



## Motivational Drivers and Learning Strategies in Reading: A Study of Iraqi EFL University Students

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore the motivation kind that Iraqi university learners rely on during reading comprehension lectures, and the motivational learning strategies they employ to understand the given English texts while reading them. Adopting a descriptive research design, data were collected through the MSL survey from a sample of 170 second-year students at the Department of English, University of Mosul, Iraq. The results revealed that the learners were primarily driven by external motives, such as academic recognition and obtaining grades more than by internal ones like self-enjoyment and reading interest. Furthermore, the findings indicated that learners show a low confidence in their English reading skills. Regarding learning strategies, the findings showed that students use practical, hands-on techniques (like rehearsing words or connecting the text to their own life) more frequently than strategies for managing their own learning (like planning how to approach a text or checking their understanding as they read). The implications of these findings are discussed with reference to curriculum designers and teachers, highlighting the need to foster intrinsic motivation and enhance strategic reading competence among learners.

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## الدوافع التحفيزية واستراتيجيات التعلم في القراءة: دراسة لطلاب الجامعات العراقية الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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### الخلاصة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف نوع الدافعية التي يعتمد عليها طلاب الجامعات العراقية خلال محاضرات مادة القراءة، واستراتيجيات التعلم التحفيزية التي يستخدمونها لفهم النصوص الإنكليزية أثناء قراءتها. باستخدام تصميم بحث وصفي، جُمعت البيانات من خلال استبيان MSL لعينة من 170 طالبًا في السنة الثانية بقسم اللغة الإنكليزية بجامعة الموصل، العراق. كشفت النتائج أن الطلاب كانوا مدفوعين في تعلم القراءة بشكل رئيسي بدوافع خارجية، مثل التقدير الأكاديمي والحصول على الدرجات، أكثر من دوافع داخلية كالإستمتاع والشغف بالقراءة نفسها. علاوة على ذلك، أشارت النتائج إلى أن الطلاب يُظهرون ثقة منخفضة في مهاراتهم في قراءة النصوص باللغة الإنكليزية. فيما يتعلق باستراتيجيات التعلم، أظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب يستخدمون أساليب عملية وتطبيقية (مثل التدرّب على الكلمات أو ربط النص بحياتهم الشخصية) بشكل أكثر تكرارًا من استراتيجيات إدارة تعلمهم مثل التخطيط لكيفية التعامل مع النص أو التحقق من فهمهم أثناء القراءة. نوقشت آثار هذه النتائج بالرجوع إلى مصممي المناهج والمعلمين، مع تسليط الضوء على الحاجة إلى تعزيز الدافعية الذاتية وتحسين كفاءة القراءة الإستراتيجية لدى الطلاب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: دوافع القراءة، استراتيجيات التعلم، متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية، فهم القراءة، طلاب الجامعات.

## 1. Introduction

English is a global language that holds a vital role in many areas, such as education, technology, business, politics, economics, and science, since it is learned by a huge number of individuals for various career purposes. Therefore, mastering the skills of English languages is a crucial milestone in any EFL or ESL educational program (1). To succeed in most academic and professional domains, learners need to develop strong reading skills. Although being a proficient reader does not automatically guarantee achievement; however, success becomes considerably more difficult to attain without these skills. Reading refers to the fluent process of recognizing, interpreting, and understanding written or printed texts (2, 3) where a reader incorporates information from a written text with his/her own background knowledge to obtain meaning using effective reading strategies to comprehend the text. Accordingly, reading involves two elements: the readers' knowledge and the set of strategies employed in relation to the text (4). Among these strategies, the motivational ones are essential in supporting academic success, and enhancing both comprehension and production, helping learners in both production and comprehension. Motivation encompasses external and internal factors that influence students' decisions, as well as the direction and intensity of their actions.

