

THE METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGY AWARENESS OF FIRST YEAR EFL BA STUDENTS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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Abstract: Reading comprehension skills are a crucial set of skills which university students need. Even though these skills are not under-researched in either the international or the Hungarian context, research on the reading strategy awareness of first-year BA students at the beginning of their university studies is not extensive. In Hungary, no recent comprehensive studies investigating the input students receive in high school regarding reading strategy training can be found. Therefore, the aim of the present project is to explore the reading strategy awareness of first-year English major BA students, the reading skills training they received at high school, and to compare and contrast that training with the requirements stipulated in the official high school curriculum. To complete this research endeavour, a mixed-methods study was designed, involving a questionnaire and an interview study. The findings indicate that first-year university students lack the necessary reading strategies, and therefore the data suggests that offering targeted training to improve reading comprehension skills should be made part of not only secondary but also tertiary education. Raising students' reading strategy use awareness is important because during their university studies they are constantly faced with tasks requiring excellent reading skills.

Keywords: academic reading, reading strategies, reading skills, research instrument development, EFL

1 Introduction

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols and deriving and constructing meaning from them (Rowe, Ozuru, & McNamara, 2006). The ability to read effectively plays a crucial role in people's everyday life; however, good reading skills are the most essential in tertiary education, where students are constantly required to solve tasks which employ their reading comprehension skills. For instance, taking notes from books, writing summaries, or preparing presentations based on multiple source texts all require excellent written information processing skills.

Learning how to read in L1 is usually a core component of the first grade elementary school curriculum, and learning how to read effectively is supposed to be part of every student's high school education (Oktatási Hivatal [Educational Authority]). However, experience shows that most first-year university students struggle with tasks requiring excellent reading comprehension skills even after they have successfully taken their final

school leaving examinations in Hungarian and in foreign languages, which, among other skills, also assess L1 and L2 reading comprehension (Educational Authority).

Research carried out on the topic suggests that the use of reading strategies can only be learnt through explicit instruction (Olson & Land, 2007) and thus, in Hungary, providing explicit instruction on reading strategies forms part of the official high school curriculum (Oktatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézet [Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development]). Nevertheless, it seems that students still lack the necessary knowledge even after finishing high school. Although numerous studies have been carried out on reading strategies in Hungary (Bárdos, 2000; Gósy, 1999; Steklács, 2013), none of them addresses in detail the issue of how reading strategies are actually taught in high schools. Furthermore, few up-to-date data collection instruments are available for measuring reading strategy use, either in English or in Hungarian. To remedy this deficiency, this study has two main aims. The first is to develop a Hungarian instrument which specifically measures the reading skills awareness of first-year students who have just started university. This instrument will be designed to be able to gather data of this group's initial general knowledge about reading strategies. Secondly, the study explores the students' familiarity with reading strategies by looking at both the official requirements regarding teaching reading strategies and the students' personal experience.

2 Literature review

2.1 Reading comprehension and reading strategies

Reading can be defined as “the ability to obtain meaning from written text for some purpose” (Vellutino, 2003, p.51). It is an intricate, complex cognitive process, which is very difficult to investigate. However, in order to be able to create an instrument which investigates reading skills, first, the underlying cognitive processes have to be understood.

Despite several decades of research on this topic, there is no single unquestionable theory about the underlying cognitive mechanisms of reading comprehension. However, the cognitive processing approach is the most recent one when it comes to defining it. Instead of dividing reading comprehension into sub-skills (Weir & Porter, 1994), or using factor analysis to assess reading skills (Rosenshine, 1980), this approach tries to explain the mental processes that reading comprehension involves (Weir & Khalifa, 2008).

According to Weir and Khalifa (2008), reading comprehension involves a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing, where both the world knowledge and the linguistic knowledge of the reader are engaged. In order to be able to establish the meaning of a text, the reader has to rely on both top-down and bottom-up processing. Based on Weir and Khalifa's (2008) model of reading comprehension, which is one of the most recent and most detailed reading models, the process of text comprehension includes three stages. First, the aim of reading is decided and the selection of the type of reading is based on this reading aim. Depending on their purpose, the reader will either read carefully, extracting every single piece of information from the text, or expeditiously, by reading quickly through the text and focusing only on certain parts. The second stage of reading comprehension involves building up the meaning structure of a text. The orthographic forms of the words are recognized and the form is retrieved from the mental lexicon and attached to its meaning. This is followed by

syntactic parsing, and the words are grouped into large sentence-level units. To establish the meaning of the text, the readers activate their background knowledge and build a mental model of the text. The final stage of the comprehension process is the creation of the text-level structure, where readers organize the information into a hierarchical structure. These stages occur simultaneously and cyclically, and they are constantly monitored by the reader to make sure that the comprehension process is successful (Weir & Khalifa, 2008).

