The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of strategy-based reading instruction on the reading comprehension, metacognitive reading strategy awareness and foreign language reading anxiety of Pakistani Undergraduate Business Administration students in a private sector university in Karachi, Pakistan.

A quasi-experimental design was adopted and two intact groups of students were assigned to a control group (31 students) and an experimental group (31 students). A pre-test of reading comprehension based on an official version of the reading section of IELTS was conducted to ensure there was homogeneity in the level of reading ability between the two groups. In addition, the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies was measured through Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) and foreign language reading anxiety was measured through Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) at the beginning of the study.

The control group was taught through teacher-centred traditional reading instruction, whereas the experimental group was taught through strategy-based reading instruction for eight weeks through 2-hour long weekly sessions. The experimental group was trained to use 30 reading strategies (18 Cognitive, 7 Metacognitive, 3 social/affective and 2 Test-taking strategies) during the intervention following the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach and using Reciprocal Teaching Procedure Activities. At the end of the reading intervention, the post-test of reading instruction (a different official version of IELTS reading section) was conducted and the measures of metacognitive strategy awareness (SORS) and reading anxiety (FLRAS) were taken again. The data were analysed through t-tests, ANOVA and descriptive statistics.

The results of an independent samples t-test revealed that the experimental group students had scored significantly higher than the control group students on reading comprehension post-test (t-value = -2.771 and p value = .007, at the significance level of 0.05). The Cohen's d value measuring the effect size was calculated to be 0.71, indicating a medium effect of reading strategy-instruction on students' reading comprehension. The experimental group students had been divided into low, average and high proficiency groups based on their reading comprehension pre-test scores to measure the effects of strategy training on different proficiency level students. The results of ANOVA revealed that high proficiency group had gained more improvement than low and average proficiency students, whereas low and average proficiency students had achieved similar levels of improvement in reading comprehension.

The analysis of responses on SORS through an independent samples t-test revealed that the experimental group students had shown significantly higher improvement in metacognitive strategy awareness than control group students (t-value = -3.23 and p value = .002, at the significance level of 0.05). Cohen's d was also calculated to measure the effect size of reading strategy-instruction on metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, which was 0.81, indicating a large effect size. However, there was no significant difference found in the foreign language reading anxiety levels of control and experimental group students, as indicated by the analysis of their responses on FLRAS (t-value = - 1.35 and p value = .261, at the significance level of 0.05), although both the groups had shown slight decrease in their reading anxiety levels at the post-instructional stage.

The study recommends strategy-based reading instruction to be an effective option for teaching reading comprehension skills at the university level in Pakistani universities and in the contexts which share similar characteristics.

Key Words: Strategy-based reading instruction, Metacognitive strategy awareness, foreign language reading anxietySindh, Pakistan.