In other words, motivation - commonly categorized into extrinsic and intrinsic forms - is widely recognized as a key component in the learning process, aiming to enhance student's performance (5). Extrinsic motivation is related to incentives that encourage learners' performance as they participate in learning(6). This kind of motivation can foster engagement among students who might otherwise lack interest or drive. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation includes several elements, such as challenge, self-enjoyment, curiosity, and engagement, while extrinsic motivation refers to factors like external influences, others' respect, better grades, and acknowledgment.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized importance of reading as a crucial skill for academic and professional success, Iraqi university students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) consistently demonstrate low reading comprehension proficiency. These learners face significant challenges in reaching the advanced levels required in their senior years, raising critical questions about the underlying motivational drivers and strategic approaches that shape their engagement with English texts. While motivation is widely acknowledged as a key component in the learning process, few studies have specifically investigated the interplay between motivational types and the learning strategies employed by Iraqi EFL learners in the context of reading. Therefore, this study aims to identify the

dominant forms of motivation—intrinsic or extrinsic—and examine the specific learning strategies these students use to address their reading comprehension difficulties.

### 1.2. Aim of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Identify if there are any differences among Iraqi learners in the usage of various types of reading motivation
2. Identify the types of reading learning strategies employed by Iraqi EFL learners when reading an English text.

### 1.3. Research Questions

To achieve those aims, the following research questions guide the research:

1. Is there a mean difference among Iraqi learners in the usage of reading motivation types?
2. What are the reading learning strategies employed by the Iraqi EFL learners when reading an English text, and which of them are used most frequently?

### 1.4. Hypotheses

Based on the above research questions, it is hypothesized that:

1. There is no statistically significant mean difference among Iraqi EFL learners in their usage of different reading motivation types. (In other words, their motivation levels are consistent across all measured types).
2. Iraqi EFL learners employ a variety of reading learning strategies when reading an English text, with metacognitive strategies (such as planning and monitoring comprehension) being used most frequently, followed by cognitive and social/affective strategies.

## 2. Literature Review

Since this study investigates reading in relation to motivation and learning reading strategies, it is necessary to visit the two main theories that were relied upon in this study, that is Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Transactional Reading Theory (TRT).

### 2.1. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

In 1985, Deci and Ryan (1985) (7) proposed their Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which suggested that there are three main psychological needs that should be met by people to be considered motivated (8, 9)

**1. Autonomy:** This is the desire to feel that one is in control of one's own life. It focuses on feeling that the individual's actions are based on his/her own choice. In the class, this can be fostered by giving learners various options in the reading material or the way they choose to present their learning.

**2. Competence:** refers to the satisfaction that people obtain when they feel capable and master a skill. For an EFL language learner, this relates to the sense of accomplishment when they successfully understand a paragraph in English on the first attempt.

**1. Relatedness:** refers to the learners' main need to care for other learners and teachers and feel cared

for by them, that is to feel belonging. In learning process, this is built on via positive relations with the teachers and the community sense with classmates (10,11).

When a learning environment supports these three needs, they are more likely to develop **intrinsic motivation** (12). Motivation that arises from natural interest and self-enjoyment of the activity itself, rather than from external pressure or the desire to obtain higher grades is crucial (Hamoen (13). This inner motivation is incredibly important and powerful as it assists learners to pursue through various difficulties, deal with stress positively, and endure the long difficult learning journey of a second language as they find the learning process itself promising and rewarding (14,15). If these needs are for some reason blocked, the learners can feel ineffective, controlled, and isolated leading to a motivation lack or negative aspects, such as procrastination (16).

## 2.2. Transactional Reading Theory (TRT)

Think about reading a book like *Harry Potter*. A ten-year-old, a soldier, and a historian will all have very different experiences with the same text. Why? As Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional Reading Theory (TRT) explains, reading is not just sucking information off a page. It is an active, two-way relationship, like a dance, between a text and the reader (17). The intended meaning of a novel or story cannot solely exist in the author's phrases, nor is it available solely in the readers' mind. Instead, it *comes to life* in the transaction between them. You bring your entire self to the book—your memories, your culture, your feelings, your past experiences. The text provides the blueprint, but you use your own life to build the meaning (18).

