

# Does Instructing Test-taking Strategies Significantly Enhance Reading Comprehension Test Performance? The Case of Iranian EFL Learners

Majid Pour-Mohammadi (Corresponding author)

Dep. of English Translation, Islamic Azad University, Rasht Branch, Iran

PO Box 129, Rasht, Iran

E-mail: [pourmohammad@iaurasht.ac.ir](mailto:pourmohammad@iaurasht.ac.ir)

Mohamad Jafre Zainol Abidin

School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)

11800 Gelugor, Penang Island, Malaysia

E-mail: [Jafre@usm.my](mailto:Jafre@usm.my)

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## Abstract

Reading comprehension is greatly highlighted for either taking exam or academic purpose in most English learning settings. In addition, tests are regularly applied to evaluate academic performance. This study investigated whether teaching test-taking strategies to Iranian EFL undergraduates enhances their reading comprehension test performances or not. A total of 66 EFL sophomores studying at Islamic Azad University of Rasht, Iran took part in the study. They were in two detached classes as experimental and control groups. The former received extra teaching in test-taking strategies for multiple-choice reading comprehension test as the treatment within the regular reading classes while the latter did not. Results of the posttest indicated that the treatment was effective and the experimental group outperformed the control group. Besides, their attitudes towards the treatment were studied. The results are discussed and some pedagogical implications are provided.

**Keywords:** Test-taking strategy, Reading comprehension, Test performance, EFL learner, Attitude

## 1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is generally known as an interactive mental process between a reader's linguistic knowledge, knowledge of the world, and knowledge about a given topic (Rahmani & Sadeghi, 2011). Furthermore, according to Kim and Anderson (2011, p. 30), "Reading is essential for successfully completing all college-level courses. In other words, college students who are more proficient readers are most likely to experience more success in their courses".

Additionally, in the setting of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is often supposed that reading comprehension is the fundamental way of learning new information and it is the most significant skill required for the students' success. As Iranmehr, Erfani and Davari (2011, p. 142) maintain, "The importance and position of reading comprehension skill in Iranian academic setting like other EFL settings are undeniable; in a way, it is often introduced as the main goal of English language learning." Similarly, Ghonsooly and Eghtesadee (2006) assert that reading comprehension is claimed to be the main purpose of foreign language teaching in Iran.

Tests are the most frequent evaluating method in nearly all educational systems and academic institutions worldwide. In general, tests carry the most load of the student's total grade particularly at the college level. The significance and uses of tests have extended beyond schools as many serious decisions that affect people's lives are made entirely according to specific tests. Whether the goal is college admission, certification, detection of specific behavior, or personal selection, a decision about an individual's ability is usually made based on his or her scores in specific tests (Pour-Mohammadi & Abidin, 2011a).

Hence, the significance of research on test-taking strategies as a way of helping students do well in their tests seems undeniable. A primary step to attain this goal could be studying test-related factors. This is because in tests, ability is not the only factor that affects students' performance. There are several cognitive and psychological factors which affect performances in tests (Hambleton, Swaminathan & Rogers, 1991). One important test-related factor is test-taking strategies, also known as testwiseness. This factor has its own effect on performance in tests and leads in another advantage which is improving test validity (Dodeen, 2009).

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

How comes that two individuals with almost the same degree of knowledge take the same test but perform differently and gain different scores? In order to account for the differences, many internal and external factors can be taken into consideration one of which is test-taking strategies. In other words, to succeed in English testing does not require only English competence. Belcher (1985) maintains that a test score indicates not only the knowledge and aptitude the reader possesses in a subject area but also the ability to take advantage of the characteristics and format of the test.