Naturally, the mental process presented above is not directly accessible for analysis. However, when building an instrument which investigates reading comprehension, something more tangible has to be examined. In the case of reading comprehension, reading strategy use can be considered as evidence of conscious effort to comprehend a text. Therefore, the present study investigates the participants' perceived use of reading strategies.

According to Phakiti (2006), the use of reading strategies is a "conscious, deliberate, intentional and goal-directed processing individuals employ when using the target language" (p.23). Therefore, metacognitive reading strategies are conscious and intentional actions used for planning and monitoring purposes during task execution. These strategies are used not only in the process of setting the reading aim, but during every stage of the reading comprehension process (Bachman & Palmer, 2010).

Previous research indicates that when they have to interpret a text, regardless of whether they received any training in reading strategy use or not, all readers use metacognitive reading strategies (Hayes & Flower, 1981; Olson, 2003; Olson & Land, 2007). However, those readers who have received explicit instruction and training in the use of metacognitive reading strategies were found to perform better than their peers who were untrained in this area (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Olson & Land, 2007). Related research findings appear to agree that those readers who can execute a reading comprehension task successfully use metacognitive reading strategies consciously, and they are able to apply and manipulate these strategies freely and recursively. Therefore, students' metacognitive reading strategy use habits might be able to provide valuable information about the level of their reading comprehension skills.

Research findings also suggest that students who have higher proficiency levels are not only using more reading strategies, but are also better able to transfer their L1 reading strategy knowledge to L2 reading situations. For instance, in a study conducted with Spanish students, Clarke (1979) found that those who were successful at reading comprehension in their L1 were also more competent at reading comprehension tasks in English (their L2). Similarly, students who performed poorly in the reading comprehension tasks in their L1 also struggled with reading comprehension in their L2. Jimenez, Garcia and Pearson (1996) arrived at similar conclusions in a qualitative study conducted with eight bilingual students. Those who successfully used more reading strategies in their L1 successfully used more reading strategies in their L2 reading comprehension processes. Furthermore, a more recent piece of research conducted by Han (2012) also found that there is a moderate positive correlation between Chinese students' L1 and L2 reading strategy awareness.

2.2 Reading strategy research in Hungary

The topic of reading strategies is by no means an under-researched area in Hungary. Even though several researchers have tackled the issues related to reading strategies (Bárdos,

2000; Gósy, 1999; Steklács, 2013; Szűcs & Kövér, 2016), most of these studies focus on the cognitive aspects of reading or on its pedagogical aspects, namely how and why reading strategies should be taught to students. However, no recent study can be found which looks at the actual classroom practices in high schools, or draws a parallel between what is officially supposed to be taught to students in connection with reading strategies, and what they are actually taught during their high school years. Moreover, there are no up-to-date, published instruments for measuring metacognitive reading strategy use, especially in the Hungarian context.

Addressing this research niche, the present study aims to investigate the following research questions:

1. What metacognitive reading strategies do first-year university EFL students use when they have to work with English academic texts?
2. What are the requirements stated in the official syllabus of the Hungarian Language and Literature subject for secondary schools regarding teaching reading strategies?
3. What kind of perceived background knowledge do first year university EFL students have on reading strategies before starting their university studies?

3 Methods

The present research is a mixed-methods study that is intended to explore the reading strategy awareness of first-year Hungarian BA students of English and the type of instruction they receive on the topic before beginning their university studies. In order to do this, first, a Hungarian reading strategy awareness questionnaire was designed. As a result of the piloting of the questionnaire, further questions emerged regarding the reading strategy training students receive during their high school studies. Therefore, the research was expanded in a qualitative direction with the analysis of the national curriculum of Hungarian Language and Communication classes, taking into consideration the requirements of teaching reading skills. The Hungarian Language and Communication classes were chosen rather than foreign language classes because in Hungarian secondary education the number of the workbooks which can be used for teaching the native language is more limited than it is for the foreign language classes. This decision was made on the basis of research findings regarding the transfer of L1 and L2 reading skills (Clarke, 1979; Han, 2012; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996). Taking the results of the curriculum analysis into consideration, a semi-structured interview schedule was also developed, and three first-year English major BA students were interviewed about the training they received in reading strategies during their high school studies.