Rosenblatt described this relationship using two ideas:

**Efferent Reading:** Reading to "take away" information. In this case, the learner is focused on what he/she will learn to read a text.

**Aesthetic Reading:** Refers to the reading experience to reach the lived-through *experience*, in which the learners can feel the characters' fear visualizing the setting. This is a description of how a learner read a poem or a novel.

Although most reading involves a blend of both concepts, TRT emphasizes the aesthetic experience power of aesthetic experience. In this view, the teacher's role is merely to dictate the correct meaning supporting learners to explore their responses and think in a critical way about their own reactions and the text itself (18a). This dynamic process helps learners recognize the importance of their background in shaping their understanding, making the reading deeper, more personal, and more transformative.

## 2.3. Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension does not merely mean reading words or phrases on a piece of paper, it is

actually a personal and active process in which readers build their personalized understanding. It is one of the core skills in learning English, and it is beautifully complex, requiring your brain to coordinate many different processes at once to achieve your goal, whether for fun or for study. People read for many different reasons, such as escaping the real world for amusement, finding information that satisfies their continuous curiosity, getting better in a language, or delving into deeper, personal, passionate topics (19). Anyway, reading experience can be seen as a profound dialogue between the reader and the author, a silent conversation that occurs through the written text. According to Kurniawan (2023), (20) reading is a mental activity or workout. It is a means of communication in which readers play an active role in constructing the intended meaning of the author and need to skillfully manage various strategies. The reading process involves deriving different meanings from printed words, which is a vital skill because it allows our learners to gauge their own understanding and success. For someone learning English, strong reading skills are incredibly beneficial, especially when tackling different school subjects. Many learners rely heavily on their textbooks to broaden their knowledge because a huge amount of the world's information is preserved in writing. However, this can be a major problem. It can be considerably difficult for EFL learners, especially when the materials are in English. To truly understand what they are going to read and learn, those learners should first navigate a lot of unfamiliar vocabularies along with their meanings (21).

## 1.4. Motivational Learning Strategies (MLSs)

As reading comprehension is the desired destination, Motivational Learning Strategies (MLSs) can be considered the personal techniques learners use to energize their journey and sustain their motivation. These are the main strategies used to keep readers engaged even when they encounter difficult texts. There are some MLSs that are specifically significant, such as connecting your background knowledge already with the reading topic, asking various questions throughout reading, making suitable guesses, inferring what will occur next, summarizing in learners' own words, and checking regularly to see if learners are still understanding (22). One of the most influential strategies is using contextual knowledge, that is preparing learners' brains before starting reading by boosting their previous knowledge to interpret the given written text in a better way (23, 24).

Researchers like Kumlu & Yürük (2023) (25) agree that consciously using these MLSs can be a game-changer and significantly help in overcoming common reading comprehension challenges. Simply put, MLSs are the conscious cognitive processes chosen to understand the material. These strategies

consist of two categories: ones that apply to the text directly (cognitive strategies) and those which are used to manage learners' learning process (metacognitive strategies).

### 1. Cognitive Motivational Learning Strategies

Cognitive strategies are adjusted to a form of academic tone, practical tools for interacting with and reconstructing the meaning of a text. They are the active techniques that are used to dig into the material. Rianto (2021) (26),

provides a great list of these common strategies, which include:

**Repetition:** Practicing words or phrases out loud or silently to lock them in.

**Grouping:** Organizing words, terms, or ideas into categories based on their meaning, like sorting vocabulary into thematic lists.

**Deduction:** Applying grammar or language rules that the learners have learned to understand a sentence.

**Imagery:** Creating a picture in the learner's mind (or even drawing one) to understand and remember new information.

**Elaboration:** Connecting what the learner is reading to their own life or to other things they know, making personal connections that make the information stick.