## *1.2 Objectives and Research Questions*

This research seeks to investigate whether teaching an additional set of test-taking strategies such as vocabulary tactics, process of elimination, preview of questions before reading, scanning, skimming, time management, etc. to Iranian EFL undergraduates' for their reading comprehension tests could greatly enhance their test performances or not. In other words, as scores have been a significant part of our academic world, the main objective of this study is to determine whether given instructions and practices in test-taking strategies and testwiseness can improve EFL students' performance in reading comprehension tests. Another objective involves introducing test-taking strategies as means of taking tests successfully and encouraging the students to apply the targeted strategies consciously when they are taking reading comprehension tests. Furthermore, if teaching test-taking strategies appears useful to the students and can assist them to obtain better results, then instructors, curriculum designers, material developers, policy makers and so on ought to have a new view in this regard. More specifically, the research attempts to answer the following questions:

- Does an instruction of test-taking strategies significantly enhance Iranian EFL sophomores' reading comprehension test performances?
- Do Iranian EFL sophomores have a positive attitude towards teaching and learning test-taking strategies in their Reading Comprehension course?

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Reading Comprehension*

Despite the equal importance attached to both categories of receptive and productive skills, reading is traditionally considered to be a vital requisite for the effective acquisition of knowledge and a major source of input for both writing and speaking (Mohamed, Eng & Ismail, 2010). The term reading goes with various definitions by different people. In the meantime, Royer (2004) maintains that, "Reading comprehension is the process of understanding and constructing meaning from a piece of text."

Additionally, comprehension not only relies on what is coded or written in the text, but it also depends on the reader's background experiences, purposes, feelings, and needs of the moment. Therefore, the reader is viewed as an equal and active partner with the text in the meaning-making process of comprehension (Pour-Mohammadi & Abidin, 2011a). That is in accordance with schema theory which states that comprehension is the result of the interaction between the background knowledge of the reader and the text.

### *2.2 Factors Influencing L2 Reading Comprehension*

The influential factors in L2 reading comprehension have been dealt with by many scientists. In the following, each of these factors is briefly reviewed.

#### *2.2.1 Vocabulary Size*

Undoubtedly, vocabulary knowledge, or knowledge of word meanings, functions a basic and vital role in reading comprehension. To comprehend the written text, the reader must

distinguish the meanings of the most words they encounter. It is generally accepted that vocabulary acquisition processes are complicated. Although, vocabulary knowledge is not the only factor contributing to text comprehension, it can be viewed as an essential and accurate predictor of reading ability of a second/foreign language learner, and also has a direct impact on his comprehension ability. With regards to the importance of vocabulary knowledge, Hsueh-Chao and Nation (2000) state that readers can get enough comprehension of the text only when they are able to recognize 98% of the words found in fiction works.

### 2.2.2 Knowledge of Syntactic and Semantic

It seems that syntactic knowledge also plays a function in the meaning construction and interpretation of texts. Nevertheless, skilled and less-skilled readers also vary in their ability to make use of syntactic and semantic knowledge to comprehend a text being read. Wu (2006) believes that syntactic knowledge is significant for two reasons. First, one can use a word or express the meaning of a sentence plainly with the aid of grammatical structures and rules of syntax. Next, analyzing the syntactic structure of a sentence can be useful to identify and recognize words.

Concerning semantic knowledge, Oakhill and Garnham (1988) contend that the role of word meaning in comprehension is noticeable, because readers who can recognize the meanings of words quickly and correctly are likely to comprehend text more easily. Consequently, inefficient semantic access may be a result of decoding problems, hence leading to comprehension failure during the reading process.

### 2.2.3 Prior Knowledge

Pittelman and Heimlich (1991) described prior knowledge as an individual's life experiences and the knowledge of the world acquired through his life. Other labels like background knowledge, world knowledge, or experiential background may be used by other researchers for this body of information. All in all, it can be concluded that prior knowledge facilitates not only good readers' but also poor readers' reading comprehension. As Grabe (1991) explained, a high degree of background knowledge can even overcome linguistic insufficiencies.

## 2.3 *Test-taking Strategies*

Studies have indicated that, in reading tests, certain types of strategies are used by test-takers (Cohen & Upton, 2007; Hirano, 2009). According to Rogers and Harley (1999), test-taking strategies enable learners to use the characteristics and format of a test to increase scores in a test-taking situation.