3.1 The questionnaire study

3.1.1 Instrument development and validation

One of the aims of the present research was to investigate what kind of metacognitive reading strategies first-year English major BA students use when they have to read academic texts in English. As no published, context-appropriate instrument could be found in Hungarian, first, a Hungarian metacognitive reading strategy questionnaire was developed. As

the first step, four first-year English major students from a leading Hungarian university were asked to do a metacognitive think-aloud while solving a reading task. In the reading task, students had to find specific pieces of information in an 800-word-long English academic text on the topic of online teaching. This text was chosen because the topic is relatable and easy to understand for first year English major BA students. The think-alouds were conducted following the procedures described by Bowles (2010). First, the students had the opportunity to practice the method of metacognitive think-aloud on sample sentences, and only when they felt comfortable with the method was the actual data collection procedure started. During the think-alouds, the participants were asked to verbalize every thought emerging in their minds, irrespective of whether it was in their L1 or L2, in order to guide the researcher through their reading process as closely as possible. The collected data were manually coded and searched for emerging themes by the researcher. To ensure the reliability of the research, the think-aloud protocols were also coded by a co-coder, and the final emerging themes were agreed upon. These emerging themes served as the starting points for designing the questionnaire.

Besides the think-aloud data, the reading strategy questionnaire created for this study is also based on Mokhtari and Sheorey's (2002) instrument called *Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS)*. This instrument was originally based on Mokhtari and Reichard's (2002) earlier work: the *Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory*. As SORS was originally designed to collect data about the reading strategies used by native and non-native speaker university students when reading academic texts, it seemed to be suitable for the purposes of the present research. Therefore, the second step of the instrument development process was to compare the emerging themes from the think-aloud data with the proposed constructs and questionnaire items of SORS. To make sure that the instrument would measure every reading sub-skill, the items of SORS were also compared with the work of Weir and Khalifa (2008). On the basis of these comparisons, the original 32 items of SORS were translated into Hungarian and adapted to the analysed context. Besides changing minor details, during the Hungarian translations of the items several ambiguous terms (e.g., 'context clues', 'relevant information') were explained in more detail because first year students might not be familiar with them. Furthermore, items which were too general (e.g., 'reference materials' in "I use reference materials [e.g. a dictionary] to help me understand what I read") became more specified in the Hungarian version of the questionnaire and more examples were provided for them.

To ensure the reliability of the items, four English teachers were asked to do back-translations of every item in the questionnaire. Based on their comments and suggestions, the questionnaire items were further refined, and the first version of the *Hungarian Survey of Reading Strategies (HSORS)* was created. To test this first version, one member of the target population was asked to fill in the questionnaire while doing a think-aloud about the process. This think-aloud, similarly to the previous ones, was conducted according to the suggestions of Bowles (2010). Based on the problems and suggestions that emerged during the think-aloud, the HSORS was further improved, and the pilot version was created. (See Appendix A for the HSORS in Hungarian, and Appendix B for its English translation.)

To validate the created instrument, 39 first-year English major BA students (10 males and 29 females) from the same Hungarian university were asked to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were filled in during class time, and the procedure took approximately 10-15 minutes. Taking part in the research happened on a voluntary basis. The questionnaire had to be filled in anonymously, but besides their answers to the questionnaire items, in the questionnaire the students were also asked to provide biographical data and data about their

language learning background. The collected data were fed into SPSS 17.0 and Cronbach's alpha values were calculated.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha value
Global reading strategies	0.35
Problem solving strategies	0.65
Supporting strategies	0.59

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha values of the first pilot phase

As the Cronbach's alpha values were relatively low (see Table 1), the items of the HSORS were re-translated and two more colleagues were asked to do back-translations of the items. In addition, an expert in the field was also consulted on the possible issues with the questionnaire. Based on the back-translators' and the consulted expert's feedback, modifications were made and an improved version of the HSORS was created. This improved version was handed out again to 32 first year English major BA students (12 males and 20 females) from a leading Hungarian university. The circumstances of the data collection were exactly the same as in the case of the previous one. Participation was voluntary and the participants remained anonymous. Based on the collected data, the Cronbach's alpha values of the measured constructs were re-calculated with SPSS 17.0. As they were found acceptable (see Table 2), the metacognitive reading strategy awareness measuring instrument, HSORS, was finalized.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha value
Global reading strategies	0.79
Problem solving strategies	0.75
Supporting strategies	0.71

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha values of the second pilot

3.1.2 Data collection and analysis with the HSORS

In order to find an answer to the first research question of the present study, namely what reading strategies first-year EFL learner students use when they have to work with academic texts, the finalised version of HSORS was turned into an online questionnaire and sent out to 178 first-year Hungarian BA students of English at a major Hungarian university, who were enrolled for a 'Professional Writing' lecture. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and the students filled in the questionnaire out of class. The online questionnaire had 32 items and took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Out of the 178 students 59 replied (11 males and 48 females). The collected data were analysed with SPSS 17.0, and T-tests and correlations were calculated.

