

QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

INSTRUCTION OF EFL READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES IN

QATAR GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

BY

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## ABSTRACT

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Title: Instruction of EFL Reading Comprehension Strategies in Qatar Government Schools

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The purpose of this study was to investigate English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' implementation of reading comprehension strategies. In this study, data collection included a questionnaire-based survey investigation of 754 teachers of EFL in Qatar government schools in the three grade levels, elementary, preparatory and secondary. This quantitative study was designed to address the following three questions:

1. What is the incidence of use of reading comprehension strategies by EFL teachers in Qatar government schools?
2. What is the incidence of use of explicit strategy instruction of reading comprehension strategies?
3. How does reading comprehension instruction vary according to teaching level, years of teaching experience and gender?

In order to answer this study's research questions, descriptive statistics were utilized. Further cross tabulations were processed and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) statistical test was implemented to investigate differences between variables.

Data analysis revealed that participant teachers reported a general moderate and high frequency of using comprehension strategies. There were seven strategies used the most by the teachers. These strategies are: identify main ideas, set purpose for reading, predictions, preview text, monitor comprehension, prior knowledge activation, and

handle unfamiliar words. Conversely, five strategies reported the comparatively lower use frequency. These strategies are text structure, questioning, visualizing, summarizing, and think aloud. The major findings on explicit strategy instruction indicated that teachers ignore the gradual release of responsibility to students.

Secondary level teachers reported the lowest use of reading comprehension strategies and explicit strategy instruction across the three grade levels. In addition, the lowest overall use of reading comprehension strategies in this study was reported by 0-5 years of teaching experience teachers. Furthermore, female teachers reported higher use frequency of strategies than male participants. A statistically significant difference, revealed by multi variate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical test and t-test, was found between female and male participants in using three comprehension strategy instructional practices: modeling, collaborative learning and guided practice.

The implications of these findings suggest that EFL teachers demonstrate moderate use of reading comprehension strategy instruction. Further recommendations for The Ministry of education, school principals and teachers are offered.

## **DEDICATION**

*To my beloved husband, Adel, and to our dearest children Jana, Sama and Abdullah.*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

“Reading well is at the heart of all learning” (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, p. 62). Reading is considered an effective learning activity individuals could use to improve themselves throughout their lifespan in terms of critical thinking, understanding themselves and the world and interpreting future events that they might encounter (Karadeniz & Can, 2015). Moreover, reading plays a fundamental role in all academic disciplines in general, and in learning a language in particular (Şentürk, 2015). Consequently, the skill of reading in a foreign language has been a priority for second (SL)/foreign (FL) language teaching research (Susser & Robb, 1990). In the late 1970s, research on effective reading strategies in both first and second language contexts emerged in an effort to identify specific reading strategies to determine effective strategy instruction. In the mid-1980s, emphasis shifted to the instructional strategies that significantly enhanced comprehension skills in students (Pressley & Hilden, 2002; Pressley & Hilden, 2006; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995). In addition, research suggests that language learning strategies can be taught to foreign language learners in order to promote their comprehension skills (Grabe, 2009; Oxford, 1990).

In the last few decades, excessive studies were conducted attempting to understand how readers process reading comprehension. It is suggested that reading is a uniquely complicated skill that involves more than pronouncing or decoding letters and words since the reader has to use his\her cognitive skills and prior knowledge to construct meaning (Grabe, 2009; Lai, 2006). Reading includes the processes of interaction and involvement

with written language to extract and construct meaning (McLaughlin, 2012; McMunn Dooley & Matthews, 2009). Good readers actively participate in reading, using a repertoire of comprehension strategies and critical thinking skills to construct meaning and efficiently process text (Hall & Piazza, 2008; McLaughlin, 2012).

According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory that reflects the social constructivist nature of comprehension, readers should be engaged in discussions to negotiate meaning with others in order to refine their understanding of conveyed messages in a written text (McLaughlin, 2012; Reyna-Barron, 2016). In such a process, where the main difficulty is that the processes associated with reading is internal and abstract, teachers should ensure students' understanding of the text and their ability to draw conclusions and construct meaning. Therefore, teachers should model how good readers read (Lai, 2006) and promote students' good reading behavior (Hernandez-Laboy, 2009; Lai, 2006). Research supports that explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies enhances students' comprehension (McLaughlin, 2012). Skilled teachers have a deep knowledge of both subject and teaching methods that interact to form effective teaching competence. They can effectively and flexibly adapt content and methods in response to students' needs (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999).

Despite its importance, reading did not receive sufficient attention in the foreign language classrooms. Teaching practices were merely focusing on learning grammar and memorizing vocabulary that did not include constructing meaning or strategy-based text processing (Freeman & Richards, 1996). Furthermore, teachers and students considered reading a classroom time-consuming activity (Graden, 1996). According to Durkin (1978), reading comprehension instruction received the minimum time in actual classroom

teaching. This insufficient inclusion of reading and strategic reading instruction resulted in students' low reading comprehension achievement (Phakiti, 2003).

Teachers of reading classes are responsible for students to acquire effective reading strategies. When teachers provide students with appropriate reading strategies instruction, students are highly expected to develop effective reading abilities (Damber, Samuelsson, & Taube, 2012; Hall & Piazza, 2008; Reyna-Barron, 2016). However, previous studies suggested that teachers were not aware of the common strategies they should utilize to enhance students' reading comprehension. One study conducted by Spor and Schneider (1998), concluded that less than half of the investigated teachers were familiar with the popular reading strategies instruction, but many of them do not use these strategies (Spor & Schneider, 1998). Moreover, though research stated that teachers are aware of the importance of reading strategies in comprehending a written text, some teachers seem to be reluctant to intervene with the student-centered learning classroom and maintain their role as facilitators with no direct instruction (Hernandez-Laboy, 2009). In recent years, teachers are hesitant to deliver direct instruction, including explicit teaching of reading strategies, though research proved that students benefit from the systematic conduction of the process (Hernandez-Laboy, 2009; Reyna-Barron, 2016).

## **1.2 Research Context**

Qatar views education as the key to future economic, political, and social progress. Recognizing the fundamental importance of English language in such progress, the Qatari leadership included English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the curriculum ever since the public education has begun in 1951 (El-Laithy, 1989). English has become the most

important foreign language in Qatar (Al-Khwaiter, 2001). Various English language teaching methods and approaches were associated with the introduction of English and influenced its teaching in Qatar. Consequently, the current practices of English language teachers may reflect these approaches implemented by The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) during the twentieth century: the grammar translation method, the audio-lingual method and the communicative approach (Al-Khwaiter, 2001).

In the grammar translation method, reading focuses mainly on vocabulary with learners as passive receivers of what the teacher says. Consequently, the audio-lingual method replaced the grammar translation in the teaching of English in Qatar (Qotbah, 1990). According to Qotbah (1990), the textbooks accompanied the audio-lingual approach focused mainly on drills and practice of listening while neglecting reading and writing skills. According to Abu Jalalah and Ali (1993), the educational authorities were not satisfied with the students' achievement in English. Hence, the MOEHE has embraced the communicative approach for teaching English in Qatar since the 1970s (Jalalah & Ali, 1993). Nevertheless, the new approach contained numerous shortcomings related to textbooks and resources. Besides, teachers' negative attitudes towards the communicative approach contributed to a great extent to the failure of this method to develop students' reading and writing skills (Al-Khwaiter, 2001). Teachers' instructional practices were not related to the communicative approach principles. Reading focused mainly on copying, memorizing and grammar exercises (Abbara, 1991; Abo Galalah, 1992). Consequently, a gap emerged between the goals of the MOEHE and the objectives of the communicative approach.

In 2001, Qatar's leadership was motivated by the concern of the unsatisfying outcomes of the education system in terms of academic achievement, college attendance, and success in the labor market. Thus, the RAND corporation, a nonprofit institution concerned with improving policy and decision making through research and analysis, was asked to examine the current state of K-12 school system. A K-12 education reform initiative, known as Education for a New Era, was launched in 2001 (Brewer et al., 2007). The new education system included internationally benchmarked curriculum standards for the four core subjects amongst which was English.

Nevertheless, results of annual standardized assessment tests showed low academic achievement of students in English. Only 10% met the curriculum standards benchmarked level in 2008 (Nasser et al., 2014). According to Nasser (2013), reading teachers contributed little to language acquisition of students, reading comprehension strategies and word knowledge during an extracurricular reading intervention conducted in Qatar independent schools. Though one of the main objectives of the education reform in Qatar is to change teachers' instructional practices into student-centered learning (Brewer et al., 2007), skills needed to implement this approach may not be acquired yet by teachers and students (Palmer et al., 2016).

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The researcher's 12 years' experience as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher, supervisor and trainer in Qatar government schools (K-12) has revealed that reading comprehension is the most critical task for EFL students. Students develop a lack of interest towards the reading class. In fact, they seem to lack the essential strategies they

should use to comprehend a written text. Golkowska (2013) argues Qatari and Gulf region students studying abroad struggle with English due to their lack of reading and writing abilities. Students' low reading achievement indicates there is a problem with the teaching and consequently, the learning of reading in English. Golkowska (2013) states,

many Qatari students' educational experience with reading prior to entering college is limited to answering multiple choice questions or discovering the "right answer" to the question of what a given passage is about. Many never read fiction or practice active reading while others are exposed to linguistically or culturally inaccessible materials they find irrelevant. Not surprising, they seldom become strategic readers or find motivation to develop the habit of reading extensively (p. 340)

In addition, English language teachers seem to lack the awareness of the reading learning strategies and principles of explicit instruction that proved to be effective in enhancing comprehension in students. This observation is supported by Nunn (1996, as cited in Al-Khwaiter,2001), after studying the classroom interaction in Qatar secondary schools, concluded that the 'method-in-use' in the observed schools were incompatible with the official curriculum of English adopting communicative language approach. Twenty years later, more recent studies asserted the ineffective comprehension instruction in Qatar government schools. According to Nasser (2013), reading teachers little contributed to language acquisition of students, reading comprehension strategies and word knowledge during an extracurricular reading intervention conducted in Qatar independent schools. Though one of the main objectives of the education reform in Qatar is to change teachers' instructional practices into student-centered learning (Brewer et al., 2007), skills needed to implement this approach may not be acquired yet by teachers and students

(Palmer et al., 2016).

Based on the above-mentioned concerns and gaps, the researcher considered it relevant to examine the reading strategies and classroom practices that EFL teachers (grades 1-12) utilize to enhance comprehension in students. The study was aimed to obtain a comprehensible view of the instructional practices that are taking place in the classrooms in Qatar and shed light to the research field of reading comprehension in EFL teaching and learning in general, and in particular, in the context of Qatar.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

This study formulated the following research questions:

1. What is the incidence of use of reading comprehension strategies by EFL teachers in Qatar government schools?
2. What is the incidence of use of explicit strategy instruction of reading comprehension strategies?
3. How does reading comprehension instruction vary according to teaching level, years of teaching experience and gender?

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study aims to provide insights into reading instruction strategies used by teachers in Qatar government schools to teach comprehension and fill in the existing research gap in the field by providing empirical data from the context of Qatar. Teacher educators and professional development providers will gain insight from this study as to what in-service teachers really believe and practice in their reading classrooms. This knowledge is in hope to provide sources of information for planning effective future

professional development programs and teacher education courses. Findings can also be used to support students' reading learning as a natural outcome of teachers' practice.

### **1.6 Definition of Terms**

For this study, the following terms were defined:

1. Reading Comprehension: "a combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes, and the information that we already know" (Grabe, 2009, p. 74).
2. Comprehension strategies: refer to the procedures or methods proficient readers employ to assure their own comprehension (McKenna & Stahl, 2015).
3. Comprehension Strategy Instruction: "Comprehension strategy instruction is the direct and explicit teaching of reading comprehension strategies in order to help students become strategic and proficient readers. In comprehension strategy instruction, students are taught comprehension strategies using reading skills such as making connections, questioning, visualizing, inferring, determining importance, synthesizing, thinking aloud, and incorporating fix-up strategies" (Lai, 2006, p. 30).

### **1.7 Thesis Organization**

This thesis is organized in five chapters. The first chapter outlines the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions the study attempted to answer and significance of the study for the context. It also provides the definition of key terms as well as a brief description of the thesis organization. In chapter two, related literature is reviewed providing the theoretical framework of the study, definition of reading comprehension, background to reading comprehension strategies and explicit strategy

instruction, and teachers' implementation of reading strategies. Furthermore, the characteristics of good readers and effective teachers of reading as well as the factors associated with the use of strategies are highlighted. Chapter three describes the context of this research study, participants, research questions, and data collection methods, procedures and analysis. In addition, ethical considerations and methodological limitations are underlined. Findings of the study are revealed in chapter four guided by research questions with relevant informative tables. Discussion of findings in relation to previous research and reviewed literature is presented in chapter five and recommendations are provided at the end of the chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This study investigated the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading comprehension strategy instruction in 1-12 classrooms in the state of Qatar. This investigation aimed to draw a profile of the EFL teachers' instructional practices in order to enhance comprehension in students. In an effort to provide substantial data useful in developing this study, this chapter presents an overview of the theoretical framework used to design this study, a background to skilled reading comprehension and a review of reading strategies that support comprehension. Next, explicit instructional practices of comprehension strategies followed by findings from research studies on reading comprehension strategy instruction are presented. Finally, factors associated with the use of language learning strategies with relative literature are explored.