Cohen and Upton (2007, p. 211) define test-taking strategies as "those test-taking processes which respondents have selected and which they are conscious of, at least to some degree". Hirano (2009, p. 158) argues that there are basically distinct types of strategies that respondents use as they do language tests: 1) language learner strategies (the way learners operationalized their basic skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing including the related skills of grammar, vocabulary, and translation), 2) test management strategies

(“strategies for responding meaningfully to the test items and tasks”), and 3) testwiseness strategies (“strategies for using knowledge of test formats and other peripheral information to answer test items without going through the expected linguistic and cognitive processes”).

Cohen (1998) maintains that test-taking strategies consist of language use strategies and testwiseness strategies. Language use strategies refer to actions that individuals consciously take to enhance the use of a second/foreign language in order to accomplish language tasks. In most cases, examinees need to use four types of language use strategies (i.e., retrieval, rehearsal, cover, and communication strategies) in a testing situation so that they can store, retain, recall, and apply the information for use on the test.

In contrast, testwiseness is not necessarily determined by the examinee’s language proficiency, but rather is concerned with his knowledge of how to take tests. Cohen (1998) also described three testwiseness strategies used by examinees when taking a multiple-choice test. They are: 1) making a surface matching of some information in the passage with the identical information in the item stem and in one of the response choices, 2) making use of material from a previous item when it “gives away”, or reveals, the answer to a subsequent one, and 3) taking shortcuts to arrive at answers—that is, not reading the text but simply searching for the answers to the reading comprehension questions. Moreover, he also mentioned that in the case of responding to multiple-choice questions, a testwise examinee may choose an answer because it is 1) the only grammatical one, 2) the longest one, or 3) the first or the last response.

Rezaee (2006, p. 155) classifies test-taking strategies into two types of “general and specific”. *General strategies* can be applied to wider variety of tests such as preparing for the test, reading the directions, the use of time during a test, error avoidance strategies etc. While *specific strategies* are related to the exact area of the subject matter that is being tested and deal with taking various kinds of tests such as multiple-choice, matching, fill-in-the-blanks, essay, short answer, true-false, and problem solving.

#### *2.4 Studies on Test-taking Strategies in Reading Comprehension Tasks*

Several studies have probed the impacts of test-taking strategies on test performance (e.g., Cohen, 1984; Nevo, 1989; Phakiti, 2008; Radojevic, 2009; Scharnagl, 2004). Cohen (1984) conducted one of the early studies on test-taking strategies. He reported a set of studies which had used verbal self-report data to identify the test-taking strategies utilized by EFL readers while taking multiple-choice reading comprehension tests. His review reported the following strategies for the multiple-choice test: reading just part of the passage and then searching for a corresponding question, matching words and phrases in the distracters or the stem with those in the passage, considering the questions before the passage, applying a fast, surface reading of the passage rather than a detailed reading, also stopping reading distracters when they found what they judged to be a correct response.

Another study on test-taking strategies was conducted by Phakiti (2003). The study investigated the relationship of test-takers’ use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to the EFL reading comprehension test performance. The results proposed that (1) the use of

cognitive and metacognitive strategies had a positive relationship to the reading test performance, and (2) highly successful test-takers reported considerably higher metacognitive strategy use than the moderately successful ones who, in turn, reported higher use of these strategies than the unsuccessful test takers. These results also support the findings of other research that successful readers are more metacognitive than less successful readers.

Scharnagl (2004) also conducted an experimental study to examine the impact of additional instruction of test-taking strategies on reading achievement of low-performing third-grade students. Ten test-taking strategies were taught to the experimental group (N=15) for two hours every week over a period of 15 weeks, while the control group (N=15) did not receive any instruction on test-taking strategies. The results revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group.

More recently, Radojevic (2009) examined the effects of providing students with explicit instruction in how to use a repertoire of reading comprehension and test-taking strategies when reading and responding to three kinds of questions (direct, inferential, and critical). Particularly, the study examined whether providing students with an explicit or implicit instruction on reading comprehension strategies and test-taking strategies could improve their reading comprehension achievement. Students' reading comprehension and test-taking performance scores were compared as a function of instructional condition. The findings revealed the effectiveness of providing students with explicit strategy instruction when reading and responding to different forms of text. Students became able to apply the same thought processes to their own independent work.