3.2 Document analysis and interviews to investigate the teaching and use of reading strategies

Even though it was possible to create a final version of the HSORS, the fact that the pilot phase had to be repeated, and that the initial Cronbach's alpha values were relatively low, raised further questions. Students appeared to find it hard to fill in the questionnaire, most probably because they had difficulties interpreting the questionnaire items. There were

several possible reasons for this, the most obvious one being that the formulation of the items was too complicated for first-year students. However, by doing a think-aloud on the questionnaire with a member of the population and consulting several colleagues and an expert in the field, this possibility had been minimised. Secondly, as the participants were all between the ages of 18-24 with no recorded reading difficulties, the possibility of their not being cognitively developed enough to be able to interpret the items could also be ruled out. Therefore, the only possible explanation remaining seemed to be that students were not really aware of what reading strategies are; thus, they could not interpret the questionnaire items because of their lack of background knowledge. In order to explore this possibility, the scope of the research was expanded and a document analysis of the Hungarian language curriculum was carried out as well as an interview study with students on their experience of learning reading skills in high school.

3.2.1 The analysis of the official syllabus for the Hungarian Language and Communication subject

In order to gain a general insight into what kind of training in reading strategy use high school students are supposed to receive, the official syllabus for the Hungarian Language and Communication subject was analysed. This subject was chosen rather than foreign language subjects such as English because currently, in Hungary, the course book options for the Hungarian Language and Communication subject are more controlled and more limited than for foreign language studies (Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development). Another reason for choosing the Hungarian Language and Communication subject was that the final school leaving examination in Hungarian Language and Literature includes components that measure reading skills (Educational Authority). Therefore, high school students theoretically should receive extensive instruction on how to read effectively. As previous research results indicate that there is a transfer between L1 and L2 reading strategy use at higher proficiency levels (Clarke, 1979; Han, 2012; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996), it seemed preferable to examine the more controlled curriculum of the Hungarian Language and Communication subject rather than the curriculum of foreign languages.

In order to obtain an overview of the possible reading strategy training high school students receive, both the traditional syllabus and the experimental syllabus were subjected to content analysis. Furthermore, the respective course books belonging to each syllabus were also analysed for content.

3.2.2 Interview studies

Based on the results of the analysis of the official syllabi of the Hungarian Language and Communication subject, a semi-structured interview schedule was developed. It contained questions about the participants' high school studies and the types of instruction they received from their Hungarian and foreign language teachers about how to read effectively. With the help of the interview schedule, three first-year English major students who participated in the second pilot were interviewed in the penultimate week of their first semester. The interviewees were selected on a voluntary basis. All three interviews were conducted the same way. First, the participants were assured that all their data and answers would be handled confidentially, and their personal data were recorded. Secondly, the semi-structured interviews about their former instruction on and knowledge about reading strategies

were conducted. This was followed by approximately five to ten minutes of training in the method of think-aloud protocols, where the participants had the opportunity to practice performing a think-aloud on sentence-building practice tasks. When they felt comfortable with the think-aloud method, they were given a printed version of the finalized HSORS and instructed to fill in the questionnaire while verbalizing every single thought that emerged in their minds. The biographical data of the participants can be found in Table 3. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, they were given pseudonyms.

	Ella	Brigitta	Jakab
Age	19	19	18
Place of high school	outside Budapest	outside Budapest	outside Budapest

Table 3. Biographical data of the interviewees

All three interviews and think-aloud protocols were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The transcribed data were subjected to content analysis, paying special attention to the possible problems interviewees might have had understanding and answering the questionnaire items.

4 Results

4.1 The results of the questionnaire study

The HSORS measures three reading strategy-related constructs, namely global reading strategies (GLOB), problem solving strategies (PROB), and supporting strategies (SUP). The 59 filled in questionnaires were subjected to statistical analysis with the help of SPSS 17.0. First, a T-test between the answers of the male and female participants was calculated. The results of the T-test suggested that there was no significant difference between the genders regarding any of the measured scales. As the second step, a correlation analysis was computed among the three scales. There were positive correlations between global reading strategies and problem solving strategies ($r = 0.447$, $n = 59$, $p = <0.001$), between global reading strategies and supporting strategies ($r = 0.427$, $n = 59$, $p = <0.001$), and between supporting strategies and problem solving strategies ($r = 0.444$, $n = 59$, $p = <0.001$). The positive correlation among all three scales might suggest that high awareness of one type of reading strategy can result in being more aware of one's reading strategy use in general.