**Transfer:** Using knowledge from learners' native language to help them figure out English.

**Inferencing:** Being a reading detective—using clues in the text to guess the meaning of something unfamiliar or to fill in missing information.

**Summarizing:** Pausing to create a mental, spoken, or written summary of what just have been read to solidify learners' understanding (Also see: Pintrich & Garcia, 1991) (27).

Erni (2021) (28) argues that these techniques are used to engage deeply with the text via analysis, summarization, and reasoning. When learners use abilities such as inferring meaning from context or reading hidden meaning in certain lines, they activate these cognitive skills. Practicing such strategies offers excellent exercises for learners' brains as it assists them to build the necessary mental muscles needed to tackle complicated academic reading tasks.

### 2. Metacognitive Motivational Learning Strategies

If cognitive strategies are the plays in a sports game, metacognitive strategies are learners' role as the coach. These strategies are used to oversee, manage, and regulate learners' own learning process. They are conscious and intentional, involving a great deal of self-awareness and self-regulation (29).

Using metacognitive strategies is widely seen as a highly effective way to learn a language because it helps learners become organized and intentional about *how* they study. In fact, over the last twenty

years, the use of metacognitive reading strategies has become a major focus for researchers (e.g., (30, 31). Such strategies include planning how to approach a text, monitoring comprehension, and evaluating the understanding after finishing are powerful tools. They do not just help to understand the text—they help to develop critical thinking capabilities. These metacognitive strategies allow learners to oversee their cognitive processes, enhance their use of other strategies, and ultimately achieve their reading goals more effectively (See also: Liu, 2021 Pintrich & Garcia, 1991) (27, 32).

#### 1.5. Motivational Teaching Strategies (MTSs)

While this study focuses on what *learners* do to motivate themselves, it is impossible to ignore the crucial role of the teacher. Motivational Teaching Strategies (MTSs) refer to the methods teachers employ to inspire their students and create an environment that encourages active engagement in reading comprehension lessons. Gui et al. (2021) (33) put it perfectly: motivation is the "why" behind our behaviors and thoughts. It is the initial spark that makes someone decide to learn a new language, and it is the sustaining energy that keeps them going on what is often a long and difficult journey. The influence of a teacher and their methods in the classroom is undeniably crucial for nurturing that spark into a lasting flame. As Min & Chon (2021) (34) pointed out, the specific techniques instructors use to engage English learners are called motivational strategies. These are the deliberate, teacher-led efforts designed to have a positive and lasting effect on a student's drive to learn.

Of course, not every strategy works for every student. A teacher's approach might not land well if students have different expectations or if there are social and educational barriers that are hard to overcome. Gui et al. (2021) (33) highlight several MTSs that are particularly helpful for reading comprehension:

**Fostering Self-Confidence:** A teacher can significantly build up a student's belief in their own abilities, creating a classroom "can-do" spirit. It is important to remember that self-confidence is often more about what a student *believes* they can do than their actual ability.

**Establishing a Positive Classroom Environment:** When a teacher makes the classroom a comfortable and welcoming space, it directly reduces anxiety and makes learning more enjoyable.

**Understanding Student Attitudes:** A great teacher recognizes when the classroom atmosphere feels too high-pressure and provokes anxiety. They avoid practices that create shame, like publicly ranking grades, which can be deeply demotivating.

**Presenting Tasks Effectively:** How a teacher introduces a reading task is everything. They can spark enthusiasm by explaining the steps clearly, showing students exactly how to do it, and, most importantly, explaining *why* the task is valuable and

relevant to their lives. Making tasks feel engaging and interesting, rather than just another systematic exercise, makes a big difference.