### **2.2 Theories Related to Reading Comprehension**

In order to efficiently provide learners with substantial assistance needed in reading, it is essential to examine what occurs in the reading process, reading comprehension strategies and effective strategy instruction. (Ballou, 2012; Duke & Pearson, 2008; Kuzborska, 2010). Effective reading comprehension instruction emphasizes the cognitive/social constructivist approaches (Ballou, 2012; Hernandez-Laboy, 2009; Negari & Askani, 2014) as well as Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Ballou, 2012; Grabe, 2009).

Pedagogical and psychological studies highlight the importance of learners' involvement in the learning process and the outcomes of this engagement. According to Bruner (1957), thinking is the outcome of cognitive development. Learners' minds should go beyond the given data in order to invent generic concepts and problem solving procedures. Flavell (1979) argues metacognition awareness is essential for reading comprehension. It refers to the actions performed by readers in order to plan, monitor or evaluate the success of a specific reading task. Therefore, it involves the consciousness of comprehension occurrence and the utilization of reading strategies (Baumann & Jones, 1993; Anna U. Chamot & O'Malley, 1994).

Social constructivist learning theory explains how learners might acquire knowledge and learn. It suggests that meaningful learning should occur since the learner constructs knowledge and personal interpretations using prior knowledge and experiences. It includes the idea that knowledge is a human construction (Au, 1998; Thanasoulas, 2001). In addition, Vygotsky (1978) has influenced the literacy researchers by his well-applied formulations, the zone of proximal development (Au, 1998). He argues that a child's mental functions have social origins as they are mediated by the collaboration with adults (Au, 1998) supporting the gradual release of responsibility until the individuals can independently learn something new and successfully perform the task (Grabe, 2009; Iwai, 2011). Therefore, the role of teachers, peers and classroom instruction have received great emphasis by research on literacy learning (Au, 1998).

There are various perspectives reading can be viewed from, including sociocultural, affective, physiological, philosophical, educational and cognitive. This study assumes a cognitive learning theory aligned with social constructivism and Vygotsky's zone of

proximal development. Hence, it follows the definition of reading involving mental process readers utilize in comprehending different texts. This interest emerges from the claim that understanding reading as a cognitive process is a prerequisite for understanding other approaches (Urquart & Weir, 1998). Moreover, research studies considered the process of reading comprehension a complex cognitive process and the readers' awareness of this process, called metacognition, is fundamental for monitoring their understanding of a text (Ballou, 2012; Grabe, 2009; Negari & Askani, 2014). Thus, this study considers reading as a cognitive activity.

### **2.3 Reading Comprehension Defined**

According to Grabe (2009) identifying the cognitive learning theory as grounding for defining reading underlies the,

incremental nature of skill learning, the need for extended practice, the importance of time on task, the integration of subskills and subroutines as proceduralization, the introduction of new information as just the beginning phase of learning and the central role of automaticity for fluent and skilled reading abilities (p.17).

This study utilizes the definition of reading by Grabe (2009) as “a combination of text input, appropriate cognitive processes, and the information that we already know” (p. 74). He further states that this definition should address the characteristics of reading by fluent readers; the cognitive processes used and how they work together to comprehend a text (Grabe, 2009).

This definition is agreed by a list of researchers who identified reading as mental processes the readers use to comprehend a written text (Bruner, 1957; Grabe, 2009;

Hodges, 1999; McLaughlin, 2012; McMunn Dooley & Matthews, 2009; Pressley, 2001).

Harris & Hodges (1995) define reading comprehension as

[Reading comprehension is] the construction of the meaning of a written or spoken communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message . . . The resumption here is that meaning resides in the intentional problem-solving, thinking processes of the interpreter, . . . that the content of the meaning is influenced by that person's prior knowledge and experience (p. 39)

Reading comprehension is mainly defined as constructing meaning of a written text through a holistic ideas interchange between the interpreter and the message in a particular context (Hodges, 1999). It includes the processes of interaction and involvement with written language to extract and construct meaning. Besides, the importance of the reader's prior knowledge and previous experiences influencing the content of constructed meaning is strongly highlighted (McLaughlin, 2012; McMunn Dooley & Matthews, 2009).

#### **2.4 Background to Skilled Reading Comprehension**

One of the most critical tasks in reading instruction is teaching students the strategies they should master in order to comprehend a text. Moreover, teachers must have the potentials to provide effective instruction for students to ultimately utilize the learned strategies in the process of comprehension (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007). Comprehension strategies refer to the procedures or methods proficient readers employ to assure their own comprehension (McKenna & Stahl, 2015). According to the *Nation's report card* (2015), proficient readers in eighth-grade are able to infer and provide relevant

information, identify the main ideas in a text, use text structure to support comprehension and analyze text features (*Nation's Report Card*, 2015).

A growing body of research has investigated the development and validation of effective comprehension strategies. Researchers sought to describe the skilled reading comprehension of 'good readers' or 'strategic readers'. Grabe (2009) describes strategic readers as able to use strategies effectively in various contexts, actively engage in reading, read extensively, identify relevant information and read for longer periods of time. They also build automaticity in strategy use for routine situations they encounter (Grabe, 2009). In addition, good readers plan before they read. They set a purpose for their reading, preview the text, activate prior knowledge and make predictions about the text. During and after reading, good readers mainly monitor their comprehension, identify main ideas and use context clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. They also use text structure to guide comprehension, summarize, evaluate and reflect on the text (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; Pressley & Hilden, 2002).

Neufeld (2005) discusses the characteristics of expert readers. Based on Neufeld's (2005) overview, expert readers employ pre-reading strategies including setting a purpose for reading, activating prior knowledge and making predictions about the text. While reading, expert readers ask questions about the text and relate the information they read to their previous knowledge. After reading, they reread, summarize, and monitor their comprehension (Neufeld, 2005). The above-mentioned characteristics are in agreement with Graves, Juel & Graves's (2006) and Harvey & Goudvis' (2000,2005) description of good readers. The researchers argue that good readers make connections between the known and unknown, activate prior knowledge, create visual pictures of text in their mind,

make predictions, determine importance of information, infer meanings, summarize the text, synthesize, ask and answer questions, deal with graphic information, monitor comprehension, and reflect on, criticize and evaluate what they read. (Goudvis & Harvey, 2000; Graves et al., 2006; Harvey & Goudvis, 2005).

Duke and Pearson (2008) emphasized the importance of studies on good readers since they have been the ground for studies on the reading comprehension process. They summarized what good readers do when they read. According to the researchers, good readers are active readers with clear goals in mind from the outset and constantly evaluate if the text meet their goals. Good readers also implement their background knowledge, text structure, predicting, questioning and construct the meanings as they read. They determine the meanings of unfamiliar words, think about the author, and evaluate the text constantly. For good readers, reading is both a satisfying and productive process (Duke & Pearson, 2008).

### **2.5 Reading Strategies that Support Comprehension**

Research on ‘effective’ reading strategies both in first (L1) and second (L2) language contexts emerged in the late 1970s when researchers started to identify specific reading strategies to determine effective strategy instruction. The emphasis then shifted by the mid-1980s, to decide on the most important strategies for reading comprehension, that significantly enhanced comprehension skills in students (Pressley & Hilden, 2002; Pressley & Hilden, 2006; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995). L2/FL reading-strategy research history is limited, which prevents generalizations of most results. However, findings from L2/FL

research studies can be expanded if they confirm similar results in L1 reading research (Grabe, 2009).

Over several decades, strategy research identified a number of comprehension strategies as empirically supported by research studies in L1 and L2 contexts. In the next section, strategies that have been found significantly improving students reading comprehension are presented. Strategies identified by the *National Reading Panel* (NRP) (2000), Pearson & Duke (2008), Paris, Cross & Lipson (1984) and Grabe (2009) are presented and in the following sections.

In order to identify eight effective comprehension strategies, the NRP (2000) analyzed 203 experimental and quasi-experimental studies on reading comprehension strategies for normal readers. Those studies had to be published in a scientific, peer-reviewed journal. Found to be research-evident efficient strategies, the NRP asserted the following eight strategies,

1. *Comprehension monitoring* in which the reader learns how to be aware or conscious of his or her understanding during reading and learns procedures to deal with problems in understanding as they arise.
2. *Cooperative learning* in which readers work together to learn strategies in the context of reading.
3. *Graphic and semantic organizers* that allow the reader to represent graphically (write or draw) the meanings and relationships of the ideas that underlie the words in the text.

4. *Story structure* from which the reader learns to ask and answer who, what, where, when, and why questions about the plot and, in some cases, maps out the time line, characters, and events in stories.
5. *Question answering* in which the reader answers questions posed by the teacher and is given feedback on the correctness.
6. *Question generation* in which the reader asks himself or herself why, when, where, why, what will happen, how, and who questions.
7. *Summarization* in which the reader attempts to identify and write the main or most important ideas that integrate or unite the other ideas or meanings of the text into a coherent whole.
8. *Multiple Strategy Instruction* in which the reader uses several of the procedures in interaction with the teacher over the text. Multiple strategy teaching is effective when the reader or the teacher in naturalistic contexts uses the procedures flexibly and appropriately. (p. 4-6)

Pearson & Duke (2008) suggest a model for comprehension instruction including six recommended strategies to be taught to students. These strategies were selected to be effective based on reviewing studies that targeted age groups ranged from kindergarten to college level. Though not every single strategy was tested for the entire range of age groups, no substantial evidence indicated the inappropriateness of any age group. The six strategies concluded by the researchers were: prediction, think aloud, text structure, visual representations of text, summarization and questioning (Duke & Pearson, 2008). Another set of strategies was identified by Paris et al. (1984) comprising six comprehension activities as fundamental strategies to many educational curricula: understanding the

purpose of reading, activating relevant background knowledge, allocating attention to main ideas, critical evaluation, monitoring comprehension, and drawing inferences. Recently, Gooden (2012) selected another variation of strategies to include in her research study: prior knowledge activation, determining important ideas, asking questions, visualizing, inferring, retelling and synthesizing, and using ‘fix up’ strategies to repair understanding.

## **2.6 Teachers’ Implementation of Comprehension Strategies**

In an effort to identify a set of strategies effective for L2/FL learners, Grabe (2009) revised the studies of NRP (2000), Pressley, Johnson, Symons, McGoldrick, & Kurita (1989) and Trabasso & Bouchard (2002) and concluded eight strategies that have been identified in research as significantly supporting reading comprehension. The selected strategies are: summarizing, forming questions, answering questions and elaborative interrogation, activating prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension, using text structure awareness, using visual graphics and graphic organizers, and inferencing (Grabe, 2009).

A considerable number of L1 and ESL/EFL language researchers have investigated English language teachers’ implementation of reading strategies in an attempt to determine the most frequently used by teachers to enhance comprehension in students (Alsamadani, 2012; Althewini, 2016; Hernandez-Laboy, 2009; Kadah, 2005; Kuzborska, 2010; Reyna-Barron, 2016). Some studies are briefly reviewed in the following sections.

Alsamadani (2012) explored EFL Saudi teachers’ attitudes towards reading comprehension strategy instruction in the EFL classroom. The researcher deployed an attitude questionnaire, among 60 male Saudi teachers, compiling the most common, research-evident reading strategies. Besides, classroom observations were conducted.

Results revealed the positive attitudes Saudi teachers had towards nine strategies: previewing the reading material, skimming and scanning, guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words, questioning, activating student's prior knowledge, paraphrasing, using context clues and visualization. Conversely, teachers were uncertain or unaware of the importance of the other strategies such as, setting a purpose for reading, summarization, identifying main ideas, monitoring comprehension, think aloud, inferring and evaluation.

In a study investigating the reading strategies ESL teachers utilize to enhance comprehension in students, Hernandez (2009) concluded that teachers frequently used reading strategies in the comprehension process. Analysis of data, collected by a reading strategies survey, showed that teachers did not implement the use of text structure and think aloud protocol. Besides, the strategies of setting a purpose for reading, questioning and monitoring comprehension were not taught with the regularity anticipated. Reyna-Barron (2016) contended teachers' lack of knowledge of comprehension strategy instruction. Teachers did not show awareness of the strategies research proved to be effective in developing comprehension such as setting clear goals for reading, text preview, prediction, identifying the meaning of unfamiliar words and activating students' prior knowledge. When asked about research-evident strategies to improve comprehension, few teachers mentioned the strategy of 'summarizing' (Reyna-Barron, 2016).

Kadah (2005) investigated how frequently Arabic Foreign Language (AFL) teachers teach reading strategies to their students. A questionnaire consisting of 22 strategies was distributed among 106 K-12 AFL reading teachers in the United States. Results revealed that the six most used strategies by the majority of teachers were: repetition, inferring, use background knowledge, role play, plan, summarize and cooperate.

