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In-Text Citation: (Lim & Shah, 2022)
To Cite this Article: Lim, L. M., & Shah, P. M. (2022). Investigating The Reading Strategy Used among Primary ESL Learners. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *12*(12), 512 – 528.

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Investigating The Reading Strategy Used among Primary ESL Learners

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Abstract

"Language learning strategies (LLS)" is shown in studies to aid its process of learning English among the learners of *"English as a second language (ESL)".* Nonetheless, a troubling number of students continue to struggle as ESL learners, even in urban areas. As a result, the goal of this preliminary study is about determination and investigation of the reading strategies that are used by *"above average and below average learners"* in primary school. The study included 70 year 5 pupils to an urban and national-type school in Johor, Malaysia. The *"Young Learners' Language Strategy"* uses Survey, which was adapted from *"Cohen and Oxford's",* was used to gather the data. The data gained was then analysed with descriptive analysis such as frequency, percentage, and mean. The findings revealed that above average students had a higher possibility than below average students to use reading strategies. Fascinatingly, the findings also indicated that above average language learners make an effort to utilise effective strategies far more often, and below average language learners tended to be using compensation strategies the most regularly. The findings have noteworthy implications for LLS research for both above average and below average ESL learners, as well as classroom instruction by teachers. Understanding learner differences and identifying which LLS both above average and below average learners used more often and less often would assist teachers to personalise their teachings according to learners' requirements to support them in becoming better learners. Future research may use the think-aloud protocol to investigate the factors to promote or inhibit this using of LLS by students in *"language learning process"* to better understand the factors that lead to variances in the use of LLS among learners of above average and below average.

Keywords: Language Learning Strategies, ESL, Reading Strategies, Above Average Learners, Below Average Learners

Introduction
Background of the Study

The necessity of reading is completely undeniable. It is not only crucial for students' academic achievement but it is also a life survival skill that everyone need. The inability to obtain reading skill through primary level education may lead to learners' lack of other literacy skills as well. This also applies to second language learners. They rely hugely on reading skill

to acquire and learn a new language. Some learners depend on individual differences to learn the English language to understand it in an easier way whereas some others face more difficulties in learning this language in a slower way (Oxford, 1990). Such an example of an individual differentiable factor is their learning strategy and their style to apply the learning strategies (Vance, 1999). These learning strategies refer to the implementation process of different learning styles for making the learning process smoother and easier so that they can learn the language in a more impactful and effective way. Furthermore, it refers to the addition of elements that are more fun and a learner-centered process to learn this language by using real words (Rubin, 1975). These learning strategies are impactful for learners for easier implementation of the learning process and make the overall process easier and this involves effective reading capabilities of learners.

Reading policies are purposeful, goal-oriented as it attempts to regulate or change the reader's abilities to interpret materials, comprehend vocabulary, and create meanings from writings (Afflerbach, Pearson and Paris, 2008). Thus, in learning a language, various reading strategies (RS) exist to ensure the that learning occurred more effectively.

Malaysia, India, the Philippines, and Nigeria were all colonised by the United Kingdom or the United States in the past, and English to this day is being used in speeches and utilised as a second language (L2) (Thirusanku & Melor, 2012). Among the Asian countries, Malaysia is one of the leading countries for implementation of a bilingual schooling system. The goal is to achieve a harmony between national and international demands and problems as reflected in language educational policy (Gill & Kirkpatrick, 2012). In regards to the Malaysian educational framework, the English language is established as the L2 (Gill, 2002) and, according to educational policy, English is one of the mandatory subjects for every level of education, meaning that "it exists alongside the native languages, and it is widely used in the spoken language, as well as in official functions in Malaysia, such as in the policymaking, the mass media, jurisdictions, higher education and other similar fields "(Thirusanku & Melor, 2012). In Malaysia instructional system, formal learning of the English language only occurs within the school's walls. Jeon-Ellis et al (2005) give definition of the L2 classroom as *"the social environment in which students approach themselves and their previous experiences, which they build up specific connections and endeavour to participate and engage in tasks in a way that suits their social needs best."* Exclusive of the pre-school stage, the official English education period for Malaysian students is at the minimum of eleven years.