**Encouraging Independence:** Empowering learners to take ownership of their learning is a profoundly effective motivational strategy. Students become more invested when they feel trusted to guide their own learning and when they see a direct link between their own effort and their success or failure

### 3. Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach undertaken to investigate the reading motivation and learning strategies of Iraqi EFL university students. To achieve the research aims of identifying dominant motivation types and the learning strategies employed, a quantitative, descriptive research design was adopted. This approach was selected to systematically describe the characteristics of the sample in relation to the variables of interest. The subsequent sections detail the implementation of this design, including the sampling procedure, the instrument used for data collection, and the methods applied for data analysis.

#### 3.1. Research Design

The current study employs a descriptive research design to detect the reading motivation types utilized by Iraqi sophomore learners at Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul, and which of the reading learning techniques are employed by the learners.

#### 3.2. Sample

The sample of the current study included 170 participants who were drawn from a population of 371 students. The participants were male and female sophomore EFL learners, aged between 20 to 22 years enrolled in the Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Mosul, during the 2024–2025 academic year. Stratified random sampling was used to choose the sample by first dividing the population into groups based on common characteristics—such as gender, income, or education level—and then selecting participants from each group. Random sampling was then conducted on each stratum to obtain the sample (35). It should be noted that all the participants were English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who attended Reading Comprehension classes twice a week, with a 50 minutes per lecture.

#### 3.3. Data Collection

The data collection tool employed in this study was an adapted survey of Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSL) that was originally developed by Pintrich & Garcia (1991) (27). The original copy contained two main sections: the motivation section (31 items) that assess students' value beliefs and objectives for a course, their confidence to succeed in that course, and their test anxiety levels. However, the second section comprised the learning strategies (50 items) that are

related to the use of cognitive and metacognitive techniques by students. Thus, the Pintrich & Garcia (1991) (27) MSL version has 81 items.

The MSL version used in this study has been altered to fit the aims and scope of the research by employing a 7- point Likert scale survey with a total of 33 of items that were set into two main scales: reading motivation and reading learning strategies. The first scale has been divided to three constructs: a. intrinsic motivation, b. academic or achievement motivation (extrinsic motivation), and c. self-efficacy, while the second scale included two constructs: a. cognitive learning strategies (rehearsal and elaboration), and b. metacognitive learning strategies (critical thinking and metacognitive self-regulation). The participants were asked to select the most convenient option that applies to their case from 1: Not at all true of me to 7: Very true of me.

The instrument has been verified to be used via reliability and validity means. Reliability refers to the internal consistency, that is the ability of the survey tool to yield similar results when the assessment is repeated on the same sample under the same conditions. The researchers used Cronbach's alpha coefficient, as indicated by Feldt & Brennan (1989) (36), who classified the reliability coefficient values into two levels: values above 0.70 are considered high, while values below 0.70 are considered low. If it is greater than 0.70, it indicates strong reliability of the questionnaire overall. Based on the pilot study's results, the MSL survey's reliability is 0.89, which indicates an excellent reliability measure.

**Table 1**  
*Reliability of the adapted MSL Survey*

Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Q1-Q33	0.896

As for the validity, content (face) validity and construct validity have been applied on the MSL. Content validity was assessed by a panel of specialists in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics to ensure that the survey covers all aspects under investigation. The researchers then addressed all of the jury's modifications and adhered to all required comments. Construct validity, on the other hand, has been evaluated by a statistician using the Common Method Bias (CMB) Test, which is fundamental requirement for obtaining accurate and valid estimates and relationships. According to the results of this test, there is no issue related to the MSL items in terms of its construction.

#### 3.4. Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed via the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software (version 26), which is a widely used software for statistical analysis in educational research. For both research questions, descriptive

statistical analyses (mean and standard deviation) were conducted to identify and summarize the kinds of reading motivation used by the participants, and provide comprehensive insights into which kind of reading learning strategies is mostly used the participants.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### 4.1. Results of Research Question One:

The first research question was set to find any difference in the reading motivation kinds among Iraqi sophomore learners. Data were collected for this question by responding to the first part (Reading Motivation) of the survey by the learners, which included three constructs: 1) intrinsic motivation, 2) Extrinsic Motivation), and 3) Self-efficacy. Data have been analyzed via SPSS, version 26 where percentages utilized to explain the results of each construct as shown in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5.