On the other hand, the least used strategies included the use of graphic organizers, access information sources, take notes, selective attention, evaluate and organize (Kadah, 2005)

## **2.7 Explicit Instruction of Strategies**

Despite automaticity and efficient use of strategies are research-evident critical to reading success, little attention has been devoted to the development of instructional methods that promote automaticity in comprehension (Sinatra, Brown, & Reynolds, 2002). Increasing student's self-regulation in using strategies is a major component of comprehension instruction. Students should be taught how, when and why to use a strategy in order to increase automaticity (Baker, 2002). According to Grabe (2009), The main goal for comprehension strategies is efficient implementation of strategies without needing to consciously reflect on the strategy selected or use problem solving skills. Hence, strategy instruction in L1 and L2 contexts has been asserted an instrumental component of reading comprehension instruction. Besides, reading strategies can be taught effectively which ultimately leads to improving reading comprehension (Grabe, 2009).

Research about proficient readers and skilled reading comprehension involved explicit instruction of comprehension strategies as a successful instructional model (Pearson, Roehler, Dole, & Duffy, 1992). Thus, explicit strategy instruction has become strongly recommended to teach strategies for students by many researchers (Dole, 2000; Duffy, 2002; Duffy et al., 1987; Duke & Pearson, 2008; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Hayes, 2012; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007; Kena et al., 2015; Pearson et al., 1992; Pressley & Hilden, 2002; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995). Pressley and Woloshyn (1995) states,

Strategy instruction should be explicit, intensive, and extensive. The ultimate goal is to have students using the trained strategies autonomously, skillfully, appropriately, and creatively. Strategies should be taught to students directly over an extended period of time as part of the existing curriculum (p. 11)

Built upon cognitive and metacognitive research, Dole (2000) recommends teachers explain for students how, when and why to employ comprehension strategies through explicit instruction. Research contends early explicit strategy instruction since metacognitive strategy use develops gradually through experience. Teachers should start using explicit strategy instruction with students in the early grades as metacognition development is a slow process and needs a long time to see the desired results (Aud et al., 2012).

The underlying principles of explicit strategy instruction have emerged from constructivism and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. With respect to constructivist theory, explicit instruction promotes students' learning through demonstration, collaboration and contextual learning (Cambourne, 2002). It assists students understand the reasons behind using various strategies and how to implement them effectively. This style of teaching requires meaningful teacher-student communications with teacher guidance of learning (Blair et al., 2007).

According to Vygotsky, a student's zone of proximal development is his ability to learn through collaboration with others until he/she can perform the task independently. This gradual release of responsibility is an underlying principle in explicit strategy instruction (Gordon & Pearson, 1983; Grabe, 2009; Iwai, 2011). According to Pearson & Gallagher (1983), in direct explicit instruction, the teacher begins by modeling the strategy

(teacher is fully responsible for learning), then students start guided practice (shared responsibility) during which responsibility is gradually released to students. At the last stage of instruction, students practice the strategy independently with students holding full responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983).

Duke and Pearson (2008) suggest a model of comprehension strategy instruction comprising the following five components:

1. An explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used.
2. Teacher and/or student modeling of the strategy in action.
3. Collaborative use of the strategy in action.
4. Guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility.
5. Independent use of the strategy.

Throughout the proposed model, the researchers highlight the importance of comprehension strategies coordination or orchestration for both the teacher and the students. Strategies cannot be used solely, rather multiple strategies should be used constantly (Duke & Pearson, 2008).

## **2.8 Characteristics of an Effective Teacher of Reading**

It has been highlighted in literature that the teacher is a critical component in the reading strategy instruction. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) assert the importance of teachers of reading,

Because learning strategies can be taught, the teacher has an important role in conveying to students the importance of using strategies, defining various strategies

and their use with academic tasks, and supporting the students in their efforts to become more strategic, independent, and self-regulated (p. 58)

In other words, teachers are responsible for providing students with explanation of strategy use. According to Winograd and Hare (1988), it is the teacher's role to teach students what the strategy is, how they use it, and when. Though it is generally accepted that teaching children how to read is a demanding task that requires great efforts, Blair et al. (2007) assures that exerting much effort alone is not enough, effective teachers know exactly on what to focus their effort in order to make a difference.

Reviewing the literature on the qualities of an effective teacher of reading, it has been concluded that there are common important instructional features associated with influential teachers of reading, summarized by Blair et al. (2007) as follows:

1. assessing students' reading strengths and weaknesses,
2. structuring reading activities around an explicit instructional format,
3. providing students with opportunities to learn and apply skills and strategies in authentic reading tasks,
4. ensuring that students attend to the learning tasks, and
5. believing in one's teaching abilities and expecting students to be successful (p. 433).

Ruddell (2008) investigated highly-effective teachers' practices in the reading classes and concluded certain characteristics effective teachers possess. Effective teachers are able to activate students' prior knowledge and relate the learning experience and information to their personal beliefs. In addition, effective teachers are vitally important in designing active learning environment with clear meaningful objectives and constructive

feedback. Furthermore, effective teachers are aware of their students' different needs, potentials and motives (Ruddell, 2008).

## **2.9 Factors Associated with the Use of Language Learning Strategies**

Various studies have examined the differences in strategy use associated with the learners' variables (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). The focus of the present study is on three variables: grade level of students (Alexander & Jetton, 2000; Baily, 1996; Kadah, 2005; Keatley, 1999; Ness, 2006; White, 2011), teaching experience (Berliner, 1988; Anna Uhl Chamot, 2004; McAninch, 2015; Reyna-Barron, 2016; Xing, 2009), and gender (Dadour & Robbins, 1996; Kadah, 2005; Kaylani, 1996; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Leaver, 1996).

The present study aims at investigating EFL teachers' reading comprehension strategies instruction and how their instruction varies according to grade level, teaching experience and gender. This exploration was based on informed speculation that as learning strategies used by learners are found to be associated with their variables, teachers' use might be similarly associated as well. The selected demographic variables for this study will be briefly discussed in relation to accessible literature in the following sections.

**2.9.1 Grade-level factor.** Exploring the variable of grade level and its association with the use of language learning strategies, literature has revealed that students at different grade levels vary in strategy use, with more use reported by older students (Baily, 1996; Keatley, 1999; Oxford, 1994). Oxford and Nyikos (1989), in one of the largest studies in the pedagogical field, investigated the factors affecting the use of learning strategies among 1,200 foreign language university students in the USA. The researchers implemented the

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) as the main instrument for the study. Results revealed a highly significant effect of years spent studying the foreign language on the use of strategies. Students who had been studying the language for more time (four or five years) reported more frequent use than students with less study.

Studies investigated language strategy instruction indicated that frequency of strategy instruction varies in relation to grade level taught (Kadah, 2005; Ness, 2006; White, 2011). Kadah (2005) conducted a quantitative study focusing on reading comprehension strategy instruction. The researcher investigated the frequency of use of 22 reading comprehension strategies among Arabic as a foreign language (AFL) teachers for grades k-12 in the USA. The findings revealed positive correlation between the grade level taught and the frequency of instruction of five reading strategies: Kindergarten and elementary students were taught the 'organize' strategy more frequently, while the strategies of 'make predictions', 'access information sources', 'use imagery' and 'use selective attention' were taught more frequently to preparatory and secondary school students (Kadah, 2005). White (2011) investigated the relationship between grade levels and instructional variety used by 4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> teachers. A number of 2,844 teachers responded to the questionnaire in this quantitative correlational study conducted in California. Results revealed a negative correlation between grade level and instructional variety of English/Language arts. The instructional variety decreased when the grade level increased. As grade level increased, teachers used less illustrations, independent work, and partner work. The study of Ness (2006) is incongruent with White's findings. Ness (2006) investigated the frequency of reading comprehension instruction in preparatory and secondary school

content-area classes. Findings asserted more reading comprehension instruction occurred in preparatory school classes.

**2.9.2 Years of teaching experience factor.** Berliner (1988) divided the development of expertise in pedagogy into five stages based on skill development: novice teacher, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert. Each of these stages has particular characteristics. Novice teachers' behavior is rational though inflexible; marginal performance is expected. The second stage, advanced beginner, is labeled by the development of strategic knowledge but with no sense of deciding on importance. In the third stage, competent teachers make conscious choices, decide on plans and prioritize goals, yet not fast or flexible. At the fourth stage, proficient teachers have an intuitive sense of situations, they gain holistic similarity recognition that allows them to precisely predict events. At the last stage, experts are categorized as 'arational'. Their performance is fluid and they get engaged more qualitatively than do teachers in the other stages (Berliner, 1988).

A number of studies investigated the differences among the development of expertise stages (Berliner, 1988; Johnson, 2011; Langenthal, 2004; Reyna-Barron, 2016; Xing, 2009). Xing (2009) investigated the consistency of self-reported beliefs and behavior of experienced and inexperienced teachers of English as a foreign language, and whether experience influences the actual classroom practices. Data were collected through a questionnaire among 464 teachers and four case studies. Results revealed that experienced teachers' beliefs and practices were significantly more consistent than inexperienced teachers. Experienced teachers showed stronger attitudes towards certain classroom instructional strategies such as encouraging students to self-correct their errors.

Furthermore, experienced teachers were found to be more conscious of their behavior and had higher abilities to articulate the related rationales (Xing, 2009).

Langenthal (2004) explored the impact of experience on first-grade teachers' knowledge on evaluating reading progress in their students. Data were collected through interviewing ten novice teachers and ten experienced teachers. Teachers with greater work-practice experience and training reported more flexible practices in using formal and informal assessment tools. They could also make stronger logical connections between the assessment results and their instructional practices. They indicated great ability in reflecting on their instruction in order to solve out relevant problems and meet all students' needs.

In contrast to the above studies, Reyna-Barron (2016) investigated the difference between the amount of time beginner (0-3 years) and seasoned (15 or more) teachers of English implement comprehension instructional practices in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. Findings of this qualitative study among 12 teachers observed, revealed that beginner teachers spent more time teaching students comprehension strategies. None of the seasoned teachers implemented comprehension activities during the observed classes. Moreover, Johnson (2011) investigated the differences existed between experienced and inexperienced teachers with respect to EFL teaching strategies. A number of 59 randomly selected teachers responded to a reading instruction strategies questionnaire. A minimal impact of foreign language teaching experience was observed on strategies scale. It was concluded that years of teaching experience did not influence instructional practices of teachers participated in the study.

Some explanations for the differences between novice and experienced teachers were presented by several studies. According to Berliner (1988), the number of years of teaching experience does not necessarily place a teacher in a specific stage, i.e., novice or experienced, as a teacher at one stage of skill development may perform specific acts or show characteristics of other stages of development in particular situations. Borko and Livingston (1989) account for the differences between experienced and inexperienced teachers in making different instructional decisions by the assumptions that the cognitive schemata of novices are less complex, less interconnected and less accessible than experienced teachers. Thus, their pedagogical knowledge is less efficient. Hill, Rowan, & Ball (2005) argue that teachers with greater knowledge for teaching have better decision making skills regarding instruction. Johnson (1992) claims that beginner teachers are less considerate to students' needs as they are so concerned about keeping the flow of their planned lesson activities. Thus, they are more teacher-centered and do not allow enough opportunities for students to initiate.

**2.9.3 Gender factor.** Gender differences have been discerned by numerous studies on language learning strategies. Most of the studies wherein gender differences emerged concluded higher frequent use of strategies by females. However, other studies reported no statistically significant difference between males and females in the use of language learning strategies. In some cases, studies demonstrated more frequent use of specific strategies by either gender ( Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Leaver, 1996).

Several studies that investigated the effect of gender on the use frequency of language learning strategies, showed higher frequent use of language learning strategies by females (Kadah, 2005; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Zeynali, 2012). Kadah (2005) indicated positive relationship between the AFL teachers' gender and the use frequency of 13 types of strategies. Results suggested female teachers taught more reading strategies than male teachers. Almost similarly, Oxford and Nyikos (1989) (explained previously under grade level) revealed profoundly significant gender differences in strategy selection. Females reported more strategy use frequency in three factors, whereas males showed no more frequent use of any factor. In addition, Zeynali (2012) explored the effect of gender on EFL learners' learning strategies among 149 Iranian students who responded to the SILL questionnaire, the same instrument use by Oxford and Nyikos (1989). Findings showed a significant gender difference in the use of strategies; females tended to use strategies more often than males.

On the other hand, studies conducted by Dabour and Robbins (1996) and Kaylani (1996) revealed no significant differences between males and females in using language learning strategies. Kaylani (1996) explored the influence of gender on learning strategies use among 225 EFL Jordanian secondary school students. Data were collected through the SILL questionnaire and interviews. Results indicated no gender difference with respect to the use of language learning strategies. Moreover, strategies used by successful female learners resembled those used by successful male learners. Furthermore, Dadour and Robbins (1996) investigated the effectiveness of strategy instruction on the development of 122 university students in Egypt. They examined the difference between males and females in frequency of strategy use as measured by the SILL. Results concluded no

significant gender difference in strategy use. Females and males used strategies at approximately equivalent frequencies.

In the context of the current study, Qatar, Al-Khwaiter (2001) investigated the beliefs and practices of teachers, students and head teachers towards English language teaching and learning in Qatar. Questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations were utilized for data collection. Results suggested that, in addition to the cultural background, there are significant factors that affect the attitudes of teachers and students. These factors include sex, qualifications, location of school and nationality. Female students were found to have more positive attitudes towards learning English than male students, whereas for teachers, male teachers had more positive attitudes towards teaching English than female teachers. The effect of gender was statistically significant on teachers' attitudes towards English language teaching (Al-Khwaiter, 2001). Furthermore, in a classroom observational study of instruction in Qatar schools, Palmer et al. (2016) concluded that female teachers were more active than male teachers in the classroom asking and answering questions, and regularly checking for students' understanding.