During ESL learning in the past, it used a different process of increasing the reading skill of learners such as repetitive drilling, use of sceneries to stimulate their brain, consistent reading, and memorizing. As stated by Allan & Bruton (1997), thus, teachers use different stimuli for increasing the reading capabilities of students in the ESL study process so that they can achieve reading skills more effectively and easily. This refers to a constructive process of learning that encourages learners' for increasing their capabilities to understand the importance and emergence of a phrase or word of the language they have learned. According to Taylor (2020), this is the most important step for learning a language skill as phrases and words matter the most in a language so that learners can later apply these phrases in the talking and implementation process of their learning skill. Thus, their communication skill will be improved in the English language and they will also be able to write it properly without any difficulties.

Drilling is one of the most impactful ways of increasing reading skills as it focuses on the exclusive controlled practice of the learned language for increasing fluency in that language. According to Wright (2011), the overall aim of learners is to improve their language skills in a

strategic manner without any difficulties and they have to choose the most appropriate way as per their flexibility. Thus, discovery of strategies is the most important step in the learning process to build word blocks during the learning process as per their brain autonomy. According to Oxford (1990), strategies of learning are some specified courses of action to make a faster, enjoyable, self-directed, easier, and transferable learning process. This theory is divided into two strategies direct and indirect and both of these have cognitive, memory, meta-cognitive, affective, compensation, and social effects.

Rationale of the Study

This study aims to examine the ***reading strategies*** used by the primary English as their second language and compares the reading strategies used between the below average and above average learners. The study will be beneficial in enlightening the teachers on RS and instil awareness among them to use and teach the suitable strategies to their students. Teachers can aid learners in improving their reading skill through the instructions of reading strategies. According to Kucukoglu (2013), many researches show that good readers are dynamically connect with the text, and are conscious of the processes they practice to comprehend what they read. In other words, competent readers are aware of the strategies in reading. Other than that, it is also to shed light on the teachers on which strategies are suitable for their students. Discoveries from this study is beneficial in inspiring teachers to train their students to utilise whichever strategies that they think are best for their students. The findings can also be used for designing reading lessons to ensure a more impactful learning process among the students. It is essential to give guidelines and knowledge for teachers so that they can improve their teaching by getting to know the most and the least used RS among Malaysian primary ESL learners especially in national-type school. The teachers need to have a solid understanding on the RS themselves to be able to disseminate the "ideas" to their respective students. Other than that, the findings of the study will be able to give insight for teachers to develop and adapt materials for their lessons. It is particularly significant because developing reading competency is vital during the early age of life.

Problem Statement

Rastakhiz and Safari (2014) argue that the key to being a competent reader is developing an awareness of the underlying reading strategies that one employs. This is true because everyone has their own unique method of reading that they find most effective. Therefore, it is crucial for each reader to develop their own effective method of reading. In addition, ESL readers have been known to use strategies like as visualizing, rereading, and utilizing dictionaries, as well as more tailored strategies such as investigating implications and creating summaries.

Many ESL learners faced difficulties in reading English materials in secondary and tertiary levels. Teaching RS in primary education to help learners to be more literate is very important. It is not a top-secret that not only for academic accomplishment, but for progress in all aspects and phases of life, excellent reading skill must be developed from an early age. Reading, on the other hand, may be a difficult subject to grasp for many students. Nothing could be more significant to teachers than assisting students in becoming fluent and competent readers. Most learners face difficulties due to inefficient reading and learning policies necessary for building their language capacity. They are mostly unaware of the RS and how to utilise them. RS plays a crucial role in learners' learning process.

In order to be competent in the targeted language, having good RS gives a huge benefit. There should be more research on learners' RS because each learner is unique and the strategies used might differ. Furthermore, learners of different proficiency levels might also have different RS that are suitable for them. It is the teachers' job to find out which strategy suits their students best. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify RS used by Primary ESL learners and discover if there are any significance difference between above average and below average in respect to the RS used.

The majority of the literature on the topic agrees that teachers of English as a second language should use a variety of reading strategies when instructing students of varying levels of English literacy. This is especially true in the Malaysian context, where a teacher might use one set of reading strategies with a class of lower-level students and another set with students of higher-level English proficiency. It has also been emphasized that pupils of varying skill levels and sex will use various methods. Female students were observed to use supplementary aids more often than male students (Snoubar & Tamador, 2017). Using a reference book and highlighting key points are two examples of support tactics that might improve one's ability to read. Most women students use aids like highlighting key phrases and looking up words in a dictionary to interpret their meanings (Snoubar & Tamador, 2017).

