

Reading Strategy Use in EGP and ESP Reading Tasks by Iraqi EFL Learners with High and Low Levels of Proficiency

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Abstract

This study examines ESP and EGP reading techniques in Iraqi EFL learners with high and low proficiency. The study included 100 Iraqi EFL vocational institute students (50 male and 50 female). Performance on the proficiency test divided them into high and low groups. All participants spoke Arabic first. The study's primary research tools were reading strategy surveys, EGP, and ESP reading comprehension tests. The Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory and Test of Reading Comprehension in English were used for general and specific research. EGP correlated positively with ESP reading strategies. EGP students use reading strategies more than ESP students. The study's primary research tools were reading strategy surveys, EGP, and ESP reading comprehension tests. The metacognitive awareness reading strategies inventory and English reading comprehension test were used for general and specific research. EGP correlated positively with ESP reading strategies. ESP EFL students use fewer reading strategies than EGP students. The study's primary research tools were reading strategy surveys, EGP, and ESP reading comprehension tests. They used the Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies Inventory and the Test of Reading Comprehension in English for general and specific research. EGP correlated positively with ESP reading strategies. EGP students use reading strategies more than ESP students. EGP and ESP reading strategies differed significantly between high- and low-proficiency groups. The results suggest that ESP readers, especially low-proficiency ones, need extensive strategic training. Reading efficiently is essential for EGP readers, especially low-proficiency ones. Reading extensively and practicing reading skills are required.

Keywords: Academic reading, EGP, ESP, Reading Strategy Use, Metacognitive awareness

Abbreviations: EGP= English for General Purposes, ESP= English for Specific Purposes

استخدام استراتيجيات القراءة في مهام القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية العامة واللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض تخصصية من قبل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية العراقيين ذوي المستويات العالية والمنخفضة من الكفاءة.

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خلاصة

تبحث هذه الدراسة في تقنيات القراءة باللغة الانكليزية لأغراض تخصصية و اللغة الانكليزية للاغراض العامه ، لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى الطلبة العراقيين ذوي الكفاءة العالية والمنخفضة. شملت الدراسة ١٠٠ طالب عراقي في المعهد المهني للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (٥٠ ذكراً و ٥٠ أنثى). وقد قسمهم الأداء في اختبار الكفاءة إلى مجموعات عالية ومنخفضة. تحدث جميع المشاركين باللغة العربية أولاً. كانت أدوات البحث الأساسية للدراسة هي استطلاعات استراتيجيات القراءة، والانكليزية العامة، واختبارات الفهم القرائي للغة الانكليزية لأغراض تخصصية. تم استخدام جرد استراتيجيات القراءة للوعي ما وراء المعرفي واختبار فهم القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية التي في الأبحاث العامة والخاصة. يرتبط تعلم اللغة الانكليزية العامه بشكل إيجابي مع استراتيجيات القراءة التي كذلك في اللغراض الخاصة . يستخدمها الطلاب في إستراتيجيات القراءة أكثر من طلاب تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض تخصصية. كانت أدوات البحث الأساسية للدراسة هي استطلاعات استراتيجيات القراءة في اللغة العامة، واختبارات الفهم القرائي للغة الانكليزية لأغراض تخصصية. تم استخدام جرد استراتيجيات القراءة للوعي ما وراء المعرفي واختبار فهم القراءة باللغة الإنجليزية للبحث العام والخاص. يرتبط تعلم اللغة الانكليزية بشكل عام بشكل إيجابي مع استراتيجيات القراءة لدى متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية يستخدمها طلاب استراتيجيات قراءة أقل من التي كانت أدوات البحث الأساسية للدراسة هي استطلاعات استراتيجيات القراءة، واختبارات الفهم القرائي للغة الانكليزية لطلاب تعليم اللغة لأغراض تخصصية. اختلفت استراتيجيات القراءة الخاصة باللغة لاغراض عامه واللغة الانكليزية لأغراض تخصصية بشكل كبير بين المجموعات ذات الكفاءة العالية والمنخفضة. تشير النتائج إلى أن قراء تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض تخصصية، وخاصة ذوي الكفاءة المنخفضة، يحتاجون إلى تدريب استراتيجي مكثف.

القراءة بكفاءة أمر ضروري لقراء اللغة العامة، وخاصة ذوي الكفاءة المنخفضة لغرض تطوير القراءة على نطاق واسع وممارسة مهارات القراءة المطلوبه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القراءة الأكاديمية، تعليم اللغة الانكليزية العامه، تعليم الانكليزية لأغراض تخصصية، استخدام استراتيجيات القراءة، الوعي ما وراء المعرفي.