4.2 The results of the document analysis and interviews

4.2.1 The results of the analysis of the official syllabus for the Hungarian Language and Communication subject

From the analysis of the official syllabi of the Hungarian Language and Communication subject, it became evident that high school teachers of this subject have two options: they either follow the traditional syllabus with the course book series written by Ágnes Antalné Szabó and Judit Raác (e.g., Antalné Szabó & Raác, 2011) or the experimental syllabus with the course book series written by different authors for each grade

(e.g., Aczél, Forró, Hegedűs, & Pelczer, 2016). Both the traditional and the experimental course books have supplementary workbooks available, which were also subjected to content analysis.

The results of the content analysis are summarised in Table 4. The table shows that both the experimental and the traditional syllabus included the improvement of reading and study skills as one of their major aims. Parts of the materials are aimed at developing and improving reading strategies such as reading for specific purposes or activating background knowledge during reading. These and similar reading sub-skills are mentioned in both the traditional and the experimental syllabus for all the grades from ninth to twelfth. Based on the official syllabi, high school teachers of the Hungarian Language and Communication subject are supposed to place great emphasis on improving the reading skills of their students.

	Traditional syllabus	Experimental syllabus
9th grade	improving reading comprehension skills is mentioned as a main aim for every single Hungarian Language and Communication class during the school year	improving text comprehension skills is mentioned as the main aim for ten Hungarian Language and Communication classes during the school year
10th grade	improving reading comprehension skills is mentioned as a main aim for every single Hungarian Language and Communication class during the school year	improving reading comprehension skills is not mentioned as an aim in the syllabus
11th grade	improving reading comprehension skills is mentioned as a main aim for every single Hungarian Language and Communication class during the school year	improving text comprehension skills, critical thinking skills, and text analysis skills are mentioned as the main aim for four Hungarian Language and Communication classes during the school year
12th grade	improving reading comprehension skills is mentioned as a main aim for every single Hungarian Language and Communication class during the school year	improving text comprehension skills, critical thinking skills, and text analysis skills are mentioned as the main aim for nine Hungarian Language and Communication classes during the school year

Table 4. The results of the content analysis of the official syllabi for the Hungarian Language and Communication subject

The analysis of the course books shows similar results (Table 5). The course books for several grades include at least a one-page unit on how to read more effectively. It is, however, interesting that in case of the experimental method, course books and workbooks seem to put

less emphasis on explicit instruction in reading strategies than the traditional course books and workbooks, even though both the traditional and the experimental syllabus puts some emphasis on the importance of this skill for almost every grade. Another tendency can also be recognised: course books and workbooks designed for higher grades, such as the 11th and 12th grades, tend to focus on the improvement of reading comprehension more than the materials designed for lower grades.

	Traditional syllabus		Experimental syllabus	
	Course book	Workbook	Course book	Workbook
9 th grade	some instruction on reading strategies	some practice tasks on reading strategies	no instruction on reading strategies	no instruction on reading strategies
10 th grade	no instruction on reading strategies	no instruction on reading strategies	no instruction on reading strategies	no instruction on reading strategies
11 th grade	explicit instructions on how to select the main ideas in a text, and on learning strategies	practice tasks for improving text comprehension skills	no instruction on reading strategies	no instruction on reading strategies
12 th grade	explicit instructions on text comprehension strategies	practice tasks for improving text comprehension skills	no instruction on reading strategies	practice tasks for improving text comprehension skills

Table 5. The results of the content analysis of the official course books and workbooks for the Hungarian Language and Communication subject

4.3 The results of the analysis of the interview data

The participants in the interview studies were all first-year English major BA students who had just finished their high school studies and had taken their final school leaving examinations about three months before the interviews were conducted. To the question whether they had ever received formal training in reading strategies during their high school years, every participant's answer was negative. None of them received any specific training in using reading strategies from their Hungarian Language and Communication high school teachers; however, none of them were completely unfamiliar with the concept. Jakab claimed that he had learnt techniques on how to read effectively from his primary school history teacher: "We did not cover such things in high school, but my history teacher in primary school always told us to underline and highlight the important things in the book when we were learning" (Jakab). In contrast with Jakab, Brigitta and Ella claimed that they had never received formal instruction on reading strategies during their school years. Brigitta said that she had never encountered the concept of reading strategies before starting her university studies; whereas, Ella said that she started to look for methods to improve the efficiency of

her reading skills on the Internet when she was preparing for her final school leaving examinations. The participants were also asked if they had received any information about reading effectively in their foreign language classes, to which they all replied that their high school teachers did not provide any; their private English teachers did give them general tips before their B2 level language examinations, but none of them could recall any specific tips to improve reading comprehension.