## **2.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the main themes of the study in relation to the theories and accessible literature in the field, involving the reading strategies used to enhance comprehension in students and the explicit strategy instruction of these strategies as proposed by previous research. Furthermore, grade-level, years of teaching experience, and gender were discussed as demographic factors associated with the use of language learning strategies.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.1 Overview of Methodology**

The present research study focused on the reading comprehension strategies English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers use in the reading instruction process. The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the frequency of instruction of comprehension strategies and explicit strategy instructional practices by EFL teachers who teach 1-12 grades, and the implications of these practices for EFL classes in the government schools in Qatar. This chapter describes the methodology and procedures that were implemented to answer the proposed research questions. It reports information of the research context, participants, data generation methods, procedures and data analysis.

#### **Research Questions**

This study investigated the following three research questions:

1. What is the incidence of use of reading comprehension strategies by EFL teachers in Qatar government schools?
2. What is the incidence of use of explicit strategy instruction of reading comprehension strategies?"
3. How does reading comprehension instruction vary according to teaching level, years of teaching experience and gender?

### **3.2 Participants**

The population for this study was 1<sup>st</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade EFL teachers in all Qatar government elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. According to the Statistics Section in the Department of Educational Policy and Research, the total number of EFL teachers for the school year 2016-2017 is 1815 teachers in the three grade-level schools, 1313 female teachers and 502 male teachers. The entire population consisted of potential survey participants. A number of 754 EFL teachers currently working in government schools voluntarily participated in this study.

All participants in this study had the same professional characteristics, they were all teaching EFL, working in government schools and teaching non-native students in mixed-abilities classes. Both male and female teachers in the three grade-levels were included in the study. Female teachers comprised 63.5% of participants against 36% for male teachers.

### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.3.1 Choice of methods**

This research is a descriptive study utilizing a quantitative method design. Quantitative descriptive studies typically use surveys to gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing an existing phenomenon (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). This design was chosen for the present study in order to describe the current conditions of reading comprehension strategies instruction in the EFL reading classes.

In this study, a questionnaire-based survey was used as the method for data generation. Questionnaires are effective and quick tools because they help collect the data through a wide range of forced-choice questions and save time, effort and financial resources (Dörnyei, 2001). According to Cohen et al. (2013), using a survey is useful in educational research in that it usually gathers data over a short period of time and hence is economical and efficient, represents a wide target population through a large-scale data gathering to enable drawing generalizations, and provides descriptive inferential information (Cohen et al., 2013). In addition, surveys are also used to explore the relationships between variables (McMillan, 1996).

### **3.3.2 Methods**

*Instrument.* This study utilized *The Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction* survey instrument originally developed by Hernandez-Laboy (2009) in order to explore teachers' experience in using reading strategies with learners during comprehension process. The survey was designed to elicit descriptive and behavioral data about the instructional reading strategies teachers utilize in their classrooms to improve students' comprehension. A copy of the study survey instrument is provided in Appendix A. In addition, an official permission from the developer of the instrument was obtained (Appendix B).

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was related to demographic information: gender, academic level, grade-level and years of teaching experience. The second part, comprised two sections, focusing on the use of instructional reading comprehension strategies in the classroom. In section A, teachers responded to 12 closed-

ended questions by rating their frequency of instruction of the reading strategy described in each of the 12 statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (never=1) to (always=5). In section B, teachers responded to 6 closed-ended questions by rating their frequency of implementing explicit strategy instructional practices on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (never=1) to (always=5). The Likert-scale is widely used in educational research and allows respondents to choose the degree that matches their agreement with a given statement (Cohen et al., 2013).

This survey was based on the cognitive/ social constructivist approach. Effective reading comprehension instruction emphasizes the cognitive/social constructivist approaches (Ballou, 2012; Hernandez-Laboy, 2009; Negari & Askani, 2014) as well as Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Ballou, 2012; Grabe, 2009).

***Content validity and reliability.*** The researcher requested advice from a panel of experts regarding content validity in addressing the design of the instrument and research questions. Three experts evaluated the instrument, one in the field of ESL curriculum, an ESL methodology and reading expert mastery in the learning and reading processes in ESL, and an evaluation and assessment expert. The panel used a validation instrument prepared by the researcher in order to evaluate pertinence, wording, and adequacy. Statistically, the questionnaire generated a Cronbach's Alpha of .880 indicating high reliability. For validity, the mean score of each expert was as follows: 3.00, 3.00, and 2.97 (maximum score was 3). The researcher collected the experts' feedback on the survey construction items through cognitive interviews. These interviews helped the researcher evaluate and prepare a reliable and valid questionnaire (Hernandez-Laboy, 2009).

### **3.3.3 Data collection procedures**

**3.3.3.1 Pilot study.** Prior to beginning the process of data collection for this study, ethical approval was obtained from Qatar University's Institutional Review Board (QU-IRB). In addition, an approval from The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) was obtained in order to get access to the intended participants, EFL teachers in government schools.

A pilot study was conducted in the new context, Qatar government schools, in order to ensure the validity of the questionnaire with the selected sample. According to Cohen (2013), a pilot study is conducted to check the clarity of the questionnaire items, the time taken to complete the questionnaire and to gain feedback on the appearance, layout and instructions of the questionnaire. A number of 10 EFL in-service teachers in a government school in Qatar participated in the pilot study. According to Babbie (1990), any member of the study population can serve as pretest subject for the intended study. Each member of the pilot participants completed the online survey and reported any comments or questions in written form to the researcher. They indicated that the items of the questionnaire were clear with no ambiguous wording and the layout was appropriate. They also reported that the layout and instructions were smooth to follow and the time taken to answer the questionnaire was approximately 10-15 minutes. Based on the feedback from the pretest group, no modifications were applied to the survey instrument.

**3.3.3.2 Data collection.** Teachers used an online version of the survey to report the use frequency of each of the 12 reading strategies and the explicit strategy instruction in the reading comprehension classes. In addition, teachers provided background information about educational and professional experiences. The survey was made available online for

two weeks at the end of the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017. The creation of the survey tool, and data collection and retrieval from the participants was conducted through the commercial questionnaire service provider : Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). Internet-based surveys have several advantages: According to Cohen (2013), Internet-based surveys reduce the effects of the researcher and guarantee anonymity and non-traceability for participants. Furthermore, they reduce the human error in data entry as the data could be directly processed once entered by respondents (Cohen et al., 2013). The software was designed to prompt the respondents for any missed items in order to increase coverage and avoid incomplete answers.

Upon the completion of all required approvals, the MOEHE sent an invitation email that contained the website of the questionnaire to all EFL teachers in all levels in government schools in Qatar (i.e., elementary, preparatory, and secondary). The emails provided teachers with the title, purpose and anticipated advantages of the study, and asked them to voluntarily participate. Participants were given two weeks to respond to the questionnaire. A friendly reminder was sent via emails to all teachers after one week. The number of contacted teachers was 1815, out of which 871 responded to the questionnaire before it was closed. Completed responses were 754 with a response rate of 41.5%, as 117 respondents withdrew without submitting their responses.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Data retrieval occurred automatically after the survey was closed via the software implemented in the data collection process (Survey Monkey). Data collected were exported to the Statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS-Version 24) statistics software, in

order to obtain exploratory data analysis. Data was checked for any missing information. No missing entries were found. Data were already coded into numbers and ready for analysis. In order to measure the internal consistency of the collected data, the reliability Cronbach's alpha indicator was conducted. The Cronbach's alpha computed for the 18 items of the questionnaire (part 2) was .901, which indicated high reliability.

The research questions were answered and analyzed according to the data obtained for each part of the survey. Each question was related to a number of the survey items. Research question one, regarding the frequencies with which EFL teachers utilize reading comprehension strategies, was answered through the analysis of the 12 items in part 2, section 1 of the questionnaire. As for research question two, addressing the frequent use of explicit strategy instruction practiced by teachers, it was answered through the data analysis of the 6 items in part 2, section 2 of the questionnaire.

In order to answer this study's research questions one and two, descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean scores) were utilized. Data gathered were analyzed using a survey scale that varied from always to never. The alternatives were scored as: always=5; frequently=4; sometimes=3, rarely=2, and never=1. According to Healey (2014), when a description of distribution of a single variable is needed, or the relationship between two or more variables should be determined, descriptive statistics is relevant. Besides, it was also used to illustrate the demographic profile of the participants. Results were presented in tables of counts, frequencies and percentages.

Regarding research question three, further cross tabulations were processed and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) statistical test was implemented to find significant differences between variables; in two or more vectors of means. In order to

examine association between scale scores and demographic variables, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was conducted with three demographic variables as independent variables, and with the reading comprehension strategies and explicit teaching of these strategies as dependent variables. The three independent variables included teachers' gender, teaching level and years of teaching experience. Significant differences were examined further by the Scheffe and Tukey post-hoc tests.

Findings from this study provided a profile of EFL teachers' reading comprehension strategies instruction in the reading classes. The results also illustrated the association of participants' demographics with their instruction of reading comprehension strategies.

### **3.5 Ethical Consideration and Limitations**

**3.5.1 Ethical consideration.** Prior to conducting the study, an official approval from The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) and Qatar University was required. In order to obtain the MOEHE's approval, a summary of the research proposal containing the title of the research, purpose, researcher's name and institution, intended participants, research questions and methodology was submitted. Besides, a consent letter was signed by the researcher declaring the commitment to research ethics and data confidentiality. After obtaining the official approval from the MOEHE, a permission from the Qatar University's Committee of Institutional Review Board (IRB) was requested. The required documents to obtain the approval included the proposal, consent letter, supervisor's clarification, research instrument and a request for ethics

approval form. The request of ethics approval form included an informed consent, confidentiality consent and declaration statement from the applicant.

There were no risks or costs incurred by participants. Besides, an introductory brief was provided in the online survey explaining for the participants the purpose of the study, confidentiality, procedures, estimated answering time, volunteering statement and the option of withdrawing anytime.

Anonymity was granted for the participants because the online-questionnaire did not request for any personal information or contact details. Besides, it is non-traceable. All data were stored electronically in the researcher's password-protected computer for the purpose of analysis. Data will be saved for three years after getting the Master's degree.

**3.5.2 Limitations.** This study had two methodological limitations. First, no reliable data or previous research studies on the research topic was available in the context of Qatar. This could be due to the limited attention paid for strategy instruction in general. Lack of related data in the same context of the study limited the scope of analysis. Hence, similar studies in other EFL contexts were reviewed and used to build meaningful relationships and implications. Future research should be conducted to build on the present study in order fill in the gap in the literature regarding this important discipline in research. Second, due to time constraints, the study design was merely quantitative based on self-reported data. Quantitative studies provide description of a current phenomenon and self-reported data can contain potential sources of biases. The present study drew on EFL teachers' profile of reading comprehension instructional practices. This study did not investigate the relationships between the beliefs teachers reported about themselves and the actual

classroom practices. Teachers' attitudes and beliefs do not necessarily reflect the actual classroom practices (Fang, 1996). There is a need for future qualitative or mixed methods studies that include observations, interviews and case studies. Exploring the relationships between beliefs and practices is crucial for developing better understanding of teachers' perspective that leads to a deeper analysis of professional needs. This should assist professional development providers in designing in-service training that addresses the existing needs of teachers.

### **3.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed the methods, data analysis, and ethical considerations and limitations of this study. This study is a descriptive quantitative research that aimed at investigating the reading comprehension instruction EFL teachers implemented in Qatar government schools of all levels, elementary, preparatory and secondary.

Data were collected through an Internet-based questionnaire. 754 teachers participated in the study. Data analysis was conducted using Statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistics software, version 24.00. Prior to conducting the study, official and ethical approval was obtained from the MOEHE and QU-IRB.

## **Chapter 4: Results of the Study**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the results of the data analysis are presented. A background on the purpose of the study and participants is first offered. A short overview of the research survey instrument and research questions is then provided. Results and findings are presented guided by research questions. Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-Version 24), in order to determine the frequency, percentage and mean scores of survey items corresponding to research questions. In addition, Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical test was conducted for the sake of investigating differences across the variables.

This exploratory study aimed to investigate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading comprehension strategies instruction in Qatar government schools. There were 754 EFL male and female teachers from all school levels (elementary, preparatory, secondary) that participated in the study by responding to a 24item-questionnaire. Teachers provided their answers on a 1-5 Likert scale measuring the frequency of utilizing each practice in the reading class (always, frequently, sometimes, rarely, never).

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the incidence of use of reading comprehension strategies by EFL teachers in Qatar government schools?
2. What is the incidence of use of explicit strategy instruction of reading comprehension strategies?"
3. How does reading comprehension instruction vary according to teaching level, years of teaching experience and gender?

A questionnaire-survey, Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction, was conducted for data generation in order to answer these questions (see chapter 3). Research question one was answered through part two of the survey (Instructional strategies in the classroom- section A), while research question two was answered through section B of the same part. As for research question three, it was answered by considering the significant differences between the variables in each of the two research questions (1-2).