On the whole, test-taking strategies are acquired skills and if a student has learned some of the specific skills of taking tests, that individual is expected to score considerably higher in tests than those with equal ability in the subject area that have not learned any test-taking strategies. The abovementioned studies describe that test-taking strategies instruction as well as the use of such strategies lead to improvement in language test performance, particularly reading comprehension scores, for different leveled students. Moreover, knowing how to prepare for and take exams can affect students' attitudes toward exam, reduce their test anxiety, build up their self-confidence, make a difference in exam scores, and ultimately, help them to have better achievement (Pour-Mohammadi & Abidin, 2011b).

### **3. Methodology**

This study intended to investigate the effect of direct teaching of test-taking strategies on Iranian EFL students' performance in multiple-choice reading comprehension tests. Moreover, their attitudes towards teaching such strategies were studied. It was a quasi-experimental design, including experimental and control groups. Both groups were administered a pretest and a posttest, but the treatment was only administered to the experimental group. The treatment in this study was direct teaching of test-taking strategies. The data were analyzed using independent-samples t-tests.

### *3.1 Participants*

The participants in this study were 66 undergraduate students studying English as their major course in two separate classes at Islamic Azad University of Iran, Rasht Branch. They were both male and female students studying for a Bachelor of Arts in 'English Language Translation'. Their average age was 20 and the average years of learning English was 7. Having passed their Reading Comprehension courses (1) and (2) in the two semesters of the first year of their education, they were doing their Reading Comprehension course (3). Each class constituted 33 students.

In selecting the participants for this study, factors such as age, ethnic affiliation, native language/dialect and linguistic background were not taken into account and all available students in that semester were selected. The rationale behind this decision was that students with all these various characteristics took the same University Entrance Examination. Therefore, they came together, from all over the country, in a given course. Furthermore, during their four-year period of study for the degree, they are all assigned the same materials. Finally, almost the same teaching methods are used for classroom presentations, and they are all assessed by the same procedures and almost according to the same criteria. Before implementing the treatment, the participants in experimental group were briefly informed that they would be involved in this research.

### *3.2 Instruments*

Three instruments were used to gather the relevant data for this study.

#### *3.2.1 Multiple-choice English Reading Comprehension Tests*

These were two TOEFL reading comprehension subtests administered as the pretest and posttest. Each test consisted of three passages followed by 30 multiple-choice items. The participants in both groups were allowed 60 minutes to answer the questions in both pretest and posttest. These comprehension questions mostly required the participants to draw inferences based on careful reading and a profound comprehension of the texts. More particularly, the participants had to infer the meaning of new words or expressions in the texts, search for particular details, and recognize the main idea or the best title for each passage.

#### *3.2.2 Two Likert Rating-scale Questionnaires (A and B)*

Questionnaire A was a 5-point Likert rating-scale questionnaire: 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) adopted from Rezaei (2006) and modified for the purpose of this study to elicit information about the participants' general background knowledge in the domain of test-taking strategies (See Appendix A). In other words, it intended to distinguish what percentage of the participants and to what extent were familiar with test-taking strategies before the intervention begins. This was done as some students may be familiar with and trained in such strategies in some private institutions or somewhere else before or during their university education and this could negatively affect the test results as well as the consequent conclusions. Thus, such probable participants who were highly familiar with test-taking strategies could be recognized by means of this questionnaire and their overall activities had

to be discreetly excluded throughout the study in order to remove the effect of such prior knowledge.

Questionnaire B was a 4-point Likert rating-scale questionnaire: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree) adopted from Vattanapath and Jaiprayoon (1999) was used for this study. It was conducted at the end of the course to investigate the students' impressions and opinions on the teaching of test-taking strategies as well as their learning experience. It also elicited information about their likes and dislikes and overall ideas about the teaching and learning of test-taking strategies for multiple-choice English tests in particular (See Appendix B).

### *3.3 Procedure*

The process of collecting data for this study included five stages as follows:

#### *3.3.1 Pretest*

Prior to the initiation of the study, the pretest was administered to the participants of both groups.

#### *3.3.2 Likert Rating-scale Questionnaire A*

It was administered for both groups immediately after the pretest.