**Table 2**

*Results of Intrinsic motivation*

Q	Likert Scale														Mean	Std.
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
A1	19	12.7	15	10.0	18	12.0	12	8.0	6	4.0	18	12.0	62	41.3	4.82	2.29
A2	13	8.7	6	4.0	10	6.7	19	12.7	20	13.3	16	10.7	66	44.0	5.26	1.99
A3	11	7.3	9	6.0	12	8.0	8	5.3	25	16.7	12	8.0	73	48.7	5.37	2.00
A4	22	14.7	8	5.3	13	8.7	18	12.0	20	13.3	15	10.0	54	36.0	4.78	2.19
Mean	10.85		6.325		8.85		9.5		11.825		10.175		42.5		5.06	2.12
Sum	26.0		9.5		64.5											

Table (2) presents the results of the intrinsic motivation construct relying on percentages to representing how much intrinsic motivation the participants have toward reading comprehension with the highest sum of both options 5 “Somewhat true of me” and “Very true of me”, i.e. 64.5 %.

**Table 3**

*Results of Extrinsic motivation*

Q	Likert Scale														Mean	Std.
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
B5	12	8.0	7	4.7	12	8.0	13	8.7	2	1.3	19	12.7	85	56.7	5.55	2.05
B6	17	11.3	2	1.3	9	6.0	9	6.0	10	6.7	14	9.3	89	59.3	5.61	2.09
B7	30	20.0	16	10.7	10	6.7	19	12.7	19	12.7	14	9.3	42	28.0	4.27	2.30
B8	15	10.0	6	4.0	14	9.3	17	11.3	12	8.0	16	10.7	70	46.7	5.22	2.10
Mean	12.33		5.18		7.50		9.63		7.18		10.50		47.68		5.16	2.13
Sum	25.01		9.63		65.36											

Table (3) exhibits the results of the *Extrinsic Motivation* construct using percentages to represent how much the participants were *Extrinsically motivated* toward reading comprehension with the highest sum of both options 5 “Somewhat true of me” and “Very true of me”, i.e. 65.3 %.

**Table 4**

*Results of Self-efficacy*

Q	Likert Scale														Mean	Std.
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
C9	16	10.7	6	4.0	10	6.7	19	12.7	28	18.7	17	11.3	54	36.0	5.03	2.01
C10	18	12.0	11	7.3	19	12.7	12	8.0	28	18.7	29	19.3	33	22.0	4.60	2.03
C11	18	12.0	6	4.0	13	8.7	19	12.7	7	4.7	20	13.3	67	44.7	5.13	2.17
C12	20	13.3	19	12.7	15	10.0	15	10.0	26	17.3	28	18.7	27	18.0	4.33	2.06
C13	6	4.0	6	4.0	18	12.0	25	16.7	23	15.3	33	22.0	39	26.0	5.05	1.71
C14	2	1.3	10	6.7	21	14.0	10	6.7	24	16.0	37	24.7	46	30.7	5.26	1.69
C15	22	14.7	0	0.0	6	4.0	6	4.0	6	4.0	20	13.3	90	60.0	5.63	2.17
Mean	9.71		5.53		9.73		10.08		13.53		17.51		33.91		5.00	1.98
Sum	24.97		10.08		64.95											

Table (4) illustrates the results of Self-efficacy construct relying on percentages reflecting how much *dependent or self-confident* the participants were toward reading comprehension as a subject with the highest sum of both options 5 “Somewhat true of me” and “Very true of me”, i.e. 64.9 %.