Regarding the think-aloud part of the interview, the participants seemed to struggle with interpreting the questionnaire items correctly. The items which caused the most difficulty were Item 3 (“I rely on my background knowledge to understand what I read”) and item 23 (“I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text, I don’t just accept it because it is written down”). Students appeared to misinterpret the term ‘background knowledge’ in item 3, and associated it with vocabulary items only. “Well, of course I rely on my background knowledge; I have to recall the Hungarian meaning of those English words” (Brigitta). The term ‘background knowledge’ in this context was supposed to refer to factual knowledge about the topic they were reading about and not to the knowledge of the necessary vocabulary.

In comparison, item 23 posed a different kind of difficulty. For instance, Ella said that “if it is written down in a course book, I shouldn’t really doubt it, right?” This kind of attitude suggests that these students were not taught to read critically in high school or warned not to accept anything at face value, despite the fact that critical evaluation of texts is assessed in the final school leaving examination (Educational Authority).

5 Discussion

The quantitative data collected suggests that there is a high correlation among the different types of reading strategies. This can be interpreted as a sign that high awareness about using any reading strategy type results in a higher awareness about using reading strategies in general. However, taking the findings of the think-aloud protocols into consideration, the results of the questionnaire study could be considered questionable. All three students who performed a think-aloud on the questionnaire regularly misinterpreted several items of the instrument. This tendency to misinterpret certain questionnaire items may have led to distorted results.

Probably, the most notable feature regarding the instrument development was not the actual data collected with it, but the fact that the instrument needed several re-translations and re-formulations during its piloting. Although the items were back-translated by several colleagues, an expert of the field was consulted, and a think-aloud was made on the instrument with a member of the population, nonetheless the instrument still failed to measure reading strategy awareness at the first administration. The whole process of adapting the instrument had to be repeated in the light of feedback from different colleagues and experts, despite the fact that the original English questionnaire was already a validated and published instrument.

The phenomenon of students being unable to interpret questionnaire items correctly even though they were written in Hungarian and were about a topic that in theory they should be familiar with, could have several explanations. The students might not have been cognitively mature enough to be able to use reading strategies consciously (Mateos, Martín,

Villalón, & Luna, 2008). However, as all the participants were above the age of 18, this explanation can easily be dismissed. Another explanation could be that the students lack the schema (Widdowson, 1983) required to fully comprehend the situations described by the questionnaire items. This again, is not a plausible explanation, as all the items describe situations that every high school student should be familiar with, such as reading course books and preparing for tests. Therefore, the most plausible explanation to this phenomenon is that students do not receive explicit instruction on reading strategies during their high school studies.

The analysis of the official syllabi, official course books and official workbooks suggests that high school students should have received an ample amount of instruction on reading strategy use and effective reading by the time they begin their university studies. Nevertheless, first-year students still seem to struggle initially with effective reading. The findings of the interviews might give a possible explanation for this problem. It appears that at least in some Hungarian high schools, teaching reading strategies is neglected. There could be several reasons for this. For instance, teachers might not have enough class time to cover this topic, or they might not recognize the importance of explicit instruction in this area. Unfortunately, as research suggests, the conscious use of metacognitive reading strategies can only be developed through explicit instruction (Olson & Land, 2007), so waiting for it to develop on its own is not a viable option. Another possible explanation is that students do receive explicit instruction on how to read efficiently, but as these techniques are not presented to them in the form of continuous training but piecemeal during their high school studies, they fail to combine these scattered pieces of information into comprehensive knowledge and awareness of reading strategy use. Some researchers argue that a certain cognitive maturity on the participants' part is required to be able to successfully apply reading strategies (Mateos, Martín, Villalón, & Luna, 2008); however, in this case, the possibility of the studied population not being cognitively developed enough can be excluded because of their age. Therefore, the answer to this problem should be sought elsewhere, and further research should be conducted involving interviews with high school teachers and classroom observations of high school EFL and Hungarian Language and Communication classes.

6 Conclusions

The aim of the present study was to explore the reading strategy awareness of first-year BA students of EFL. It attempted to create a base line of what kind of reading strategy knowledge first-year students start their university studies with. To investigate this, first, a Hungarian reading strategy questionnaire was developed. Even though the development of such a Hungarian instrument was possible, during the process, and as a result of the data obtained, the scope of the study broadened, and qualitative aspects were also introduced into the analysis. In order to answer the questions raised during the development of the instrument, the official syllabi and course books for the Hungarian Language and Communication subject were analysed, paying specific attention to the requirements and instructions regarding teaching reading strategies.