Additionally, in the Malaysian ESL setting, most schools would have a mix-abilities either high level of proficiency or low level of proficiency students in one class. Except for the few convent schools that solely admit female students, students in such classrooms will be a mix of sexes. Most students, particularly in Chinese schools, will have English as a second language, which means that the readers' native language will also have an impact on how they interpret the text. As a result, without instruction in effective reading techniques, many Chinese language students struggle to make sense of the texts they are assigned to read. Students' reading techniques will be influenced by these three considerations.

Although English is a required subject beginning in primary school and continuing through college, some pupils remain illiterate despite repeated exposure to the language at all levels. In the third grade, non-readers were determined to be the main reason of kids' poor performance on reading exams (Nordin, 2013). Higher education schools often have specific reading requirements for their students. Some evidence has accumulated over time highlighting the significance of certain abilities, suggesting that students who already possess these abilities or who use certain reading practices are more likely to achieve reading success.

Aims and Objectives of the Study
The main aim of the study is to examine the reading strategies used by the primary English learners as their second language and compare the reading strategies used between the below average and above average learners.

Objectives
➢ To analyse the importance of reading strategies used by primary English Learners.
➢ To examine the factors influencing reading strategies used by primary English Learners.
➢ To examine the difficulties faced by primary English Learners on reading strategies.

Research Questions
This study regulates the following research questions:
1. What are the reading strategies used by Primary English as a Second Language Learners?

2. Is there any significance difference between below average and above average learners in respect to the reading strategies used?

Significance of the Study

According to the findings of this study, educators would do well to familiarize themselves with the many reading techniques available to them so that they may better aid their students in achieving reading comprehension. This is because, in order to ensure that their students retain what they have been taught and that they can get the most out of their students, teachers need to have a firm grasp on effective reading strategies that can be used to improve students' reading abilities before they can design an effective lesson plan. It is also important for educators to have a firm grasp of the most effective reading strategies to use with their pupils. Also, this research is significant because it allows educators to see how male and female students in Malaysian ESL secondary schools approach reading with different strategies.

Additionally, understanding the differences between Malaysian male and female ESL form 2 learners in the use of reading strategies will help the teacher apply the appropriate reading strategies in class to each gender so that both sexes of students can pay attention in class and focus on their reading objectives. The instructor will also be able to understand how the competency level of Malaysian ESL form 2 pupils influences the learners' usage of reading strategy by doing this research. A conclusion that can be derived from the current study article on teaching is that instructors play a significant role in supporting readers' reading processes by attempting to integrate the use of reading strategies on the reading materials with the activities conducted in the classroom.

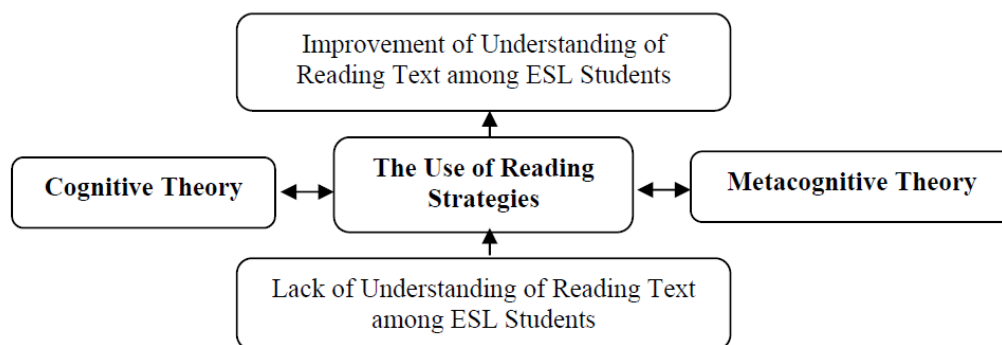## Literature Review
Conceptual Framework

Diagram 1 Conceptual Framework

This study's theoretical and conceptual framework is depicted in Diagram 1. In the context of learning a second language, reading strategies are essential to help students' reading process and guide them to understand written texts. In this framework, the reading strategies practises are linked to the two concepts of cognition and metacognition. Baker and Brown (1984) stated that when it comes to cognitive theory of learning, reading does not only pay attention to how the reader completes the specified comprehension tasks, but also pays attention to the included cognitive processes. It is said that "cognitive psychologists have studied psychological structures and processes to explain changes in learning and behaviour" (Yilmaz, 2011). Furthermore, according to Alfassi (2004), reading involves complicated

cognitive activities, which is very important for cultivating students' literacy skills in order to play a good role in the current age.