#### **4.2 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Participants**

This study was carried out among all EFL teachers in all government schools in Qatar; elementary, preparatory and secondary. A number of 754 EFL teachers participated in the study. Tables 4.1 through 4.5 present descriptive statistics of the participants' socio-demographic information including the variables of gender, teaching level, years of teaching experience, academic preparation and certification of EFL teaching.

Table 4.1 shows facts related to the gender of the participants. Out of 754 participants, 479 (63.5%) were females while 275 (36.5%) were males. Females were approximately twice as males.

Table 4.1

*Distribution of Participants by Gender*

Gender	Percent	Frequency
Female	63.5%	479
Male	36.5%	275
Total	100	754

Table 4.2 below summarizes the grade-level participants taught. The data collected indicated that the largest proportion of the sample, 338 teachers (44.8%), were teaching elementary level, while 189 (25.1%) were teaching preparatory level and 227 (30.1%) were teaching secondary level. This might be attributed to the fact that the number of elementary school teachers in Qatar is the greatest, and consequently the number of participants from the same portion, compared to the other levels (see chapter 3).

Table 4.2

*Distribution of Participants by Grade-Level*

Grade-Level	Percent	Frequency
Elementary	44.8%	338
Preparatory	25.1%	189
Secondary	30.1%	227

The findings on teachers' academic preparation are presented in table 4.3. Results revealed that 575 (76.3%) had a bachelor's degree; 99 (13.1%) had credits towards a master's degree; 67 (8.9%) had a master's degree; 6 (.8%) had credits towards a doctoral degree, and only 7 (.9%) had a doctoral degree.

When cross tabulating the academic preparation and the three teaching levels, it was found that teachers of elementary level had the lowest percentage with a master's degree preparation; only 5.9% (20 out of 338), while the secondary level teachers gained the greatest percentage with 11.9% (27 out of 227). Regarding the doctoral degree, only .2% (1 out of 338) and 2.6% (6 out of 227) of elementary and secondary teachers respectively were found to hold it, while there was none of preparatory school teachers. In general, the majority of participants 76.3% (575 out of 754) held a bachelor's degree.

Table 4.3

*Distribution of Participants by Academic Preparation*

Academic Preparation	Percent	Frequency
Bachelor's Degree	76.3%	575
Bachelor's Degree plus credits towards Master's Degree	13.1%	99
Master's Degree	8.9%	67
Master's Degree plus credits towards Doctoral Degree	0.8%	6
Doctoral Degree	0.9%	7

Answers provided by the teachers whether they were EFL Certified are shown in table 4.4. Results indicated that the majority of the participants, 94.3% (711 out of 754), were EFL certified teachers while 5.7% (43 out of 754) were not. Elementary level teachers

were significantly lower than preparatory and secondary school teachers with 91.1% (308 out of 338) certified in EFL. While 8.9% (30 out of 338) of elementary school teachers were not certified, only 2.1% (4 out of 189) and 3.9% (9 out of 227) of preparatory and secondary teachers respectively were not.

Table 4.4

*Distribution of Participants by EFL Certification*

Certified in EFL\ESL	Percentage	Frequency
Yes	94.3%	711
No	5.7%	43
Total	100%	754

Table 4.5 illustrates teachers' overall experience in teaching English. Eighty-eight of the participants (11.7%) had from 0-5 years of teaching experience; 264 (35%) had from 6-11; 200 (26.5%) had from 12-17 and 202 had 18 or more years of teaching experience. In all, the majority of participants were experienced teachers.

Data analysis demonstrated secondary level teachers were significantly the most experienced (18 or more) with a percentage of 40.5% (92 out of 227), followed by preparatory and elementary levels with 27.5% (52 out of 189) and 17% (58 out of 338) respectively. On the other hand, elementary level teachers ranked the first when comparing

the percentages for the lowest years of teaching experience (0-5) among the three levels with 17% (58 out of 338) while preparatory school teachers ranked the last with 6% (12 out of 189). However, the largest proportion of participants were in the range of (6-11) years of teaching experience with 35% (264 out of 754) across the three levels.

Table 4.5

*Descriptive Statistics for Years of Teaching Experience across the Teaching Levels*

Years of teaching experience	Teaching level			Percentage	Frequency
	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary		
0-5	58	12	18	11.7%	88
6-11	141	63	60	35.0%	264
12-17	81	62	57	26.5%	200
18 or more	58	52	92	26.8%	202
Total	338	189	227	100%	754

Overall, participants in this study had considerable experience in teaching English. Furthermore, the majority, 77.5% (584 out of 754), reported that they took courses on the teaching of reading comprehension during their bachelor's degree studies. This should contribute to their practice in teaching reading.

### **4.3 Research Question One**

*What is the incidence of use of reading comprehension strategies by EFL teachers in Qatar government schools?*

Research question one was answered through section A of part two of the survey (see Appendix A). This part of the instrument dealt with the reading strategies teachers used in the reading process and how frequently they engaged students in strategic reading. It comprised 12 items measuring the frequency of utilizing each strategy in the reading class on a Likert-scale (always, frequently, sometimes, rarely, never). Data obtained from this part were tabulated and the frequency, percentage and mean scores were generated for each item as well as for the overall number of items for this part.

Teachers' responses converged on always (5) and frequently (4) in most items with a total mean score of 4.16. Item #5, which dealt with the think aloud strategy, generated the lowest mean score amongst the other items with 3.56. Items #7, #9 and #10 also obtained low mean scores compared to the other items and total score of the complete sample with 3.92, 3.90, and 3.93 respectively.

The think aloud strategy dealt with in item #5, which is considered essential in developing the reading skills in EFL learners, seemed to be not habitually utilized by most teachers. Only 22.8% of the participants chose 'always' as their answer while 77.2% of their responses concentrated on frequently, sometimes, rarely and never. The mean score generated for this item (3.56) is remarkably low with regard to other items such as #1 and #3, which obtained 4.5.

As for items #7 and #9, which dealt with visualizing and summarizing to aid comprehension, approximately 35% only of participants' answers centered on always, while the rest ~66% distributed around frequently (~30%), sometimes (~28%), rarely (~6%) and never (~1%). These strategies were expected to be more frequently used in the reading classes by EFL teachers, but unfortunately, they were determined to be less preferred with mean scores of 3.92 and 3.93. Though item #10 generated almost the same low mean score (3.93), participants' answers focused more on always (~42%) whereas the remaining 58% of the responses ranged from frequently to never. This item was related to the strategy of students generating questions for the text that is one of the most effective protocols in reciprocal reading, a strategy which depends mostly on students to read and comprehend a text. Participants in this study seemed to prefer traditional teaching methods, which were always less demanding in terms of planning, instruction time and individualized activities. Table 4.6 below presents a summary of this part of the instrument dealt with strategic reading.

Table 4.6

*Descriptive Statistics of Reading Strategies Use in the Reading Process*

#		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean
1	F	474	194	76	7	3	4.5
	%	62.9%	25.7%	10.1%	0.9%	0.4%	
2	F	417	202	118	12	5	4.34
	%	55.3%	26.8%	15.6%	1.6%	0.7%	
3	F	481	182	79	11	1	4.5
	%	63.8%	24.1%	10.5%	1.5%	0.1%	
4	F	368	244	132	9	1	4.29
	%	48.8%	32.4%	17.5%	1.2%	0.1%	
5	F	172	199	287	75	21	3.56
	%	22.8%	26.4%	38.1%	9.9%	2.8%	
6	F	266	248	206	31	3	3.99
	%	35.3%	32.9%	27.3%	4.1%	0.4%	
7	F	259	235	211	41	8	3.92
	%	34.4%	31.2%	28.0%	5.4%	1.1%	
8	F	489	180	76	7	2	4.52
	%	64.9%	23.9%	10.1%	0.9%	0.3%	
9	F	262	220	213	50	9	3.9
	%	34.7%	29.2%	28.2%	6.6%	1.2%	
10	F	316	181	165	75	17	3.93
	%	41.9%	24.0%	21.9%	9.9%	2.3%	
11	F	313	257	152	28	4	4.12
	%	41.5%	34.1%	20.2%	3.7%	0.5%	
12	F	377	241	120	14	2	4.3
	%	50.0%	32.0%	15.9%	1.9%	0.3%	
Total Mean Score					4.16		

These findings correspond to the relatively low total mean score of the complete sample (4.16) for this part of the questionnaire. A higher score was expected indicating extensive use of strategic reading in the EFL reading process. They were also congruent with the high mean scores ranged from 4.52 to 4.29, which is notably higher than the total mean score of the complete sample (4.16), obtained for items 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 12, which dealt with less demanding strategies based mainly on oral traditional practices and required less effort in planning and instruction.

#### **4.4 Research Question Two**

*What is the incidence of use of explicit strategy instruction of reading comprehension strategies?*

Section B of part 2 of the questionnaire was designed to investigate explicit strategy instruction of reading comprehension strategies that EFL teachers utilized in their reading classes. It comprised six items measuring the frequency of including each practice in the reading class. Data obtained from this part were tabulated and the frequency, percentage and mean scores were determined for each item as well as for the overall number of items for this part.

For items #1, 2, 3 and 4, the majority of the respondents' answers (N=754) centered on always (5) and frequently (4) with 77.6%, 78.5%, 82.8% and 81.4%, respectively. Items #5 and 6 were different since only 63.7% and 57.6% of the responses centered on always and frequently, respectively which indicated that participants were not confident enough about their practice of these two strategies dealing with independent practice of the strategy (item #5) and using a combination of multiple strategies (item #6).

As for the case of items #5 and #6, an analysis was determined due to the significant differences compared to the other items in the same part. For item #5, which dealt with independent practice of the reading strategy in classroom, teachers' answers conveyed a doubtful knowledge of this strategy. Only 26.3% of teachers chose 'always' as their answer to the question, while the answers of the remaining 73.7% distributed on frequently (37.4%), sometimes (32.2%), rarely (3.8%) and never (.3%).

Item #6, which dealt with the combination of multiple reading strategies in the classroom, showed inconsistent responses. A number of 23.9% of responses centered on always, while the remaining 76.2% distributed on frequently (33.7%), sometimes (32.8%), rarely (8.4%) and never (1.3%).

The data analysis of this part of the instrument with a mean score of 4.06, suggested that participants in this study had knowledge about explicit teaching of reading strategies, though 2 out of 6 items showed inconsistency and limited practice. This might imply that teachers had difficulty in practicing certain strategies, which demand more time and differentiated instruction with students.

For an insightful view of the findings for this part of the questionnaire, Table 4.7 below provides a summary of the results including frequency, percentage and mean score for each item in this part.

Table 4.7

*Descriptive Statistics for Explicit Reading Comprehension Strategies Instruction*

#	Items		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean
1	Explicit instruction of the strategy in action	F	303	282	148	19	2	4.15
		%	40.2%	37.4%	19.6%	2.5%	0.3%	
2	Modeling of the strategy in action	F	325	267	148	10	4	4.19
		%	43.1%	35.4%	19.6%	1.3%	0.5%	
3	Collaborative use of the strategy (cooperative learning)	F	336	288	121	8	1	4.26
		%	44.6%	38.2%	16.0%	1.1%	0.1%	
4	Guided practice using the strategy	F	317	297	131	7	2	4.22
		%	42.0%	39.4%	17.4%	0.9%	0.3%	
5	Independent Practice using the strategy	F	198	282	243	29	2	3.86
		%	26.3%	37.4%	32.2%	3.8%	0.3%	
6	Combination of multiple reading strategies (orchestration)	F	180	254	247	63	10	3.7
		P	23.9%	33.7%	32.8%	8.4%	1.3%	
Total Mean Score								4.06

#### **4.5 Research Question Three**

*How does reading comprehension instruction vary according to teaching level, years of teaching experience and gender?*

**4.5.1 Grade level and reading comprehension strategy instruction.** Further cross tabulations analysis generated significant findings across grade level variable. Comparing the mean score of each item across the three teaching levels to the general findings of the same part presented in table 4.6, statistical analysis indicated a positive relation between both results with slight differences in mean scores for some items. Except for items #1, 6, 9, 11 and 12, elementary level scored higher than the complete sample mean score for each item. Almost similarly, preparatory level obtained mean scores higher than the complete sample mean score for items #1, 2, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12. For this part of the instrument, elementary and preparatory levels obtained mean scores of 4.18 and 4.19 respectively, which were higher than the total mean score of the complete sample (4.16). On the other hand, secondary level scored the lowest (4.09) among the three teaching levels.

The analysis for item #5, which had the lowest (3.56) score among the other items for the complete sample of this part of the instrument (table 4.6), was conducted. For this item, which dealt with think aloud strategy, secondary level teachers scored the lowest (3.43) across the three teaching levels while their elementary level counterparts scored the highest (3.69). Concurring with the results in table 6, only ~53% of elementary level teachers and 46% of secondary teachers chose ‘always’ and ‘frequently’ as their use frequency of this strategy. Table 4.8 below presents the total mean scores for reading Comprehension strategies across grade level.