The outcomes of the present analysis suggest that first-year Hungarian BA students of English struggle with the effective use of reading strategies, and they do not receive explicit instruction on this topic during their high school studies. Therefore, it can be suggested that both high school education and BA programmes should put more emphasis on giving explicit instruction to their students about how to use reading strategies effectively. Offering targeted

training to improve reading comprehension skills should be part of not only secondary but also tertiary education.

Even though the present study sheds light on issues worthy of further research, it also has its limitations. First and most importantly, because of the small sample size, the 59 participants of the questionnaire study do not represent the whole population, so to obtain representative data, further questionnaire studies should be conducted. In addition, the interview study had only three participants. Further interviews conducted with first-year students from different high school backgrounds could gain a better insight into how reading strategies are taught in high school. Furthermore, classroom observations are also needed in different high schools across the country, along with interviews with teachers of Hungarian Language and Communication classes, as well as teachers of foreign languages. If teachers disregard or neglect the teaching of reading strategies, it can be supposed that there is a reason. It might be lack of time, or failure to recognize their importance. Regardless of the reasons, functional knowledge of reading strategy use is not only essential for those students who want to succeed in tertiary education, but also for those who want to be successful in finding a job after high school. Therefore, language teachers' awareness of teaching reading strategies needs to be raised, and opportunities have to be provided for teaching these strategies in both secondary school and university language training programmes.

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APPENDIX A**Hungarian Survey of Reading Strategies (HSORS)****Olvasási stratégia kérdőív**

Az alábbi kérdőív 32 olvasási stratégiához kapcsolódó kijelentést tartalmaz. A kérdőívben levő állítások mindegyike angol nyelvű tudományos szövegek (pl. tankönyvek, kutatások) olvasására vonatkoznak. Mivel ez nem egy teszt, nincsenek helyes és helytelen válaszok, a személyes véleményedre vagyunk kíváncsiak. A kérdőív kitöltése körülbelül 15 percet vesz igénybe és név nélkül történik.

Kérlek, olvasd el figyelmesen az alábbi mondatokat, és jelöld be, hogy az adott kijelentés milyen mértékben jellemző rád.

- 1= Egyáltalán nem
- 2= Nem túlságosan
- 3= Csak részben
- 4= Nagyrészt
- 5= Teljes mértékben

Kérlek, minden kérdésre a lehető legőszintebben válaszolj, ezzel elősegítve kutatásom sikerét. Nagyon szépen köszönöm a segítségéd!

Ne feledd, a kérdések tudományos szövegek (tankönyv, szakkönyv fejezet, tanulmány, stb.) olvasására vonatkoznak.	Teljes mértékben egyetértek	Nagyrészt egyetértek	Csak részben értek egyet	Nem túlságosan értek egyet	Egyáltalán nem értek egyet
1. Amikor el kell olvasnom egy szöveget, előre meghatározott céllal olvasok.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Olvasás közben jegyzeteket készítek, hogy megértssem a szöveget.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Felelevenítem a korábban megszerzett ismereteimet, hogy jobban megértssem, amit olvasok.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Mielőtt figyelmesen elolvasnám a szöveget, felületesen átfutom, hogy lássam, miről szól.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Amikor a szövegben egy nehéz részhez érek, hangosan felolvasom magamnak, hogy megértssem, amit olvasok.	5	4	3	2	1
6. Összefoglalom az addig olvasottakat, amikor a szövegben található fontos információkon gondolkodom.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Olvasás közben elgondolkodom, hogy a szöveg tartalma megfelel-e az olvasási célomnak.	5	4	3	2	1

8. Lassan de figyelmesen olvasok azért, hogy biztosan megértssem a szöveget.	5	4	3	2	1
9. Az olvasottakat szeretem megbeszélni másokkal, hogy ellenőrizsem, mindent jól értettem-e.	5	4	3	2	1
10. Elolvasása előtt átfutom a szöveget, olyan jellemzőkre figyelve, mint például a hossza és a felépítése (pl. alcímekkel ellátott részekre tagolt-e).	5	4	3	2	1
11. Amikor észreveszem, hogy a gondolataim elkalandoztak, igyekszem visszaterelni a figyelmem az olvasott szövegre.	5	4	3	2	1
12. A szövegben található információkat aláhúzom vagy bekarikázom, hogy jobban emlékezzek rájuk.	5	4	3	2	1
13. Az olvasás sebességét az éppen olvasott szöveg jellemzőihez igazítom.	5	4	3	2	1
14. Olvasás közben eldöntöm, hogy a szöveg mely részeit olvasom el figyelmesen és melyeket nem.	5	4	3	2	1
15. Hogy jobban megértssem, amit olvasok, a szöveg értelmezéséhez pl. szótárt, enciklopédiát vagy kézikönyvet használok.	5	4	3	2	1
16. Amikor egy nehezebb szövegrészhez érek, jobban odafigyelek arra, amit olvasok.	5	4	3	2	1
17. A szövegben található táblázatok, ábrák és képek segítségével igyekszem jobban megérteni a szöveget.	5	4	3	2	1
18. Időnként megállok az olvasásban és elgondolkodom az olvasottakról.	5	4	3	2	1
19. Hogy jobban megértssem, amit olvasok, a szöveggörnyezet elemeire hagyatkozom (pl. egy szó jelentését megpróbálom kitalálni egy a szóval kapcsolatos magyarázatból, összehasonlításból vagy egy antoníma segítségével).	5	4	3	2	1
20. Azért, hogy jobban megértssem a szöveget, megfogalmazom a saját szavaimmal, amit olvasok.	5	4	3	2	1
21. Hogy jobban emlékezzek a szöveg tartalmára, megpróbálom elképzelni, vagy gondolatban képileg megjeleníteni azt, amit olvasok.	5	4	3	2	1