Regarding the metacognitive theory of learning, Wilson & Smetana (2009) said that learners can supervise their understanding by evaluating their development in achieving their learning objectives and control their process of learning by determining appropriate effectual strategies that allow them to perform learning tasks. They also pointed out that metacognition includes aspects of learning namely monitoring and regulation, because these features mirror the capability of the student to sort out the input, store, explore and retrieve their individual memory content. They defined metacognition as the selection, evaluation, revision, or deletion of cognitive tasks, goals, and strategies.

This study examines reading strategies based on the Young Learners' Language Strategy Use Survey that is created by Cohen and Oxford in 2002. They pointed out that learning strategies involves direct and indirect processes. Direct strategies refer to the implementation of *"compensation, cognitive, and memory strategies"* and indirect strategies comprise *"social, affective, and meta-cognitive strategies".* This research aims to discover effective reading strategies for connecting students with comprehensive reading skills like ESL strategies and as per its foundation, these two reading strategies emerge. Cognitive strategies claim to be closely related to some specific learning policies and are used in this learning process, for an example associating new phrases in the mind and then writing its main ideas, listing main points or summarising texts to form a better comprehension of reading materials. In contrast, meta-cognitive strategies need *"planning for learning, envision the learning process that occurs, monitoring one's own understanding, and evaluating the learning after completing tasks"*.

Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Each person is a unique, it is naturally expected that our behaviours, natures or qualities differ from one another. It is quite rare, or nearly impossible, to have identical traits in every aspect to another individual. This also applies during language learning with the rate at which someone learns a language is determined by a number of factors, including their surroundings, comprehension, and motivation (Amir, 2018). The study of the English language is a great example. A native speaker that has grown up speaking the English language would have had no difficulty in comprehending the language. As stated by Griffiths & Soruç (2020), non-native speakers, on the other hand, are at a disadvantage since they did not grow up in an English-speaking environment. As a result, each person's level of language proficiency varies significantly. This is also why there seem to be a variety of language learning methodologies that are regularly used.

Several research and study on the *"language learning strategies (LLS)"* has been increasing for receiving new knowledge for managing the learners' capabilities. LLSS comprises several factors of learners that influence the learning process such as *"sex, age, attitude, capabilities, learning style, and motivational factors"*. According to Oxford (1990), LLS is mainly available in two types such as direct and indirect and direct strategies (Teng and Zhang, 2019). Direct strategies involve *"compensation, cognition, and memory",* whereas indirect strategy involves *"social, affection, and meta-cognitive strategies".* According to Rubin (1975), direct strategies comprise direct use of the taught language whereas indirect does not use it directly. Efficient learners have exclusive guessing power and have the courage to learn new things and due to this reason, they can learn it easily and implement it in practical life along with gaining experience from their communications.

They are also able to communicate well with others and learn from their interactions. They are also open to making errors in order to practise, and they will reap the benefits of each and every chance they have to learn and improve. This, however, may not be the scenario with all learners. Learners have varied styles of learning and strategies in learning; thus, they learn in different ways. It is critical for all teachers to really be conscious of this and to recognise that no single learning policies that can be effective for different kind of learners. It is also strongly recommended that teachers assist students in seeking out and discovering the ideal language learning strategy that suits their learners.

English Reading Skill

Malaysia always gives more importance to English language learning in its education policies and is taught in every type of school. Malaysia makes it their second language after Malay and despite giving importance and having been taught from the preliminary to the higher secondary stage still students face difficulties to adopt this language. As argued by Jeon-Ellis et al (2005), the main problem is in practice, as most of the students do not use it outside of their classrooms and constant changes in the learning process for the betterment of the process. Thus, students face difficulties to adopt the newly developed process quickly and this causes insufficient proficiencies among students (Ab Rahman Sazali & Veloo, 2019). Students cannot construct phrases and sentences by themselves until now and this shows their critical proficiency level. *"Ministry of education of Malaysia"* worked with different educational institutions to implement the *"Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)"* to improve students' proficiency levels (Yasin & Yamat, 2021). This implementation improves the situation as it focuses on clear guidelines for the learner but it also has some difficulties as the government has implemented it without observing local trends in the country (Salleh et al., 2020). Hence, the education providers and the government of Malaysia faced tremendous difficulties to improve proficiency of students in this language learning process.