#### *3.3.3 Intervention*

The experimental group was only given an additional training in test-taking strategies for multiple-choice English reading comprehension tests as supplementary teaching to the regular English Reading courses. The test-taking strategies which were employed in this study had mostly been adopted from Vattanapath and Jaiprayoon (1999) and modified for the present study on the basis of the weaknesses of Iranian EFL university students.

Two strategies were practiced in each session. This lasted for 11 sessions, once a week. Each session lasted only 20 minutes, making a total of almost 4 hours. The participants were provided with a written guide and sample test. In order to enable the participants to be familiar and internalize the test-taking strategies, one of the researchers clarified and modeled how each strategy could be used in the processes of completing reading comprehension questions. As for the control group, the same time was devoted to sample tests of reading comprehension without any instruction of test-taking strategies.

#### *3.3.4 Posttest*

After completing all the test-taking strategies instruction, the posttest was administered to the participants of both groups to determine their reading comprehension test performance.

#### *3.3.5 Likert Rating-scale Questionnaire B*

It was conducted after the posttest only to the experimental group to elicit information about the participants' likes, dislikes and overall ideas about the teaching and learning of test-taking strategies for multiple-choice reading comprehension tests.



#### 4. Results and Discussion

The gathered data were analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). To examine the significant difference between the two groups, their reading comprehension scores were compared by independent-samples T-test analyses. Afterward, the attitudes of participants in the experimental group towards teaching and learning test-taking strategies were analyzed. The gathered data were then discussed accordingly.

##### 4.1 Results of the Questionnaire A

According to the results of this questionnaire, the students in both groups had low to moderate knowledge of test-taking strategies at the beginning of this study. In other words, although all 66 students had some knowledge of test-taking strategies to some extent, they were all qualified to take part as the participants in the study.

##### 4.2 Results of Reading Comprehension Tests

Two independent-samples t-tests were performed to compare the differences of the pretest and posttest mean scores for the control and the experimental groups. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests. As indicated in Table 1 below, the Shapiro-Wilk statistics for pretest scores for the two groups have p-values greater than .05. Thus, it can be concluded that pretest scores for both groups are normal.

Table 1. Tests of Normality for Pretest Scores

	Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	Experimental	.965	33	.358
	Control	.955	33	.181

Table 2 shows the results of the first analysis which is an independent-samples t-test to check for significant difference in pretest for the experimental and the control groups. As it can be seen, there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups as the p-value (.858) is greater than .05. In other words, the two groups were not statistically significantly different from each other in terms of reading proficiency before implementing the treatment.

Table 2. Independent-samples t-test for the Experimental and Control Groups: Pretest

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.
Pretest Equal variances assumed	.069	.793	-.179	64	.858	-.18182	1.01569
Equal variances not assumed			-.179	63.677	.858	-.18182	1.01569

The mean scores of the pretest and the posttest for both the experimental and the control groups were compared. The average pretest score for the experimental group was 15.60 and the average posttest score was 19.09, yielding a 3.49 average gain in reading comprehension scores. On the other hand, the average pretest and posttest scores for the control group were 15.78 and 16.69 respectively, yielding a .91 average gain in reading comprehension scores (Table 3).

Table 3. Group Statistics of Posttest Scores

	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Experimental	33	19.09	4.94	.86094
	Control	33	16.69	4.33	.75439

As Table 4 shows, the Shapiro-Wilk statistics for posttest scores for the two groups have p-values less than .05. It is, therefore, concluded that posttest scores for both groups are not normal.

Table 4. Tests of Normality for Posttest Scores

	Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Posttest	Experimental	.917	33	.015
	Control	.918	33	.016

To test for significant difference in posttest scores for the control and the experimental groups, the nonparametric Mann-Whitney test was used. The result indicates that there is statistically significant difference because p-value (.039) is less than .05.

Furthermore, a close examination of individual test scores in the experimental group (N= 33) reveals that around 91% of the students (N=30) showed positive changes in the posttest scores when compared to the pretest scores after the intervention was completed, while 3% (N= 1) showed negative changes and 6% (N= 2) showed no changes. Of the students in the control group (N=33), around 67% (N= 22) saw an increase in the posttest, while 18% (N= 6) saw a negative change and 15% (N= 5) showed no changes. The descriptive statistical analysis reveals that in the posttest, the experimental group outscored the control group by a 2.39 average points increase on reading achievement. However, it cannot be confidently suggested that the 2.39 point increase in scores indicated statistical significance, but it is worth further exploring the possibility.

