**."
- 3 means "I **sometimes** do this" (about 50% of the time).
- 4 means "I **usually** do this."
- 5 means "I **always or almost always** do this."

After reading each statement, **circle the number** (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that applies to you using the scale provided. Please note that there are **no right or wrong answers** to the statements in this inventory.

Type Strategy Scale

1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.
3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.
4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.
5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.
6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.
7. I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I'm reading.
8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.
9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.
10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.
11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I'm reading.
12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.
13. I use reference materials such as (e.g. dictionary) to help me understand what I read.
14. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I'm

reading.

15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.
16. I stop from time to time and think about what I'm reading.
17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I'm reading.
18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.
19. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.
20. I use typographical aids like boldface and italics to identify key information.
21. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.
22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.
23. I check my understanding when I come across new information.
24. I try to guess what the material is about when I read.
25. When text becomes difficult, I reread to increase my understanding.
26. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.
27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.
28. When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.
29. When reading, I translate from English into my native language.
30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.

About the Author

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