

EFFECTS OF TEXT TYPES ON READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE

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Abstract:

Aim of this study, is to examine the effects of narrative and expository text types on reading comprehension performance of Thirty first stage secondary students studying at an Iraqi school in the Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Apparently, this is the only Iraqi school in Malaysia under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Iraq. Reading comprehension tests were prepared according to text types in accordance to the Iraqi curriculum and were used as data collection tool of the study. t-test was administered when comparing reading comprehension marks according to text types. Findings indicate that students understand and perform better on narrative texts compared to expository texts in terms of reading comprehension.

Key words: narrative text, expository text, reading comprehension.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, the desire to learn English as a foreign language caught the attention of many educators from around the world. The learning of English Language has been an area of interest to many researchers especially to assist the development of students' performance and subsequently in the use of English language effectively.

In the field of learning English, reading is one of the most important skills which is considered as a major source for students to obtain language input Ediger (2002). Preferably reading should be an active, fluent process involving the reader and the text in building meaning. The average learners' L2 reading ability is usually well below their reading ability in the first language. This situation can impede academic progress. Second language teachers and learners normally face many challenges in the classroom. Teaching students how to use the skills and knowledge they bring from their first language, develop vocabulary skills, improve reading comprehension, rate and monitor their own improvement are just some of the elements that teachers must consider in preparing for an L2 reading class. As far as the students are concerned learning to read in an L2 is a process that involves learning skills, learning new vocabulary and collective patterns, and cultivating the ability to transfer these skills from classroom to the real world should be the priority.

In essence, Anderson (2004) defines reading as a process of readers' combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning to comprehension. Strategic reading is defined as the ability of the reader to use a wide variety of reading strategies to accomplish a purpose for reading. Good readers know what to do when they encounter difficulties. The reader's background knowledge integrates with the text to create the meaning.

Reading comprehension is the true essence of the reading process, and major process around which all other processes take place. Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.

Problems related to reading comprehension

Comprehension is the peak of reading skills, and the basis of all read operations, speed and slow in reading depends on the absorption of the reader to read and comprehend is an essential factor in the control of the whole language arts.

Nelson, Smith, Taylor, Dodd, and Reavis (1991) highlight comprehension and problems of comprehension and there are two problems related to reading comprehension, first problem; poor comprehension reason leads to poor decoding which effect comprehension and second problem; students may not know how to read for comprehension, they may not be actively focus on the meaning of what they read or know how to monitor their comprehension.

Durkin (1978) stated that 'comprehension instruction anything that is done to help learner acquire reading ability. Within this broad framework, instruction concerned with whole word identification, word meanings, and phonic and structural analyses belongs under the umbrella called "comprehension instruction". Durkin steered an observational study on reading comprehension teaching, she established that usual comprehension instruction requires mentioning, performing, and assessing process. Specifically, teachers would mention to students the skill that they sought them to practice. Then they would offer learners opportunity to practice that skill over and done with exercise book, and at that point the teacher would assess whether or not learners employed the skill effectively.

In Iraq, teachers normally tell their students to read passages and memorize the difficult and new vocabulary. Teacher gives marks for word pronunciation and reading fluency without paying attention to the meaning of the passages, and generally teachers and pupils do not give much attention to reading comprehension. Generally due to how reading in English Language is taught and learned in Iraqi schools, students confront difficulties in reading comprehension.

Text types

Narrative text is a kind of text to retell the story. The aim of narrative text is to create joy to the readers to gain a reader's interest, and the second aim of narrative text is to teach or inform like; soap operas and television drama that are used as a communication tool. Therefore, it requires a global theme, message, point, or purpose in writing the text. ground rules for the communication may differ among the various genres, such as arguments, tutoring sessions, jokes, and newspaper articles (Graesser, McNamara, Louwerse, & Cai, 2004).

The second type of text is the expository text, can be broadly explained as a factual text. Its principal goal should be to tell, describe, or perhaps influence. Samples of expository text messages are text books, biographies, autobiographies, magazines, diaries, periodicals, journals, and catalogues (Weaver III & Kintsch, 1991).

In general, narrative texts are less difficult for students to understand compared to expository texts, due to their relation between oral storytelling styles and different culture, flashbacks, these may influence into likely smooth text comprehension. Further, the visual modalities of texts – ranging from the kinds of graphics used, the length of lines and the use of elements such as pull quotes – contribute not only to readers perceived enjoyment but also to the readers' comprehension of text.

Aim of the study

In the light of this study, factors that are examined: the text i.e., narrative and expository, to find out what are the problems and which one affects Iraqi students' reading comprehension performance.

In line with the primary aim of this study to examine factors that may affect reading comprehension performance subsequently; the research question:

- Is there a significant difference between narrative and expository texts comprehension levels of first grade students?

METHOD

Thirty first stage secondary students participated in this study from the Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia Iraqi secondary school. Selected participants in this study are 15 female and 15 males students, and 2 teachers in the school participated. The students real names were replaced with codes in all the examples used to illustrate the patterns found in the data. A number was randomly assigned to each student, and this number was consistently used for the same student in the data analysis of the study. For example, student number one was coded S1 and student number 30 was S30, respectively.