Learners have to understand that available reading skill is the basic of the language. Without being able to read the language, learners will find difficulties especially in written form. In accordance of the circumstances above, the past related studies shown the learners were often imbedded with inappropriate learning strategies (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). Enayati & Gilakjani (2020) asserted the educators tend to provide a wordlist for learners and explicitly paired the words with translations. This conventional teaching and learning method were widely applied in the learners, thus lower down their interest in learning the language. Alharthi (2020) claimed the learners were lack of opportunities to express their idea and develop reading skill due to the conventional classroom teaching. Group discussion and social ability among the learners tend to lower down by the educators because they are not in the favour of implementing discussion due to the chaotic environment during the discussion held in the classroom (Bao & Van Loi, 2020). Therefore, the language learning strategies act as an essential instrument to trigger the educators and learners about the learning styles that fitted on them in terms of their interest, motivation, and needs. Thus, examining the actual situation of English reading strategies in Malaysian schools is an important and urgent task. Hence, this study is designed aiming at finding out the reading strategies used by above average and below average learners. It is hoped that the results of this study will serve as one of the guidance for teachers to improve the quality of teaching reading strategies to primary school learners.

Methodology

Research Design

This study aims to identify the most and the least used reading strategies among the above average and below average language learners in the urban area among Year 5 pupils in national-type primary school. Hence, a survey design was implemented to collect the data.add ref The questionnaire consisting of 16 items in a Likert-scale form was used to collect the findings. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an online platform such as Google Form was used for distributing the questionnaire to all subjects. According to Eskey & Grabe (1988), study the frequency of the reading strategies used among both above average and below average learners, a quantitative approach was chosen. The approach was used because it allows the researcher to generate quantifiable data of learners' reading strategy use. The questionnaire is adapted from Cohen and Oxford's (2002) *"Young Learners' Language Strategy"* Use.

Research Site

The focus of this study is to know the procedures of learning English among Chinese national primary schools that seem to be located near urban areas of Johor, Malaysia. The school was established in 1937 with only a few dozen enrolment and the current enrolment in 2021 has reached about 1300 students. The school consists of majority Chinese and minority of the students are of different races such as the Malays, Ibans, Indians and others. Parents who send their children to the school comes from different socio-economic backgrounds like green grocers, cooks, businessmen, freelancers, government servants, politicians and many more. The incomes of the students' families also vary from low-income family to a very well-off family.

Research Subjects

All the classes in the school comprise of mix-ability students. Thus, a total of 70 pupils from Year 5 classes were chosen to be the subjects through purposive sampling method. The age of the subjects in the study were all 11 years old. Most of the subjects' first language is Mandarin and they were exposed to ESL for at least 5 to 6 years including their pre-school education. The subjects were from different socio-economic backgrounds. All of the subjects were divided into two groups mainly; above average and below average in English language. Table 1 shows the overview of the subjects involved in this study. The subjects were categorised based on criteria such as teacher's observation and subjects' performance in English monthly assessments. With these subjects, the data will have good faith due to its characteristics.

Table 1
Overview of the Subject of the Study

Year	Number of Sample		**Total**
	Above average learners	Below average learners	
Five	30	40	70

Research Instrument

Research seemed to identify the interest among young people in English language and its information needs to be gathered by using the *"Young Learner's Language Strategy (YLLSU)"* for knowing desired objectives. YLLSU is considered an important tool delivered by

Cohen and Oxford (2002), as it is a highly comprehensive tool for investigating the strategy of learning English among learners. Habok and Magyar (2018) advocate this where they mentioned that this instrument is a suitable taxonomy to be used in assessing the strategies used by ESL/EFL learners. The questionnaire consists of 16 questions. This version of Cohen and Oxford's (2002) *"Young Learners' Language Strategy"* use respectively adopted the three-point Likert scale (1: The statement isn't like you, 2: The statement is somewhat like you, 3: The statement really describes you). By watching facts, a learner can evaluate himself or herself with the instrument and find their mistakes which they can reflect on and rectify while reading various items related to the English language.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection process refers to the process of gathering and measuring suitable information absorbed from various sources to conduct hypotheses as well as evaluate outcomes. Primary Quantitative investigations have seemed to be conducted and for this reason, an online questionnaire has been prepared for conducting the survey process. The questionnaire seems to be sent by using online platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, as well as Google, meet for knowing the process of learning English as their second language.

Data Analysis

In the current study, a descriptive study was conducted to summarise the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire. Therefore, descriptive statistics comprises of frequencies, percentages, and means were calculated because these analyses were deemed as being the most appropriate for presenting the key elements of the quantitative data. The analyses could assist the researchers in determining what reading strategies were most and least used by above average and below average ESL learners. Learners' reading strategies use were analysed based on their proficiency level – above average or below average – as well as the frequency of strategy use – high, moderate, or low.