22. A kulcsfontosságú információk megtalálásához a szöveg tipográfiai elemeire (pl. félkövérrel vagy dőlt betűvel szedett szavak) hagyatkozom.	5	4	3	2	1
23. A szövegben található információkat kritikusan megvizsgálom és értékelem, tehát nem fogadok el bármit, csak azért, mert le van írva.	5	4	3	2	1
24. Angol nyelvű szöveg olvasása közben, az olvasottakról angolul és magyarul is elgondolom.	5	4	3	2	1
25. A szöveg különböző részeiben szereplő információkat összevetve igyekszek összefüggéseket találni az információk között.	5	4	3	2	1
26. Amikor egymásnak ellentmondó információkkal találkozom, ellenőrzöm, hogy jól értettem-e a szöveget.	5	4	3	2	1
27. Olvasás közben előre megpróbálom kitalálni, hogy mi lesz a szöveg várható mondanivalója.	5	4	3	2	1
28. Ha egy szövegrészt nehezen érthetőnek talállok, újraolvasom, hogy jobban megértsem.	5	4	3	2	1
29. Olyan kérdéseket fogalmazok magamnak a szöveggel kapcsolatosan, melyekre a szöveg olvasása során válaszokat szeretnék kapni.	5	4	3	2	1
30. A szöveg figyelmes elolvasásakor ellenőrzöm, hogy a szöveg felületes átfutása alapján a tartalmáról alkotott elképzeléseim helytállóak voltak-e.	5	4	3	2	1
31. A számomra ismeretlen szavak vagy kifejezések jelentését megpróbálom a szöveg segítségével kikövetkeztetni.	5	4	3	2	1
32. Amikor angol nyelvű szöveget olvasok, olvasás közben gondolatban angolról magyarra fordítom.	5	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX B

The English translation of the Hungarian Survey of Reading Strategies (HSORS)

This questionnaire contains 32 questions about reading strategies. Every item of the questionnaire refers to reading English academic texts (e.g., course books, research articles). This is not a test; therefore, there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your own opinion. Filling in the questionnaire is anonymous and it requires approximately 15 minutes.

Please read the sentences below carefully and indicate the extent to which you agree with them.

1= I strongly disagree

2= I disagree

3= I partly agree

4= I agree

5= I strongly agree

Please answer as honestly as possible to ensure the success of this research. Thank you very much for your help.

Don't forget that the questions refer to reading academic texts (e.g., course books, academic essays, academic journal articles, etc.)	I strongly agree	I agree	I partly agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	5	4	3	2	1
5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	5	4	3	2	1
6. When I consider the relevant pieces of information in the text, I summarise what I have read so far.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	5	4	3	2	1

8. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I like to discuss what I have read with others to check if I understood everything correctly.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organisation.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	5	4	3	2	1
14. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I use reference materials (e.g. a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	5	4	3	2	1
16. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	5	4	3	2	1
19. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	5	4	3	2	1
21. I try to picture or visualise information to help remember what I read.	5	4	3	2	1
22. I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	5	4	3	2	1
23. I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.	5	4	3	2	1
24. When reading, I think about information in both English and Hungarian.	5	4	3	2	1
25. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	5	4	3	2	1
26. When I see contradictory information in the text, I check if I have understood everything correctly.	5	4	3	2	1

27. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	5	4	3	2	1
28. When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.	5	4	3	2	1
29. I ask myself questions I would like the text to answer.	5	4	3	2	1
30. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	5	4	3	2	1
31. When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	5	4	3	2	1
32. When reading, I translate from English into Hungarian.	5	4	3	2	1