As is shown in Table 5 below, the results of the independent-samples t-test show that the students in the experimental group significantly outscored their counterparts in the control group at the level of .040. In other words, there is a significant difference between the two groups after the posttest because the p-value is less than .05. Therefore, it can be concluded that students who received the explicit test-taking strategies instruction in the experimental group achieved a significant improvement on the reading comprehension scores than the students in the control group who received regular instruction only.

Table 5. Independent-samples T-test for the Experimental and the Control Groups: Posttest

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.714	.401	2.091	64	.040	2.39394	1.14469
	Equal variances not assumed			2.091	62.914	.041	2.39394	1.14469

Overall, on the basis of the results of the statistical analysis, it can be concluded that the instruction of test-taking strategies was statistically significant regarding the improvement of performance. As indicated above, the test-taking strategies instruction did have a significant effect on the Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension test performance. These findings are congruent with several researchers' findings such as Chance (1992) and Scharnagl (2004),

and prove that test-taking strategies instruction improved the Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension test performance.

#### *4.1 Results of the Questionnaire B*

Questionnaire B, which was administered immediately after the posttest, investigated the students' attitudes towards instructing of test-taking strategies for multiple-choice English reading comprehension questions during their Reading Comprehension course.

The results indicate that the participants in the experimental group generally showed positive attitudes towards test-taking strategies instruction for multiple-choice English reading comprehension questions. In twenty one items out of thirty items, they reported positive responses. They reported that the intervention helped them to do the test better, feel relax, guess effectively, manage time, and improve their reading test performance. Just in nine items, out of thirty, they reported mixed opinions. These findings also agree with the previous researchers' claim that training of test-taking strategies can lead to positive outcomes (Phakiti, 2003; Pour-Mohammadi & Abidin, 2011b).

### **5. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications**

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of direct teaching of test-taking strategies on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension test performance. Besides, it tried to take into account the participants' attitudes towards teaching and learning test-taking strategies in their reading comprehension classes.

Some implications could be drawn on the basis of the findings of the present study. First, the findings of this study and other related studies indicate that test-taking strategies instruction could have a significant impact on the reading comprehension performance of the students. As the results of the present study also indicated, Iranian EFL students in the experimental group significantly outperformed their peers in the control group. Thus, it seems wise that English teachers should teach test-taking strategies to improve their students' reading comprehension test performance.

Secondly, English teachers should put more emphasis on vocabulary development so that their students could have sufficient vocabulary knowledge to comprehend a text and grasp the instructions on test-taking strategies. In addition, teachers should motivate the students to realize the importance and the benefits of learning some test-taking strategies that can be applied in the testing situation. Thirdly, they should also introduce and explicitly teach all the necessary strategies so that students can independently employ them while taking a test.

In conclusion, it is hoped that educators would maintain to update and enhance ESL/EFL students' existing competencies and expertise especially in reading area. Further studies that gather valuable information on individuals' differences hold great promise in assisting instructors to pick up the quality of SL/FL teaching and learning.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire A

Dear student, please read each of the following statements carefully and choose one of the choices which corresponds to what you do in answering the questions in a test. Please remember that the correctness or incorrectness of the statements is not important; I would like you to mark what you exactly do in taking a test. Your answers in this questionnaire are not used in evaluating your knowledge of English.