Findings

Table 3 below shows the detailed descriptive statistic for each of the responses in the questionnaire to compare the reading strategy used by the above average and below average learners.

Table 3
The Frequency of Learners' Reading Strategy Use

No	Reading Strategy		Frequency of Strategy Use (%)		
			Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	I read a lot in the language.	*Above average*	20.00	73.33	0.07
		Below average	0.00	52.50	47.50
2	I read for fun in the language.	*Above average*	56.67	30.00	13.33
		Below average	22.50	55.00	22.50
3	I find things to read that interest me.	*Above average*	80.00	13.33	6.67
		Below average	10.00	50.00	40.00
4	I look for things to read that are not hard.	*Above average*	80.00	20.00	0.00
		Below average	27.50	55.00	17.50
5	I skim over a reading for to get the main idea.	*Above average*	43.33	46.67	0.00
		Below average	0.00	70.00	30.00
6	I look for important facts.	*Above average*	13.33	33.33	53.33
		Below average	0.00	30.00	70.00
7	I read things more than once.	*Above average*	10.00	66.67	23.33
		Below average	12.50	67.50	20.00
8	I look at pictures and what under the pictures.	*Above average*	63.33	36.67	0.00
		Below average	35.00	37.50	27.50
9	I look at the headings.	*Above average*	73.33	16.67	10.00
		Below average	27.50	40.00	32.50
10	I think about what will come next in the reading.	*Above average*	46.69	26.67	26.67
		Below average	5.00	17.50	77.50
11	I stop think about what I just read.	*Above average*	53.33	20.00	26.67
		Below average	0.00	7.50	92.50
12	I underline parts that seem important.	*Above average*	20.00	26.67	53.33
		Below average	20.00	25.00	55.00
13	I mark the reading in different colours to help me understand.	*Above average*	20.00	30.00	50.00
		Below average	5.00	50.00	45.00
14	I check to see how much I understood.	*Above average*	33.33	43.33	23.34
		Below average	5.00	40.00	55.00
15	I guess the meaning by using clues from other parts of the passage.	*Above average*	43.33	40.00	16.67
		Below average	0.00	60.00	40.00
16	I use a dictionary to find the meaning.	*Above average*	76.67	13.33	10.00
		Below average	65.00	17.50	17.50
Overall Strategy		*Above average*	51.67	33.54	14.79
		Below average	14.69	42.19	43.12

The analysis of learners' overall strategy use is provided in the table above. The results showed that above average learners differed significantly from below average learners in LLS use. Above average learners employed 51.67% of the reading strategies frequently. On the other hand, below average learners only used 14.69% of the reading strategies frequently. The results indicates that the above average learners in the school are high frequency users of the reading strategies whereas the below average learners are revealed to be low frequency users of the reading strategies. As shown in the table above, 20.00% of the above

average learners agreed to the statement "I read a lot in the language", 73.33% of them feeling neutral about item number 1 and only 0.07% of the above average learners disagreed with the statement. Meanwhile, for below average learners, 0.00% agreed to item number 1, 52.50% were neutral and 47.50% disagreed. For item number 2, "I read for fun in the language", 56.67% of the above average learners agreed to the item, 30.00% of them chose neutral and 13.33% disagreed to the item whereas 22.50% of the below average learners shown agreement to the item, 55.00% of them chose neutral and another 22.50% of the below average learners chose to disagree with the item. For item number 3, "I find things to read that interest me", 80.00% of the above average learners agreed to the statement, 13.33% of the learners were neutral to the statement and only 6.67% of them disagreed with the item. On the other hand, only 10.00% of the below average learners agreed to the item, 50.00% of them stayed neutral about the statement and 40.00% of the below average learners showed disagreement to the item.