Table 4.8

*Total Mean Scores for Reading Comprehension Strategies across Grade-Level*

#	Grade Level		
	Elementary	preparatory	Secondary
1	4.41	4.61	4.53
2	4.39	4.37	4.26
3	4.64	4.43	4.35
4	4.37	4.28	4.17
5	3.69	3.51	3.43
6	3.98	3.96	4.01
7	4.04	3.94	3.73
8	4.53	4.54	4.48
9	3.86	3.99	3.87
10	4	3.95	3.82
11	3.99	4.25	4.22
12	4.27	4.42	4.23
Total	4.18	4.19	4.09

With the intention of having a more accurate view of explicit teaching of reading strategies, tabulations across grade-levels were calculated. These calculations, presented in the following paragraphs, allowed comparisons among the different variables.

Comparing the mean score of each item across the three teaching levels to the general findings of the same part illustrated in table 4.9, statistical analysis showed a positive relation between both results with slight differences in mean scores for some items. In item #2, elementary level obtained a mean score of 4.33, which is higher than the complete sample mean score of the same item (4.15) and of the preparatory and secondary levels with 4.08 for each. Almost similarly, in item #3, elementary level mean score of 4.31 is higher than the overall mean score of the same item 4.26. Furthermore, the answers provided by secondary school teachers to this part of the instrument seemed to yield the lowest overall mean score with 3.9, which is also lower than the score of the complete sample (4.06), while elementary and preparatory levels obtained 4.09 and 4.08, respectively.

Analysis was carried out for items #5 and #6 across the three teaching levels. Concurring with the general results in table #8, only ~ 28% of elementary grades teachers (N=338) responded to item #5 by choosing always, while the remaining ~72% chose frequently (~30%), sometimes (~34%), rarely (~7%) and never (~1%). Preparatory and secondary school teachers' answers centered on always with ~25% and ~22%, respectively.

As for item #6, the results revealed consistency with item #5 and the mean score of the total sample for this part of the questionnaire. Only ~25% of the elementary grades teachers, which is the largest percentage amongst the other two levels, selected always as

their answer, while the remaining of the answers (~75%) ranged from frequently to never. Answers of preparatory and secondary school teachers obtained equal percentage for always (22%), showing correspondence with the analysis of item #6 and the general results of the complete sample.

Noticeably, the responses of secondary school teachers obtained the lowest mean score for each of the six items comprised this part of the instrument as well as the total mean score. However, the findings showed consistency with the complete sample mean score and elementary and preparatory teachers' responses. Total mean scores for explicit reading strategies instruction across grade-level are reported in table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9

*Total Mean Scores for Explicit Reading Strategies Instruction across Grade-Level*

Item #	Teaching Level		
	Elementary	preparatory	Secondary
1	4.14	4.19	4.13
2	4.33	4.08	4.08
3	4.31	4.28	4.17
4	4.22	4.31	4.15
5	3.86	3.9	3.81
6	3.71	3.77	3.63
Total	4.09	4.08	3.9

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance test (MANOVA) was performed to determine the impact of grade-level on EFL reading comprehension strategies implementation and the explicit instruction of these strategies. Grade-levels were divided into three levels, elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. secondary school teachers scored the lowest in both reading strategies implementation (M= 49.1, SD=7.44) and strategies explicit instruction (M= 23.97, SD= 3.69) than elementary and preparatory teachers who almost scored similarly in both reading strategies implementation (M= 50.15, SD= 6.78; M= 50.2, SD= 5.97, respectively) and strategies explicit instruction (M= 24.56, SD= 3.67; M= 24.53, SD= 3.31, respectively).

However, a one-way MANOVA revealed no significant multivariate main effect for teaching level, Wilks'  $\lambda = .993$ ,  $F(4, 1500) = 1.234$ ,  $p < .294$ .

#### 4.5.2 Years of teaching experience and reading comprehension strategy

**instruction.** Further cross tabulations analysis generated significant findings across years of teaching experience variable. Teachers of 6-11 years of teaching experience scored the highest mean (4.21) among the others and higher than the mean score of the complete sample (4.16) for this part of the instrument. On the other hand, 0-5 years experienced teachers obtained the lowest mean score (4.10). However, the least experienced teachers (0-5) scored the highest (3.72) for item #5, dealt with think aloud strategy, compared to more experienced teachers and the total mean score of this item (3.56) for the complete sample. Table 4.10 below shows the mean scores for the use of reading comprehension strategies across years of teaching experience.

Table 4.10

*Total Mean Scores for Reading Comprehension Strategies across Years of Teaching Experience*

#	Years of teaching experience			
	0-5	6-11	12-17	18 or more
1	4.36	4.48	4.51	4.56
2	4.32	4.43	4.32	4.27
3	4.49	4.58	4.50	4.40
4	4.25	4.34	4.26	4.25
5	3.72	3.65	3.53	3.43
6	3.86	4.03	3.97	4.00
7	4.06	4.00	3.87	3.82
8	4.44	4.61	4.47	4.50
9	3.89	3.98	3.87	3.82
10	3.97	4.05	3.87	3.83
11	3.85	4.11	4.12	4.27
12	4.03	4.30	4.32	4.39
Total	4.10	4.21	4.13	4.13

Further cross tabulations generated worthwhile findings on explicit strategy instruction across years of teaching experience. Teachers of 0-5 years of teaching experience scored the highest mean (4.14) among other experienced teachers. Considering the fact that female teachers comprised almost 90% of participants (79 out of 88) for this fragment of the sample (0-5), and 85% of elementary school teachers (288 out of 338), these findings seemed congruent with the results across grade-level and gender variables, wherein elementary school teachers as well as female teachers scored the highest in the use frequency of comprehension strategy instruction. Table 4.11 below presents the total mean scores for explicit reading strategies instruction across the years of teaching experience.

Table 4.11

*Total Mean Scores for Explicit Reading Strategies Instruction across the Years of Teaching Experience*

Item #	Years of Teaching Experience			
	0-5	6-11	12-17	18 or more
1	4.18	4.09	4.15	4.20
2	4.33	4.22	4.06	4.23
3	4.30	4.28	4.27	4.21
4	4.27	4.29	4.22	4.11
5	3.90	3.89	3.80	3.84
6	3.77	3.66	3.67	3.77
Total	4.13	4.07	4.03	4.06

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance test (MANOVA) was performed to determine the impact of years of teaching experience on EFL reading comprehension strategies implementation and the explicit instruction of these strategies. Years of teaching experience were divided into four levels, 0-5, 6-11, 12-17, 18 or more years of teaching experience. Teachers with 0-5 years of teaching experience scored the lowest in reading strategies implementation ( $M= 49.2, SD=7.38$ ) whereas teachers with 0-5 years of teaching experience scored the highest in strategies explicit instruction ( $M= 24.7, SD= 3.99$ ) among teachers with more years of teaching experience. However, a one-way MANOVA revealed no significant multivariate main effect for years of teaching experience, Wilks'  $\lambda = .986, F(4, 1500) = 1.784, p < .099$ .

**4.5.3 Gender and reading comprehension strategy instruction.** Female participants obtained a mean score of 4.22 versus 4.04 for male participants. Except for item #11, female teachers scored higher means in all items compared to males as well as the total mean score for the complete sample of this part of the questionnaire. Mean scores for reading comprehension strategies across gender are outlined in table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12

*Total Mean Scores for Reading Comprehension Strategies across Gender*

#	Gender	
	Female	Male
1	4.50	4.49
2	4.42	4.22
3	4.63	4.28
4	4.38	4.12
5	3.68	3.37
6	4.05	3.87
7	4.01	3.77
8	4.60	4.38
9	3.95	3.81
10	4.03	3.76
11	4.12	4.12
12	4.31	4.27
Total	4.22	4.04

Regarding gender variable and explicit strategy instruction, female participants obtained a mean score of 4.11 versus 3.97 for male participants. Except for item #6, female teachers scored higher means in all items compared to males as well as the total mean score of this part of the questionnaire for the complete sample. Table 4.13 below presents the findings.

Table 4.13

*Total Mean Scores for Explicit Reading Strategies Instruction across Gender*

Item #	Gender	
	Female	Male
1	4.17	4.11
2	4.29	4.02
3	4.35	4.09
4	4.28	4.11
5	3.89	3.79
6	3.70	3.72
Total	4.11	3.97

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was performed to determine the impact of teachers' gender on EFL reading comprehension strategies utilization and the explicit instruction of these strategies. Teachers' gender was divided into two levels, males and females. Female teachers scored higher in both reading strategies implementation (M= 50.68, SD=6.85) and strategies explicit instruction (M= 24.68, SD= 3.65) than male teachers (M= 48.46, SD= 6.5; M= 23.8, SD= 3.44, respectively).

A one-way MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate main effect for gender, Wilks'  $\lambda = .975$ ,  $F(2, 751.000) = 9.505$ ,  $p < .001$ . Table 4.14 summarizes the test results.

Table 4.14  
*Multivariate Tests<sup>a</sup> For Gender Effect on Two Dependent Variables*

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.982	21041.030 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	751.000	.000
	Wilks' Lambda	.018	21041.030 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	751.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	56.035	21041.030 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	751.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	56.035	21041.030 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	751.000	.000
	Pillai's Trace	.025	9.505 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	751.000	.000
Gender	Wilks' Lambda	.975	9.505 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	751.000	.000
	Hotelling's Trace	.025	9.505 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	751.000	.000
	Roy's Largest Root	.025	9.505 <sup>b</sup>	2.000	751.000	.000

a. Design: Intercept + Gender

b. Exact statistic

c. Computed using alpha = .05

Given the significance of the overall test, the univariate main effects were examined. Significant univariate main effects for gender were obtained for teaching strategies,  $F(1, 860.043) = 18.973, p < .0005$ ; and explicit teaching of the strategies,  $F(1, 124.214) = 9.692, p < .002$ .

Table 4.15

Univariate F Results of two dependent variables

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Teaching_Strategies	860.043	1	860.043	18.973	.000
	Explicit_Teaching	124.214	1	124.214	9.692	.002

a. R Squared = .025 (Adjusted R Squared = .023)

b. R Squared = .013 (Adjusted R Squared = .011)

c. Computed using alpha = .05

As gender variable is only of two levels, post-hoc test could not be performed in MANOVA. A t-test was conducted instead.

An independent sample t-test was conducted to examine the significant differences between males and females in relation to explicit teaching of reading strategies. The test revealed statistically significant differences between males and females in items #2, #3, and #4. There was a significant difference reported for the frequency of modeling the strategy in action (item#2),  $t(752) = 4.47, p < .001$ . Females ( $M=4.29, SD= .837$ ) reported significantly higher frequent use of item #2 than did male participants ( $M= 4.02, SD= .794$ ). In addition, there was a significant difference reported for the frequency of collaborative use of the strategy (item#3),  $t(752) = 4.52, p < .001$ . Females ( $M=4.35, SD= .756$ ) reported significantly higher frequent use of item #3 than did the male participants ( $M= 4.09, SD= .767$ ). Furthermore, a significant difference was reported for the frequency of guided practice of the strategy (item #4),  $t(752) = 2.94, p = .003$ . Females ( $M=4.28, SD= .798$ ) reported significantly higher frequent use of item #4 than did the male participants ( $M= 4.11, SD= .733$ ).

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the results and findings of the study guided by research questions. In order to provide answers for the three research questions, descriptive statistical analysis of data, collected from 754 EFL teachers, was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-Version 24). In addition, Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical test was conducted for the sake of investigating significant differences across the variables. Data analysis revealed that participant teachers reported a general moderate and high frequency of using these strategies (lowest mean 3.56 and highest mean 4.52). In addition, the major findings on explicit instructional practices

of comprehension strategies, which was the focus of the second research question, showed variation in the frequency of use of the instruction steps (lowest mean 3.7 and highest mean 4.15). The major findings on Reading comprehension strategy instruction across the three variables (grade level, teaching experience, gender), addressed by the third research question, demonstrated variations in the frequency of use of comprehension strategies and explicit strategy instruction. In respect to grade level, secondary school teachers reported the lowest use frequency of both reading comprehension strategies implementation and explicit strategy instruction across the three grade levels. In reference to years of teaching experience, the lowest overall use of reading comprehension strategies was reported by 0-5 years of teaching experience teachers. In regard to gender, female participants reported more frequent use of reading comprehension strategies than male participants. Statistically, female teachers reported significantly higher frequent use of three explicit strategy instructional practices: modeling, collaborative learning and guided practice. The next chapter provides a discussion of the empirical findings and data analysis presented in this chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter provides discussion of the empirical findings and data analysis presented in chapter four. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, research process and results are summarized. On this basis, research findings are discussed in relation to research questions and reflected to related research studies in the second section. Section three concludes the chapter with recommendations and further perspectives of research.

### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' implementation of reading comprehension strategies in Qatar government schools. The following research questions were formulated and used to guide the study:

1. What is the incidence of use of reading comprehension strategies by EFL teachers in Qatar government schools?
2. What is the incidence of use of explicit strategy instruction of reading comprehension strategies?"
3. How does reading comprehension instruction vary according to teaching level, years of teaching experience and gender?