**Table 5**

*Results of the whole scale (Reading Motivation)*

Factor	Mean	Std.	RI%	Order
Intrinsic motivation	5.06	2.12	72.24	2
Extrinsic motivation	5.16	2.13	73.76	1
self-efficacy	5.00	1.98	71.48	3

Table (5) summarizes the findings of the first research question via mean and standard deviation, showing a slight variance among the three above mentioned constructs, which indicates that the learners agree on all three constructs to almost the same degree. However, the second construct, that is extrinsic motivation, was the highest among the three, (M = 5.16, SD = 2.13), indicating that the Iraqi students are mainly motivated to read due to external rewards, such as academic recognition, grades, or simply to pass to the next level.

The second highest construct was intrinsic motivation (M = 5.06, SD = 2.12), suggesting that learners read also for self- enjoyment, internal satisfaction, or interest although to a slightly lesser extent than for extrinsic reasons. Self-efficacy came last and was the lowest among three (M = 5.00, SD = 1.98), indicating a low-level of confidence of students in their own reading skills.

##### 4.2. Results of Research Question Two:

The second research question investigated the kinds of reading learning strategies, metacognitive and cognitive, employed by university learners. Data were collected by responding to the second part of the survey (Reading Learning Strategies) or Learning Strategies Scale, which includes two constructs: 1) Cognitive Learning Strategies (Rehearsal and Elaboration), 2) Metacognitive Learning Strategies (Critical Thinking and Metacognitive Self-Regulation). Using SPSS, percentages were utilized to explain the results of each construct, as illustrated in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

**Table 6**

*Results of the cognitive learning strategies*

Q	Response Scale													
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A16	18	12.0	14	9.3	5	3.3	19	12.7	14	9.3	19	12.7	61	40.7
A17	14	9.3	2	1.3	6	4.0	8	5.3	7	4.7	29	19.3	84	56.0
A18	19	12.7	10	6.7	7	4.7	14	9.3	19	12.7	25	16.7	56	37.3
A19	28	18.7	6	4.0	8	5.3	17	11.3	14	9.3	21	14.0	56	37.3
A20	14	9.3	12	8.0	12	8.0	24	16.0	23	15.3	21	14.0	44	29.3
A21	16	10.7	13	8.7	9	6.0	14	9.3	12	8.0	20	13.3	66	44.0
Mean	12.12		6.33		5.22		10.68		9.88		15.00		40.77	
Sum			23.67				10.68				65.65			

Table 6 presents the results of the first construct, *cognitive learning strategies*, based on the percentages to explain the extent to which the learners depended on the two main cognitive learning strategies: elaboration and rehearsal during the reading lectures. The highest percentage represents the sum of both options 5 and 6 “Somewhat true of me” and “Very true of me”, i.e. 65.6 % was accounted for. This percentage denotes that the participants agree on using both strategies during the reading lecture.

**Table 7**  
 Results of the meta cognitive learning strategies

Q	Response Scale														Mean	Std.
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
B22	16	10.7	8	5.3	6	4.0	18	12.0	18	12.0	18	12.0	66	44.0	5.21	2.08
B23	32	21.3	4	2.7	15	10.0	21	14.0	28	18.7	27	18.0	23	15.3	4.21	2.10
B24	18	12.0	6	4.0	14	9.3	17	11.3	13	8.7	26	17.3	56	37.3	5.02	2.11
B25	24	16.0	8	5.3	10	6.7	13	8.7	32	21.3	25	16.7	38	25.3	4.65	2.11
B26	24	16.0	10	6.7	23	15.3	23	15.3	25	16.7	31	20.7	14	9.3	4.09	1.91
B27	27	18.0	12	8.0	16	10.7	18	12.0	24	16.0	18	12.0	35	23.3	4.29	2.11
B28	6	4.0	4	2.7	8	5.3	13	8.7	17	11.3	25	16.7	77	51.3	5.76	1.61
B29	16	10.7	2	1.3	11	7.3	18	12.0	15	10.0	32	21.3	56	37.3	5.23	1.91
B30	14	9.3	10	6.7	2	1.3	14	9.3	23	15.3	16	10.7	71	47.3	5.36	2.01
B31	16	10.7	10	6.7	4	2.7	12	8.0	27	18.0	22	14.7	59	39.3	5.17	2.01
B32	9	6.0	18	12.0	6	4.0	4	2.7	24	16.0	27	18.0	62	41.3	5.30	2.01
B33	16	10.7	8	5.3	4	2.7	12	8.0	21	14.0	29	19.3	60	40.0	5.27	2.01
Mean	12.12		5.56		6.61		10.18		14.83		16.45		34.25		4.97	2.01
Sum			24.29				1018				65.53					