As for item number 4, "I look for things to read that are not too hard", 80.00% of the above average learners showed agreement to the item, 20.00% of them chose neutral and 0.00% of the learners disagreed. Whereas in item number 4, for below average learners, 27.50% chose to agree to the item, 55.00% chose neutral and 17.50% of the below average learners disagreed. In item number 5, "I skim over a reading to get the main idea", 43.33% of the above average learners agreed, 46.67% were neutral and 0.00% of them disagreed with the item. In contrast, 0.00% of the below average learners agreed to the statement, 70.00% of them chose neutral and 30.00% of the learners chose to disagree. For item number 6, "I look for important facts", above average learners showed 13.33% of agreement, 33.33% among them chose neutral and 53.33% of them chose to disagree. Below average learners showed 0.00% of agreement to the item, 30.00% of them chose neutral and 70.00% of the below average learners disagreed with the item. For item number 7 which is "I read things more than twice", 10.00% of the above average learners showed agreement, 66.67% among them chose neutral and 23.33% of the above average learners disagreed. As for the below average learners, 12.50% of them agreed with the statement, 67.50% chose neutral and the other 20.00% disagree with the strategy. For item number 8, "I look at pictures and what is under the pictures", 63.33% of the above average learners chose to agree with the statement, 36.67% of them chose neutral while 0.00% of them disagreed. For below average learners in the other hand, 35.00% of them agreed with the item, 37.50% of them were neutral and 27.50% of the below average learners showed disagreement to the item. For item number 9, "I look at the headings", above average learners showed 73.33% of agreement to the statement, while 16.67% of them were neutral and the remaining 10.00% of them disagreed with the item. As for the below average learners, 27.50% of the agree with the item, 40.00% among them chose neutral and 32.50% of them disagreed with the item.

For item number 10 which is "I think about what will come next in the reading", 46.69% of the above average learners showed that they agreed with the item, 26.67% of them were neutral and the remaining 26.67% of the above average learners showed disagreement. As for the below average learners, 5.00% of them agreed with the item, 17.50% of the below average learners were neutral and 77.50% of them showed disagreement. For item number 11 "I think about what I just read", 53.33% of the above average learners agreed to the statement, 20.00% were neutral while the remaining 26.67% of them disagreed. For the below average learners, 0.00% agreed with the item, 7.50% chose neutral and 92.50% showed that they disagree with the item. For item number 12, "I underline parts that seem important", 20.00% of the above average learners showed their agreement to the item,

26.67% among them were neutral and 53.33% disagreed with the item. As for the below average learners, 20.00% of them agreed with the statement, 25.00% chose neutral while 55.00% disagreed.

For item number 13 which is "I mark the reading in different colours to help me understand", above average learners revealed that 20.00% of them agreed, 30.00% among them were neutral and 50.00% of them disagreed. For below average learners, 20.00% of them agreed to the item, 25.00% chose neutral and 55.00% of the below average learners chose to disagree. For item number 14, "I check to see how much I understood", above average learners showed that 33.33% of them agreed with the item, 43.33% of them were neutral and 23.34% of them disagreed. Meanwhile, the below average learners showed that 5.00% of them agreed to the statement, 50.00% of them chose neutral and 45.005 of them disagreed with the item. For item number 15 which is "I guess the meaning by using clues from other parts of the passage", above average learners revealed that 43.33% of them agreed with the item, 40.00% of them were neutral and 16.67% of them disagreed. Whereas the below average learners revealed that 0.00% of them agreed with the item, 60.00% of them were neutral and 40.00% of them chose to disagree. For item number 16 which is "I use a dictionary to find the meaning", above average learners showed that 76.67% of them agreed with the item, 13.33% of them chose neutral and 10.00% disagreed with the item. On the other hand, the below average learners revealed that 65.00% agreed with the item, 17.50% of them were neutral and another 17.50% of them disagreed.

Table 4
An analysis of Learners' Reading Strategy Use

No.	Question Items	Mean		p-value
		Above Average	Below Average	
1	I read a lot in the language.	1.87	2.48	.010*
2	I read for fun in the language.	1.57	2.00	.072
3	I find things to read that interest me.	1.27	2.30	.118
4	I look for things to read that are not hard.	1.20	1.90	.057
5	I skim over a reading for to get the main idea.	1.67	2.30	.009*
6	I look for important factors.	2.40	2.70	.001*
7	I read things more than once.	2.13	2.08	.734
8	I look at pictures and what under the pictures.	1.37	1.95	.023*
9	I look at the headings.	1.37	2.05	.452
10	I think about what will come next in the reading.	1.80	2.73	.000*
11	I stop think about what I just read.	1.73	2.93	.000*
12	I underline parts that seem important.	2.27	2.35	.425
13	I mark the reading in different colours to help me understand.	2.33	2.35	.936
14	I check to see how much I understood.	1.90	2.50	.543
15	I guess the meaning by using clues from other parts of the passage.	1.73	2.40	.011*
16	I use a dictionary to find the meaning.	1.33	1.53	.071
(* Indicates Significance)				