In this study, data collection included a questionnaire based survey investigation of 754 teachers of EFL in Qatar government schools in the three grade levels, elementary, preparatory and secondary school. The online survey instrument developed by Hernandez-Laboy (2009) utilized a five point Likert scale to assess the reading comprehension strategies teachers utilize to enhance comprehension in students and the explicit teaching

practices of these strategies. Online surveys were sent to teachers via email by the Ministry of Education to collect the required data. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 24.00 statistics software calculating frequencies, percentages, mean scores and cross tabulations of respondents' answers. In addition, the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical test was used to find significant differences between variables; in two or more vectors of means.

The purpose of the study was to gain insight into the reading comprehension strategy instruction in the EFL reading classes in Qatar government schools. Furthermore, the variations among participants according to teaching level, years of teaching experience and gender is highlighted. Therefore, an overview illustrating the major results are provided in tables 5.1 and 5.2, followed by a summary of initial findings aimed to provide initial answers to the research questions.

The first research question addressed the use of reading comprehension strategies by EFL teachers and several major finding emerged. Data analysis revealed that participant teachers reported a general moderate and high frequency of using these strategies (lowest mean 3.56 and highest mean 4.52). There were seven strategies used the most by the teachers (mean score  $\geq 4$ ). Conversely, five strategies reported the comparatively lower use frequency (mean score  $< 4$ ). Table 5.1 below presents the strategies in descending order of frequency of instruction.

Table 5.1

*Descending Order of Comprehension Strategies Frequency of Use*

#	Comprehension Strategies	Mean
8	Identify the important ideas in the text	4.52
1	Identify their purpose of reading	4.5
3	Make predictions before and during reading	4.5
2	Preview text before reading	4.34
12	Monitor their comprehension during reading	4.3
4	Activate relevant background knowledge for reading	4.29
11	Handle unfamiliar words using context clues	4.12
6	Use text structure to support comprehension	3.99
10	Generate questions for the text	3.93
7	Create visual representation to aid comprehension and recall (visualizing)	3.92
9	Summarize what they read	3.9
5	Think aloud while reading	3.56
	Total Mean Score	4.16

The major findings on explicit instructional practices of comprehension strategies, which was the focus of the second research question, showed variation in the frequency of use of the instruction steps. Explicit strategy instruction steps are shown in table 5.2 in descending order.

Table 5.2

*Descending Order of Explicit Strategy Instruction Frequency of Use*

#	Explicit Instruction practices	Mean
3	Collaborative use of the strategy (cooperative learning)	4.26
4	Guided practice using the strategy	4.22
2	Modeling of the strategy in action	4.19
1	Explicit instruction of the strategy in action	4.15
5	Independent Practice using the strategy	3.86
6	Combination of multiple reading strategies (orchestration)	3.7
Total Mean Score		4.06

The major findings on Reading comprehension strategy instruction across the three variables (grade level, teaching experience, gender), addressed by the third research question, demonstrated variations in the frequency of use of comprehension strategies and explicit strategy instruction.

In respect to grade level, secondary school teachers reported the lowest use frequency of both reading comprehension strategies implementation and explicit strategy instruction across the three grade levels. Elementary school teachers reported the ‘think aloud’ strategy was implemented most frequently while secondary school teachers reported the lowest use. In reference to years of teaching experience, the lowest overall use of reading comprehension strategies was reported by 0-5 years of teaching experience teachers. However, teachers with the least years of teaching experience (0-5) indicated the

highest use frequency of the ‘think aloud’ strategy, which scored the lowest amongst the other strategies for all participants. Teachers of 0-5 years of teaching experience showed the highest use of explicit comprehension strategy instructional practices. In regard to gender, female participants reported more frequent use of reading comprehension strategies than male participants. Female more than male teachers indicated more frequent use of explicit instructional practices for strategies. Statistically, female teachers reported significantly higher frequent use of three explicit strategy instructional practices: modeling, collaborative learning and guided practice.

## **5.2 Discussion of the Results**

In this section, a discussion of the main findings is presented. Discussion is guided by the research questions and related to existing literature on reading comprehension strategy instruction.

**5.2.1 Use of reading comprehension strategies by EFL teachers in Qatar government schools.** In response to the research question 1, results of this study asserted frequent implementation of reading comprehension strategy instruction in the reading classes in order to enhance comprehension in students. This result reported by language researchers stressed the crucial role of teaching comprehension strategies in building strategic readers. Pressley (2000) contended that explicit teaching of comprehension strategies should be implemented in order to build strategic readers. Similarly, Paris, Cross, & Lipson (1984) highlighted the importance of being a strategic reader in enhancing reading comprehension. Furthermore, Koda (2005) determined that strategic reading do not only improve comprehension in students but also develop their critical thinking skills.

Teachers in this study indicated positive attitudes towards comprehension strategy instruction.

The results summarized the top seven reading comprehension strategies that were taught the most by the teachers (mean score  $\geq 4$ ). These strategies in descending order of frequency of instruction are: identify main ideas (4.52), set purpose for reading (4.5), predictions (4.5), preview text (4.34), monitor comprehension (4.3), prior knowledge activation (4.29), and handle unfamiliar words (4.12).

Teachers reported high frequent use of the strategy of identifying the purpose for reading a text in their classes. These results are congruent with Reyna-Barron's study (2016) that suggested teachers had strong beliefs and attitudes towards teaching reading comprehension strategies to students – teachers implemented the strategy of identifying a goal or a purpose for reading and explained to students how to apply it through direct instruction and modeling (Reyna-Barron, 2016). In addition, this finding implies teachers have strong attitudes towards routinely implementing the strategy of setting a purpose for reading in the reading classes. Teaching students the concept of setting a clear goal for reading a text is of fundamental importance in the process of building strategic readers (Conner & Farr, 2009; Pressley & Hilden, 2002; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001).

This result also indicates teachers demonstrate a belief that good readers should be able to set a goal for reading. The finding of the current study was consistent with research suggesting that utilizing the strategy of setting a goal for reading is beneficial in developing students' comprehension. According to Neufeld's (2005) overview of expert readers' characteristics, expert readers are able to set a purpose for reading. In order to become strong and devoted comprehenders of text, students should have compelling purpose in

mind when reading a text (Duke & Pearson, 2008). Reading with no purpose in mind leads to lack of necessary inputs needed to deal with a text and understand the information presented (Conner & Farr, 2009). On the other hand, the current study was incongruent with findings from Hernandez-Laboy (2009) and Kuzborska (2010). Hernandez (2009) conducted a study investigating the reading strategies ESL teachers utilize to enhance comprehension in students. The majority of the teachers did not teach students how to establish a clear goal for reading. Almost similarly, Kuzborska (2011) found that setting a goal for reading was rarely practiced by teachers in the observed classes. In relation to the current study, this could highlight the importance of observing instructional practices of EFL teachers in the reading classes in order to explore how teachers implement the strategy and whether their reported belief is consistent with their practices. As Cummins, Cheek, & Lindsey (2004) contend, in order to create an effective learning environment, it is vital to determine the congruence between what teachers believe about reading comprehension instruction and the actual practices in the classroom.

In this study, the majority of teachers indicated their frequent use of teaching students the strategy of identifying the main ideas in a text. It seems that the majority of the teachers upheld the importance of this strategy in comprehending a text. This finding confirms Grabe's (2009) claim that teaching and planning reading activities emphasizing the main-idea comprehension should be the teachers' prioritized instructional practice. Consequently, this finding assures the importance of creating effective main-idea comprehension activities concentrating on post reading questions that should help teachers assess their students' abilities to grasp the important ideas in a text and differentiate them from details. In order to achieve the goal of this strategy, teachers should facilitate further

class discussions including negotiation and assessment of peers' answers, asking for evidence-based answers supported by the text, sharing ideas and evaluating responses (Anderson, 2009; Grabe, 2009). In this respect, it is essential to underscore teachers' abilities to plan such activities and implement these in the reading class. Previous research outlined teachers' low abilities and attitudes towards teaching main idea comprehension activities. Examining a similar EFL context, Saudi Arabia, significant implications should be highlighted. Altheweni (2016), aligned with the finding of the present study, reported that Saudi EFL teachers' demonstrate a strong tendency toward utilizing the main-idea strategy. However, Alsamadani (2012) concluded Saudi EFL teachers expressed doubt about implementing comprehension activities fostering the main-idea comprehension, such as writing summaries to reflect on key ideas in a text, discussing and evaluating students' answers, providing feedback on what a student has read or analyzing the given information. Results from the present study and previous research accentuate the extreme need for guided professional development that support teachers' performance with regard to designing and planning main idea comprehension activities.

In this study, teachers displayed irregularity in implementing the strategies of prior knowledge activation and text previewing, only 48.8% and 55.3% of teachers selected 'always' using these strategies, respectively. This finding suggests teachers' lack of awareness of the crucial role these two strategies play in comprehension. Activating students' knowledge about a topic and previewing a text before reading serve as the basis of reading comprehension especially for struggling readers (Mathes, Pollard-Durodola, Cárdenas-Hagan, Linan-Thompson, & Vaughn, 2007). According to Darling-Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2007), activating students' prior knowledge through well designed

activities is an overarching characteristic of an effective teacher of reading. However, unlike what the present study reveals, previous studies have reported teachers' strong attitudes towards activating student's prior knowledge (Alsamadani, 2012) and teachers spending the largest proportion of instruction time on activating prior knowledge of students and/or previewing text (Reyna-Barron, 2016). It is worth noting here that teachers' attitudes and beliefs do not necessarily reflect the actual classroom practices (Fang, 1996). Reyna-Barron (2016) who analyzed the implementation of reading comprehension instructional activities in 7<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms found that all 12 participants observed spent 65 percent of comprehension activities on activating students' prior knowledge and/or previewing text. Teachers focused mainly on pre-reading activities while neglecting the importance of the other during and post reading activities. Results from previous research and the current study suggest teachers may lack an awareness of the essential principles of comprehension strategy instruction. This indicates that teachers should be able to plan effectively for the reading comprehension instruction period in order to achieve the maximum benefit of strategy instruction.

Results of the current study also summarized a list of the top five reading comprehension strategies that were employed the least by the participant teachers (mean score <4). These strategies in descending order of frequency of instruction are: text structure (3.99), questioning (3.93), visualizing (3.92), summarizing (3.9), and think aloud (3.56). Although these strategies were reported the least frequency, the teachers reported usage of the items were moderate.

Teachers asserted moderate use of text structure to support comprehension strategy. This finding contradicts research findings regarding the importance of teaching students

text structure for comprehension. According to Pearson (2009) and Grabe (2009), promoting students' awareness of discourse signaling markers and organization through explicit instruction is fundamental for comprehending a text successfully, locating the main ideas and even organizing information within a certain discourse structure to fit the purpose of their piece of writing in a writing exercise (Grabe, 2009; Pearson, 2009). It can be implied that teachers in the current study lack the basic knowledge about teaching text structure and how essential it is for comprehension. This result was congruent with recent studies (Hernandez-Laboy, 2009; Kuzborska, 2010; Reyna-Barron, 2016) investigating reading comprehension strategy instruction. Hernandez-Laboy (2009) found that teachers participated in her study did not use text structure strategy to support comprehension with the regularity anticipated. In addition, Kuzborska (2010) concluded teachers' being dubious about the need of their students to learn text structure. Based on classroom observations, Kuzborska (2010) and Reyna-Barron (2016) found teaching text structure to support comprehension was not practiced by teachers. Aligned with previous research findings, the present study result held teachers responsible for the effective implementation of text structure strategy in the EFL reading classes. In order to achieve the goal of text structure strategy, teachers ought to design activities that engage students in pre, during and post reading active learning exercises to develop students' awareness of text structure (Duke & Pearson, 2008; Grabe, 2009; W. P. Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

The think-aloud strategy scored the lowest frequency of use among all strategies. It could be argued teachers did not take into consideration the use of 'think aloud' protocol as a comprehension strategy. This result contradicts Oster's (2001) conclusion that "thinking aloud leads students to improved discussions, better understandings and more

enjoyment of literature” (p. 64). The finding of the present study could imply teachers’ lack of knowledge and proficiency necessary for implementing the think-aloud strategy demonstrated to be crucial in students’ comprehension. Besides, students seemed to miss the research supported benefits of using think aloud strategy in the reading classes. Empirical research studies assert that think aloud strategies are effective at improving student comprehension ( Baumann, Jones, & Seifert-Kessell, 1993; Bereiter & Bird, 1985). Often cited is a research study conducted by Bereiter and Bird (1985) that concluded students who were taught to think aloud while reading comprehended better than those who were not taught the same, based on the results of a comprehension test as the instrument of assessment. Moreover, think aloud strategy was found to be beneficial for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students (Baumann et al., 1993). The researchers asked the children to read aloud a story and stopped them intermittently to ask about what they were doing or thinking about while reading a certain part of the story. Students’ responses showed great awareness of monitoring comprehension and critical thinking (Baumann et al., 1993). Scored the lowest among the other strategies selected by teachers in the present study, the limited use of the read aloud strategy concedes the ineffective use of essential group of strategies: prediction, monitoring, questioning, summarizing and visualizing. According to Keene (2009), think aloud strategy is one of the fundamental ways teachers deploy to share these strategies with their students. This group of strategies are being shared in all grade levels and meant to become skills used by all students effortlessly and automatically (Pearson, 2009). These conclusions are in agreement with the results from the present study that reported low use frequency of summarizing, questioning and visualizing strategies. This result is also aligned to that of Hernandez-Laboy (2009) asserting the inconsideration of the think aloud

strategy as a comprehension instructional practice by the majority of teachers participated in her study.