Data Collection

Corresponding to the research question of this study, the data drawn from reading comprehension test, and interviews were analysed either quantitatively or qualitatively. The reading materials used in this study were narrative and expository text types based on the mandated Iraqi curriculum. According to Alderson and Banerjee (2001) they pointed out that narrative and expository may be the two texts that attract researchers' attention because these two type of texts are found to be the most different from each other. A brief process of tests development are; out of the four passages, two passage were narrative and two expository followed by five short-answer questions on each passage. The researcher handed the reading comprehension test, the researcher administered the reading comprehension test and the test took 50 minutes to complete.

Interview is usually "one to one" and "face to face" meeting in which the data gathered from the questions that were asked by the interviewer to the interviewee Griffiee (2005). The responses from interview will provide clarification, explanation about the manner reading, what kind of texts students prefer, what kind of text type is more difficult, interesting, role of background knowledge, and time to comprehend text. Based on these questions, the researcher prepared an interview guide for the secondary school English teachers and students as an instrument to collect data for information regarding factors that affects reading comprehension.

Subsequently, interviews were conducted with 10 students and 2 teachers. The interview for each participant was approximately 15 minutes and was recorded by the researcher.

Data Analysis and Results

Dependent t-test was utilized and the researcher used the content analysis method for interview data suggested by GHUMA (2011) which examines the sentence of the interview as meaningful units.

In this study, we analyzed the scores of first stage secondary students obtained from the reading comprehension test containing narrative and expository texts. In analyzing the scores mean, percentage, frequency, and standard deviation techniques. Meanwhile, *t* test was used for correlated and uncorrelated samples when comparing the reading comprehension marks of students based on the text types. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows the reading comprehension test text types. The (A) represent narrative texts, and (B) represent the expository texts.

Table: 1
Reading Comprehension Test

Test1	Test2	Total Score
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(A) Narrative Text	The hungry fox	New year's day in London	20
(B) Expository Text	Different schools	Two countries	20

Note: Test1=10 Score, Test2=10 Score

Error! Reference source not found. shows the comparison of the comprehension test scores of the first grade students based on text types.

Table: 2

Dependent Samples Test to Comparison Results from Comprehension Test Scores of 1st Stage Students while Reading Narrative and Expository texts

Paired Samples Statistics

Text Type	Test	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A	1,2	11.766	30	4.576	1.16706
B	1,2	10.733	30	4.660	1.07584

Paired Differences

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Test A – Test B	2.40	2.283	0.416	1.547	3.252	5.757	29	.000

Test A= narrative text

Test B= expository text

There were differences in the test scores. The difference in the narrative text scores ($M = 11.766$, $SD = 4.576$) was higher than the arithmetic mean of expository text comprehension scores ($M = 10.733$, $SD = 4.660$). In reading narrative and expository texts, a significant

difference between reading comprehension scores of students was observed ($t = 5.757$; $df = 29$; $p = 0.00$, $p < 0.05$). It appears that first grade students comprehend narrative texts better than expository texts.

The scores of the students on the reading comprehension test revealed the effects of text types on reading comprehension. Table 3 shows the performances of the students on narrative and expository texts. The average score of the participants on the first narrative text ($Mean = 6.167$) was higher than that on the second narrative text ($Mean = 5.600$). It shows the average scores of the students on the first expository text were ($Mean = 5.067$), and the second expository text ($Mean = 5.667$) respectively.

Table: 3
Descriptive Statistics on the Performance on the Reading Comprehension Test

Test	Mean	Standard Deviation
A1	6.167	2.492
A2	5.600	2.485
B1	5.067	2.490
B2	5.667	2.682

A semi-structured interview was conducted to elicit an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of the participants. The interview contained five guided questions. Although the questions were based on a predetermined interview schedule, 10 out of 30 students were randomly selected for the interview. Arabic and English were use during the interview for better understanding and convenience, and was tape-recorded, transcribed, and translated into English. Data elicited from the interviews were subjected to qualitative analysis, aiming at identifying the attitude categories of the students, and the data that were relevant to the research questions as reflected in Table 4.

Table :4
Interview

Questions	Perspectives	Selected Descriptor	Emerging Theme
1. Do you like reading?			
a. Like reading.	S3,S9,S11,S18,S23, and S28	Book, Journals	Reading
b. Don't like reading.	S2,S7,S15,and S25		
2. Which kind of texts type is easier?			
a. Narrative text	S11,S3,S15,S2,S23, S25,S28,and S9	Narrative text	Comprehension
b. Expository text	S7, and S18	Expository text	
3. Which kind of text is interesting?			

a. Narrative	S3,S18,S28,S23,S11,S25,and S9	Story Adventures	Text type
b. Expository	S2,S15, and S7	Technology	
4. Is there a role for background knowledge in understand of text?			
Background knowledge is important with narrative text.	S11	Vocabulary Information	Background knowledge
b. Background knowledge is important with expository text.	S7	Vocabulary Information	
5. Which kind of text takes more time to comprehend?			
a. Narrative text	S3,S18,S28,S23,S11, and S25	Short time	Time factor
b. Expository text	S2,S15,S7, and S9	Long time	

Conclusion

It is evident that students understand narrative texts better than expository texts. The findings will be useful in developing and enhancing EFL learning. In view of the results of the present study, text type's differences may merit more attention in the EFL reading and comprehension lessons in the classroom; curriculum should be enriched with narrative texts due to its importance in terms of students' performance.

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