From the table above, seven items revealed significant differences in mean scores between above average and below average learners. The items are: (i) "I read a lot in the language" (Above average = 1.87; Below average = 2.48); (ii) "I skim over a reading to get the main idea" (Above average = 1.67; Below average = 2.30); (iii) "I look for important facts" (Above average = 2.40; Below average = 2.70); (iv) "I look at pictures and what is under the pictures" (Above average = 1.37; Below average = 1.95); (v) "I think about what will come next in the reading" (Above average = 1.80; Below average = 2.73); (vi) "I stop to think about what I just read" (Above average = 1.73; Below average = 2.93); (vii) "I guess the meaning by using clues from other parts of the passage" (Above average = 1.73; Below average = 2.40). Compared to the above average learners, the below average learners showed less interest in employing reading strategies. The below average learners are also uninterested in thinking about what will come next in their reading and the meaning of the materials that they have just read. Meanwhile, the above average learners are showing more concern about finding and guessing the meaning of materials they have read by looking for clues and important facts. The nine items that showed no significant differences in mean scores between the two different proficiencies group of leaners are: (i) "I read for fun in the language" (Above average = 1.57; Below average = 2.00); (ii) "I find things to read that interest me" (Above average = 1.27; Below average = 2.30); (iii) "I look for things to read that are not too hard" (Above average = 1.20; Below average = 1.90); (iv) "I read things more than once" (Above average = 2.13; Below average = 2.08); (v) "I look at the headings" (Above average = 1.37; Below average = 2.05); (vi) "I underline parts that seem important" (Above average = 2.27; Below average = 2.35); (vii) "I mark the reading in different colours to help me understand" (Above average = 2.33; Below average = 2.35); (viii) "I check to see how much I understood" (Above average = 1.90; Below average = 2.90); (ix) "I use a dictionary to find the meaning" (Above average = 1.33; Below average = 1.53).

Discussion

It can be seen that there were many different learners' responses about reading strategies. Among the important findings of the reading strategies used by the above average and below average learners are the reading strategies that both above average and below average learners employed the most and the least. For above average learners, it was revealed that the reading strategies that they employed the most are "I find things to read that interest me" and "I look for things to read that are not too hard". It shows that above average learners prefer materials that are interesting and not too hard. Meanwhile, the reading strategy that the above average learner used the least is "I look for important facts" and "I underline parts that seem important". This indicates that the above average learners do not like to focus on important part of a text or reading material. On the other hand, for the below average learners, the reading strategy that they employed the most is "I use a dictionary to find the meaning". This shows that most below average learners rely on dictionary to understand vocabularies that are not familiar with them. Whereas, the reading strategy that they used the least is "I stop to think about what I just read". It indicates that most below average learners do not reflect on the text or material that they read.

Other important findings of this study also revealed that above average learners have 0.00% disagreement on the reading strategies such as "I look for things that are not too hard", "I skim over a reading to get the main idea" and "I look at pictures and what is under the pictures. On the other hand, for below average learners, they showed 0.00% agreement to the reading strategies such as "I skim over a reading to get the main idea". This is in contrast

to the above average learners where above average learners showed no disagreement to this reading strategy. Other than that, below average learners also showed 0.00% agreement to strategies like "I look for important facts", "I stop to think about what I just read" and "I guess the meaning by using clues from other parts of the passage".

Conclusion and Implications
As a conclusion, above average learners employed LLS more often than below average learners. The below average learners are not familiar with effective reading strategies which cause them to struggle in reading and comprehending English materials. LLS information can substantially lead to the advancement of ESL teaching and learning. The following consequences are proposed for ESL teachers in Malaysian primary schools, particularly those on the Chinese national-type school.

Other than that, it is critical for ESL teachers to be aware of the presence of LLS in all learners, irrespective of background or competence levels. Teachers must be aware of the reading strategies that ESL students excel at or struggle with. Learners' differences should be recognised by teachers since knowing which LLS both above average and below average learners utilise more frequently and less frequently would assist teachers in adapting their lessons to students' requirements.

There is no question that there is a strong relationship between the use of LLS and the level of proficiency of learners. As a result, strategy instruction is required for less successful learners in order for them to be more effective in learning. This study is merely a first step toward better understanding the reading strategies that above average and below average ESL learners possess and employ while reading, as well as the potential correlations between learners' proficiency level and strategy utilisation.

To address the potential alternate interpretations in this study on reading strategy employment, a more extensive study is required. Further research should look into the elements that encourage or discourage learners from using LLS during the language acquisition process.

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