

# **Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Among ESL Learners: An Online Study Conducted in Higher Education Institutes in Sri Lanka.**

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Improving reading skills among the students who study English as a second language (ESL) has gained much attention among the instructors. In light of that, the role of Metacognition in enhancing critical thinking skills and autonomous learning has become a topic of central importance. Therefore, this study is focused on assessing the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies among ESL learners in Sri Lankan Universities, through a descriptive cross-sectional study that is conducted among undergraduates who represent different streams of study. Data was gathered through an online questionnaire (in English) which was distributed via social media platforms for two weeks. The questionnaire consisted of a section on demographic information, and a separate section on metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory (MARSII) which consisted of three dimensions as Global Reading Strategies, Problem Solving Strategies and Support Reading Strategies. The researchers have obtained the informed written consent from their participants prior to the data analysis. The data gathered was analysed using SPSS 23.0, including the descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test and Turkey Post hoc test on one-way ANOVA. The researchers have observed that the mean ( $\pm$ SD) age of the participants was 21.54 ( $\pm$ 1.79) years. Most of them were female students (62.9%; n=83) and were undergraduates in the stream of law (44.7 %; n=59). When considering the participants' self-evaluation, most of them were recognised as average readers (51.5%; n=68). There was a statistically significant mean difference among the streams in awareness on Global Reading Strategies ( $p = 0.000$ ), awareness on Problem Solving Strategies ( $p = 0.000$ ), and awareness on Support Reading Strategies ( $p = 0.000$ ). According to study findings, it can be concluded that, the mean values of the GRS, PSS and SRS were at a level of medium. Therefore, it is important to make the necessary interventions to improve the reading skills of the undergraduates.

**Keywords:** Metacognitive awareness, ESL, Sri Lanka, Undergraduates, Reading skills,