1. The best time for preparing for a test is the night before the test.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

2. While answering the questions in a test, if I know what I should do I do not spend my time reading the directions of the different parts of the test.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

3. I answer the easy questions first and I leave the difficult questions until last.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

4. I try to eliminate the options that I am sure are incorrect and then I choose the correct answer from among the remaining options.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

5. If two options imply the correctness of each other, I choose neither or both of them.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

6. In a four-option multiple-choice test, I choose one of the two options which is correct and implies the incorrectness of the other one.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

7. I restrict my choice to those options which cover all or two or more given statements known to be correct.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

8. In answering a particular question, I utilise relevant content information in other test items and options.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

9. If two alternatives are correct, then I look for a third which includes these two. I choose that option as a correct answer.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

10. I look for similarities among options and identify these as incorrect. The remaining one may be the correct answer.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

11. In Reading Comprehension questions, I certainly review the questions before I read the text

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

12. In Reading Comprehension questions, if a question asks for a number or a name, I scan the text to find the correct answer.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

13. While reading a text, I try to keep in mind all the details as in answering the questions I may not find any time to go back and scan it.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

14. In order to get a general idea of the text I survey it before reading it carefully.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

15. Punctuation Marks are very important for me in understanding a text completely.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

16. I examine options which are noticeably longer than the others in the set as these may be the correct answers.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

17. I look for an association, usually semantic or grammatical, between a word or phrase in the stem and a word or phrase in one of the options which cues the answer.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

18. I pay close attention to an adverb (time, place, manner, ...) as it can help me find the correct answer in a test of grammar.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always



19. In a test of grammar, first I read the stem carefully in order to find a clue and then I answer the question. Then I go through the options to find the one option which corresponds to my answer.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

20. In tests of vocabulary, I must know the meanings of all words as the punctuation marks and discourse markers cannot be of any help to me.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

21. Analysis of the structure of words (prefix, suffix and stem) helps me finding the meanings of unknown words in tests on vocabulary.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

22. Transition words in a sentence help me to get the meaning of a particular word or the whole sentence.

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Frequently    5. Always

### **Appendix B**

The Likert Rating-scale Questionnaire: (Participants' Opinions about Teaching and Learning of Test-taking Strategies.)

Please read each of the following statements carefully and choose one of the choices.

1. I enjoyed studying test-taking strategies.

A. Strongly agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly disagree

2. I feel that I can do the test better after learning test-taking strategies.

A. Strongly agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly disagree

3. Learning test-taking strategies enables me to be more enthusiastic about taking tests.

A. Strongly agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly disagree

\*4. Learning test-taking strategies makes me more anxious in taking tests.

A. Strongly agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly disagree

5. Learning test-taking strategies makes me more relaxed while taking tests.

A. Strongly agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly disagree

6. Learning test-taking strategies assists in time management more effectively.

A. Strongly agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly disagree

7. Learning test-taking strategies helps me go through the test more carefully.

- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
8. I find learning test-taking strategies very useful.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
- \*9. I think students should be taught how to take a test or test-taking strategies.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
10. I think students should not be taught how to take a test or test-taking strategies.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
11. Learning test-taking strategies helped me improve my English reading test scores.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
12. The content of the course along with learning about test-taking strategies is too demanding.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
13. The content of the course along with learning about test-taking strategies is appropriate.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
14. The content of the course along with learning about test-taking strategies is inadequate.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
15. Test-taking strategies should be taught in class.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
16. Test-taking strategies should be taught out of class.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
- \*17. I think it is not necessary to learn test-taking strategies.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
18. Learning test-taking strategies helped me guess effectively.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
- \*19. I think that learning test-taking strategies wasted my time.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
20. I can apply test-taking strategies in the real situation while taking tests.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
21. I find learning test-taking strategies make me have a better attitude towards taking tests.

- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
22. There should be more test exercises (practice taking tests) in class.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
23. I find learning test-taking strategies necessary for me.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
24. Learning test-taking strategies makes me think that to get a good score in English is not too difficult.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
25. Learning test-taking strategies enables me to do the easy items first, skip the difficult items and answer them later.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
- \*26. After studying test-taking strategies, I still do the test from the first item to the last item respectively without being concerned about the marks and how they are allotted.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
27. Learning test-taking strategies enables me to do all the questions even if I have to guess sometimes.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
28. Learning test-taking strategies enables me to read all options before choosing the best answer.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
- \*29. Learning test-taking strategies made me get a lower score because I worry about the strategies used.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree
30. Learning test-taking strategies made me get a higher score because I can take a test effectively, and I can manage time more appropriately.
- A. Strongly agree B. Agree C. Disagree D. Strongly disagree

\*= Negative question