Using the SORS Instrument to Examine Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies

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Introduction

SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) is a questionnaire measuring metacognitive awareness of reading strategies among ESL/EFL learners.

Why SORS?
✓ Strong link between metacognitive awareness and reading ability
✓ No previous tool for L2 reading strategies
✓ Includes L2-specific strategies (translation, bilingual thinking)
✓ Helps teachers plan targeted instruction

Development: Adapted from MARSI (2002) by Mokhtari & Sheorey specifically for non-native English learners.

Instrument Structure

30 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Never to 5=Always)

Reader Classification:
- High users: ≥3.5
- Moderate users: 2.5-3.4
- Low users: ≤2.4

Key Modifications from MARSI:
- Simplified wording for L2 readers
- Added: translation & bilingual thinking strategies
- Removed: summarizing & discussing (not directly metacognitive)

Three Strategy Categories

1. Global Strategies (13 items)
Intentional, planned techniques for monitoring reading:
- Setting purposes
- Previewing text
- Using text features
- Critical evaluation
- Using context clues

2. Problem-Solving (8 items)
Actions when difficulties arise:
- Adjusting reading speed
- Rereading
- Guessing word meanings
- Refocusing attention
- Visualizing content

3. Support Strategies (9 items)
External aids for comprehension:
- Using dictionaries
- Taking notes
- Underlining/highlighting
- Translating
- Paraphrasing

Key Research Findings

- **Malaysia (Rashid et al.):** 80% moderate users; problem-solving most frequent; need for explicit strategy instruction
- **China (Xianming):** High awareness of basic strategies but low awareness of text organization and evaluation strategies
- **Turkey (Yuksel & Yuksel):** Overall mean 3.70; problem-solving strategies most used (3.91)
- **USA vs. Costa Rica (Anderson):** No significant differences between L2/FL learners; both groups favour problem-solving strategies

Conclusions & Implications

SORS is a valuable diagnostic tool that helps teachers identify student strengths and weaknesses in metacognitive reading strategies.

Key Takeaways:
- Metacognitive awareness can be cultivated through explicit instruction
- Teachers play a crucial role in strategy development
- Strategy use varies by proficiency level and instructional context
- Problem-solving strategies most frequently used across contexts
- Raising awareness significantly impacts academic success

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