### **5.2.2 Use of explicit strategy instruction of reading comprehension strategies.**

In response to research question 2, results of this study reported that participant teachers asserted their frequent use of direct explicit instructional practices of reading comprehension strategies. However, it was concluded that teachers did not teach students how to independently practice and implement comprehension strategies in the reading process with the regularity anticipated. This result is inconsistent with the crucial role direct explicit instruction of strategies plays in the comprehension process. Metacognition, the awareness of one's cognitive processes, is found to develop through the use of explicit instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2008; Oster, 2001; Pressley & Hilden, 2002). Teachers in the present study seem to ignore the gradual release of responsibility to students that ultimately leads to independent practice. Explicit comprehension strategy instruction must include direct explanation to students on the goal and application of the strategy, direct practice using the strategy, collaborative use of the strategy, guided practice with gradual release of responsibility and then independent use of the strategy by students (Duke & Pearson, 2008; McLaughlin, 2012). Teachers may be constrained by the limited instruction time and the large amount of curriculum they need to cover. Other factors may contribute to this result such as lack of professional knowledge and efficiency.

### **5.2.3 Influence of teaching level, years of teaching experience and gender on teachers' usage of reading comprehension instruction**

*5.2.3.1 Grade-level and comprehension strategies.* With respect to grade-level, secondary school teachers in the present study reported the lowest use of reading comprehension strategies and explicit strategy instruction across the three grade levels. This finding indicates that secondary school teachers do not understand or consider the instructional value in modeling and coaching students through the use of reading comprehension strategies. They might also lack the necessary knowledge required to implement reading comprehension strategy instruction in the reading process with the regularity and effectiveness anticipated. This result is congruent with Ness's (2006) findings that reported secondary school teachers having the ability to identify struggling readers but unable to support these students to enhance their reading skills. Results from both studies are supported by Alexander and Jetton's (2000) claim the more academic demands on secondary school students rise, the less explicit reading instruction occurs (Alexander & Jetton, 2000). The finding from the current study is also in agreement with Golkowska (2013), reported that Qatari university students studying abroad did not receive effective reading comprehension strategy instruction during secondary education and they became struggling readers at the university level (Golkowska, 2013). In addition, specific strategies reported higher use frequency by a particular grade level teacher than another. For example, the 'think aloud' strategy, that scored the lowest among all strategies, was reported to be implemented the most by elementary school teachers while secondary school teachers reported the lowest use. It was concluded that the use of strategies in this study varied by grade level. This result is consistent with Kadah (2005) that concluded specific

strategies used by each grade level teachers. A possible explanation for this result is teachers select the strategies that work the best for their students based on their classroom experiences and intentionally use them more frequently than other strategies.

*5.2.3.2 Years of teaching experience and comprehension strategies.* With respect to the years of teaching experience, the lowest overall use of reading comprehension strategies in this study was reported by 0-5 years of teaching experience teachers. This finding contradicts findings from Reyna-Barron's (2016) study that reported beginner teachers (0-3) observed teaching comprehension more than five times the amount of time spent by seasoned (15 or more) teachers (Reyna-Barron, 2016). However, beginner (0-5) teachers in this study demonstrated the highest use frequency of specific reading comprehension strategies and of overall explicit comprehension strategy instructional practices. Results from the present study agree with Berliner's (1988) perspective that the number of years of teaching experience do not necessarily guarantee that teachers are located in one of the five stages of skill development he stated, based on years of teaching experience: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert. Each stage has its qualities and skills. A teacher at one stage might administer skills and qualities of another stage (Berliner, 1988). This can clarify the finding that novice teachers in the current study scored higher than experienced teachers in specific strategies. Though they are theoretically placed in the 'novice' stage, they administered some skills or qualities of 'experienced' teachers stage.

*5.2.3.3 Gender and comprehension strategies.* In the respect of gender, female teachers in this study reported higher use frequency of reading comprehension strategies and explicit strategy instructional practices than male participants. Cross tabulation by gender shows that female teachers taught more reading comprehension strategies than male teachers. In addition, in the present study, statistically significant difference, revealed by multi variate analysis of variance (MANOVA) statistical test and t-test, was found between female and male participants in using three comprehension strategy instructional practices: modeling, collaborative learning and guided practice. These findings suggest that comprehension strategy instruction varied by gender and that female teachers use more strategies than males. This result corresponds to previous studies conducted in various FL contexts around the world, that showed that language strategy use varies according to gender ( Oxford, 1990; Oxford & Leaver, 1996). Results from the current study are in agreement with the findings of previous research conducted by Kadah (2005) and Oxford & Nyikos (1989). In both studies, female participants reported more frequent use of strategies than male participants. However, the findings from the present study contradict other studies conducted in Qatar and other EFL contexts. In the context of the present study, Qatar, Al-Khwaiter (2001) found statistical significant difference between male and female teachers' attitudes towards teaching of English. It was concluded that male teachers had more positive attitudes than female teachers (Al-Khwaiter, 2001). In addition, according to Dadour & Robbins (1996), the use of strategies by male and female prospective teachers in Egypt was approximately equivalent. Moreover, Kaylani (1996) concluded that there was no difference by gender in the use of language strategies amongst EFL learners in Jordan.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Results of this study have a few implications for teachers, supervisors, professional development providers, school principals and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. In addition, educational researchers can use this study as a starting point for further research examining the reading comprehension strategy instruction. Based on the data analysis of the present investigation, findings and discussion, the following recommendations are offered:

1. EFL teachers, supervisors, and school administrators should be aware of the importance of comprehension strategy instruction in developing students' achievement in comprehension. Consequently, in-service teachers should be provided by meaningful professional development, mainly by the Ministry of Education, including mentoring and coaching in order to promote positive change in EFL classrooms.
2. EFL teachers should critically examine and evaluate their reading classroom practices and measure the impact of their instruction on students' performance. These reflection skills can be developed through professional development.
3. Teachers are encouraged to regularly practice explicit direct instruction of strategies in the reading classes. Teachers are expected to demonstrate and model the strategies for students in order to actively comprehend a text. Students should be involved in guided practice activities followed by independent practice of the strategy so that gradual release of responsibility is implemented effectively and students become competent users of the strategy.

4. Efficient planning for the reading comprehension classes should be prioritized by teachers and teachers' supervisors. More instructional time should be dedicated to strategy instruction in all grade levels in order to allow sufficient period for modeling, guided practice, independent practice and evaluation of the strategy used.
5. The Ministry of Education, supervisors and teachers should consider that performing strategy instruction solely cannot improve student comprehension, but collaborative work and commitment of all the educational process stakeholders should contribute to the development of the reading comprehension in EFL students. Ongoing assessment of both classroom practices and students' outcomes is highly recommended for the development process of reading strategy instruction.
6. It is recommended that The Ministry of Education launch an initiative to develop English curriculum based on research findings that aim at enhancing EFL students' outcomes. English textbooks are recommended to support effective research-based comprehension instructional practices instead of teachers continue teaching the same way they were taught. Curriculum designers and developers in the Ministry of Education should dedicate more effort to enrich textbooks and develop teacher's manuals to assist teachers prioritizing strategies that promote students reading comprehension.
7. The Ministry of Education and school principals are strongly encouraged to adopt reading strategies in all disciplines since strategic reading is generalizable

to different content-areas. Hence, in-service training on reading strategies should be provided to all subject teachers.

8. Pre-service education programs are urged to comprise courses on comprehension strategy instruction as well as practical teaching practices of these strategies. This would provide student-teachers with great opportunities to reflect on their practice and administer deep understanding of the strategy instruction process.

Research has suggested several ways to support the process of implementing reading comprehension strategy instruction. One example is assigning the reading materials according to the reading interests of students so that they become more familiar with the text they read which requires less effort to comprehend using strategies. Another suggestion is exploring the motivational factors for both students and teachers in the learning environment which are meant to lead to more effective teaching and learning practices. Teachers should desire to become influential teachers who are destined to make change in their students' life, no matter how much years of teaching experience they gained. Constructive beliefs, knowledge inquiry, and effective instructional practices are needed to change teaching.

However, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, empirically this study merely relied on quantitative data because of time constraints. A mixed research design combining qualitative and quantitative data could have provided stronger evidence to this study. Interviewing and observing teachers in classroom settings could have provided deeper understanding of the practices. In addition, surveying teachers

presents self-reported data but this may not necessarily provide classroom realities. Therefore, future studies that conduct on-site observations to determine the relationship between teachers' beliefs and classrooms should be conducted. Finally, students' practices in reading classes should be investigated in order to determine the quality and effectiveness of reading comprehension instruction they receive in EFL classrooms. Such investigations could help identify strategies and instructional practices that proved to be effective and also to develop the teaching and learning process of reading comprehension.

In conclusion, the Ministry of Education, principals, supervisors and teachers are highly suggested to consider the importance of comprehension as the ultimate goal of reading. Reading in a foreign language is a challenge for both students and teachers. Consequently, comprehension has become problematic as the language barrier hinders understanding of a text. Considerable efforts should be exerted in order to facilitate the process of comprehending a text in a foreign language.

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## Appendix A

### Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction

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The purpose of this survey is to explore ESL teachers' experience in utilizing reading strategies with ESL learners during the reading comprehension process. Answering this questionnaire can be of great help for understanding the utilization of strategic reading when dealing with the reading comprehension process in ESL classes. Furthermore it can provide valuable information regarding classroom implications for the reading process. The completion of the survey takes approximately 20 minutes. All responses are anonymous and confidential. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

#### I. Demographic Information

Please, respond to the following questions by marking with an **X** next to the answer selected:

**1. What is your gender?**

- (a) Female  
 (b) Male

**2. What is your latest academic preparation?**

- (a) Bachelor's Degree  
 (b) Bachelor's Degree plus credits towards Master's Degree  
 (c) Master's Degree  
 (d) Master's Degree plus credits towards Doctoral Degree  
 (e) Doctoral Degree

**3. What level do you teach?**

- (a) Elementary  
 (b) Preparatory  
 (c) Secondary

**4. Are you certified at that level?**

- (a) Yes  
 (b) No

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**5. How many years of experience do you have as an English teacher?**

- (a) 0-5  
 (b) 6-11  
 (c) 12-17  
 (d) 18 or more

**6. Did you take any courses on the teaching of reading comprehension during your Bachelor's Degree studies?**

- (a) Yes  
 (b) No

## II. Instructional Strategies in the Classroom

Please, respond to the following questions by marking with an **X** under the answer selected:

### A. How frequently are students taught the following reading comprehension strategies in your class?

Strategy	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1) Identify their purpose for reading	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2) Preview text before reading	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3) Make predictions before and during reading	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4) Activate relevant background knowledge for reading	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5) Think aloud while reading	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6) Use text structure to support comprehension	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7) Create visual representation to aid comprehension and recall (visualizing)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8) Identify the important ideas in a text	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9) Summarize what they read	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10) Generate questions for text	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11) Handle unfamiliar words using context clues	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12) Monitor their comprehension during reading	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**B. How often do you include the following teaching practices in your reading classes?**

<b>Practice</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
1) Explicit instruction of the strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2) Modeling of the strategy in action	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3) Collaborative use of the strategy (cooperative learning)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4) Guided practice using the strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5) Independent practice using the strategy	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6) Combination of multiple reading strategies (orchestration)	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## Appendix B

### Authorization to Use Reading Instrument

December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

**To: Wafaa Hassan Morsy Morsy**  
**Institution: College of Education-Quatar University**  
**Program: Master in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

Dear graduate student:

Thanks for your interest in my Research Study and instrument utilized. I hereby authorize you to use the instrument “**Reading Comprehension Strategy Instruction**” as requested by you. I designed this instrument for my dissertation research and I hope it serves you the purpose traced for your research study on the reading strategies teachers use to teach EFL students in Qatar. It’s always a pleasure to collaborate with the educational field and moreover, with the English teaching and learning. If any other information or recommendation needed, please do not hesitate to email me to [draohermandez@gmail.com](mailto:draohermandez@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Dr. Olga I. Hernandez-Laboy  
[draohermandez@gmail.com](mailto:draohermandez@gmail.com)

## Appendix C



### Qatar University Institutional Review Board QU-IRB

December 29, 2016

Ms. Wafaa Morsy  
Graduate Student Project  
College of Education  
Qatar University  
Tel.: 66686745  
Email: [wm1513258@qu.edu.qa](mailto:wm1513258@qu.edu.qa)

Dear Ms. Wafaa Morsy,

**Sub.: Research Ethics Review Exemption / Graduate Student Project**  
**Ref.: Project titled, "Reading Strategies EFL Teachers utilize to Enhance Comprehension in Students: Implications for Classroom Practices"**

We would like to inform you that your application along with the supporting documents provided for the above proposal, is reviewed and having met all the requirements, has been exempted from the full ethics review.

Please note that any changes/modification or additions to the original submitted protocol should be reported to the committee to seek approval prior to continuation.

Your Research Ethics Approval No. is: **QU-IRB 714-E/16**

Kindly refer to this number in all your future correspondence pertaining to this project.

Best wishes,

Dr. Khalid Al-Ali  
Chairperson, QU-IRB