Based on the percentages, Table 7 shows the results of metacognitive learning strategies construct, which represents to which extent the learners have depended on the two vital cognitive strategies: 1) Critical Thinking, 2) and Metacognitive Self-Regulation. The highest was the sum of both options 5 and 6 “Somewhat true of me” and “Very true of me”, i.e. 65.5 %. This high percentage is due to the fact that most of the learners use both strategies during the reading lecture.

**Table 8**  
 Results of the reading learning strategies scale

Factor	Mean	Std.	RII%	Order
Cognitive Learning Strategies	5.08	2.12	72.57	1
Metacognitive Learning Strategies	4.97	2.02	70.93	2

Table 8 summarizes the findings of research question two indicating a slight difference among the learners between the use of cognitive and

metacognitive learning strategies in favor of the cognitive ones (M = 5.08, SD = 2.12). These results indicated that Iraqi learners rely more on practical and content-based strategies to comprehend the reading material. Whereas Metacognitive learning strategies showed a slightly lower mean score (M = 4.97, SD = 2.02) suggesting that while the students engage in regulatory and reflective reading practices, they use those strategies less frequently than cognitive ones.

**Implications**

The findings of this study have clear practical implications for both teachers and curriculum designers. For teachers, the results indicate a need to focus on creating a classroom environment that builds student confidence and fosters a genuine interest in reading. Since students are primarily driven by external rewards and show low self-efficacy, the classroom should become a supportive space where effort and improvement are celebrated alongside academic achievement. Teachers can contribute to this by introducing a variety of engaging texts beyond standard textbooks, such as short stories or articles on pop culture, and by allowing students some choice in their reading to increase their sense of control. Furthermore, because students rely heavily on basic learning techniques, teachers should actively demonstrate more advanced strategies. This involves directly showing students how to think while reading by modeling processes like checking for understanding or inferring word meanings, which helps learners become more independent and effective readers.

For curriculum designers, the study highlights the importance of developing reading materials that spark students' internal motivation. This means selecting reading passages that are relevant to students' lives, interests, and future careers to make the content more personally meaningful. Additionally, the activities that accompany these texts should be designed to encourage personal connection and engagement rather than just assessing comprehension. By shifting the focus from simply finding correct answers to interacting with the text on a personal level, curriculum designers can help cultivate intrinsic motivation over time.

**Conclusion**

This study was set out to understand the motivation and learning strategies of Iraqi EFL university students when reading in English. The findings provide a clear picture. Firstly, it was found that students are motivated to read more by external factors, such as the need to get good grades and academic recognition, than by a genuine interest or enjoyment in reading itself. The study also revealed that students have low confidence in their English reading abilities. Secondly, regarding the strategies students use, the results showed that they depend more on cognitive strategies. These are practical,

hands-on techniques like repeating words or connecting the text to their personal knowledge. In contrast, they use metacognitive strategies—which involve planning how to read, monitoring their understanding, and evaluating their comprehension—less frequently.

The typical Iraqi EFL learner in this study is someone who reads primarily for external rewards and lacks strong belief in their skills, while relying on basic learning methods over deeper, self-managed ones. These results are important for

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