الاختصارات :

ESP= اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض محددة

EGP= اللغة الإنجليزية للاغراض العامة

Introduction

Formal or informal, everyone reads. Reading is seen as quickly perusing a text, communication, or website. Students do not read for extended durations or briefly in academic environments, thereby delaying academic development. According to Urquhart and Frazee (2012), many students struggle to understand science, history, or math literature because they cannot organize information while reading. Reading is a critical classroom skill and a vital business ability (Grabe, 2009). According to Hyland (2004), English's dominance has transformed many researchers' and learners' academic and job lives. Reading is essential for college students (Antón et al., 2017) because it is a crucial way to gain and consolidate knowledge. More private and public colleges in Mexico require foreign language reading comprehension skills. Because most learners are not outstanding FL readers, these reading standards are often not reached. Grabe (2009) suggests that reading engagement in educational settings can be challenging due to the extensive learning involved, particularly when it comes to reading and comprehending informal texts. Thus, as Alderson (2000) points out, these learners frequently approach texts with less comprehension and more deliberately than in their home language. Even if kids are good at a foreign language, they cannot read English without appropriate education.

Reading in L2 can aid or hinder L2 student success (Taylor et al. 2006). Nevertheless, if the model is part of the teacher's toolkit, struggling readers are more likely to improve their reading skills (Rupley et al., 2009). Reading provides a solid foundation for academic and personal success. It is key to teens' school and life success. If someone can not read correctly, he can not access numerous doors to happiness and achievement. Reading is a vital yet complex topic. Reading methods are "planned activities to increase language

learning" (Anderson, 2009, p. 132). Sheorey and Mokhtari (2008) say reading styles are vital for L1 and L2 reading because they engage learners and increase text comprehension. Reading researchers have focused on second or foreign-language readers since the 1970s. According to these studies, readers improve their reading skills in many ways. Reading techniques include learning methodologies, habits, and problem-solving or study skills. Reading approaches explain how readers conceive of a text, what textual signals they pay attention to, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not. Meiraf (2013) suggests skimming, scanning, recognizing synonyms and word families, anticipating, activating general knowledge, inferring, and separating core concepts from supporting material. (1) Cognitive methods are used to manipulate language. This category includes note-taking, formal language study, summarising, paraphrasing, forecasting, analyzing, and context clues. (2) Memory strategies allow the reader to generate mental images and group knowledge and associate it with other things. (3) Using dictionaries or guessing while reading as compensatory techniques (4) Metacognitive strategies: activities used to plan, organize, and assess learning Self-monitoring, error correction, and developing a strategy are examples. (5) Self-encouragement reduces anxiety. Pritchard (1990) says that reading strategies are "acts that readers do on purpose to understand what they read." Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) define reading strategies as the cognitive processes employed by readers to interpret written information, figure out word meanings, and construct understanding from text. According to Vadasy and Sanders (2013), reading researchers have developed many ways of reading. She says these reading approaches range from skimming for a basic idea and scanning for specific information to activating past knowledge and detecting phrase structures. Bottom-up and top-down cognitive reading processes have been studied in first- and second-language reading. Goodman (1986) explains the bottom-up paradigm as deciphering letters, words, phrases, and sentences to determine their meaning. The top-down model focuses on "selecting a text's fewest and most productive bits" (Lynch & Hudson, 1991, p.218). According to Goodman (ibid), reading involves psycho-linguistic guesswork when the reader deciphers a graphic message. Galicia (2006) studies Swedish secondary school pupils' ESL reading methods. The sample includes four 15-year-olds. Participants are interviewed to acquire information. This study found that pupils exposed to reading strategies are better readers. Reading approaches boost reading comprehension. This research implies that people should use specific approaches to boost comprehension. ESP is a subset of English that focuses on training pupils in

certain areas. According to Mackay and Mountford (1978), ESP instructs English with a distinct practical objective, such as academic, occupational, or scientific purposes. Robinson (1991) states that students typically learn English out of necessity for their academic or professional pursuits.

Theoretical background

The ESP and EGP, according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987), are comparable in theory but dissimilar in application. ESP is a variant of EGP that equips students with practical linguistic abilities to facilitate their professional performance. EGP teaches English language basics at a school level when learners' occupational, professional, and academic levels are not clear. According to Widdowson (1983), ESP and EGP differ in their learning purposes. In line with Lamri (2016), EGP is defined as goal-oriented learning that does not link objectives to goals and focuses on developing universal capacities. In addition to advancing ESP and EGP teaching at this institution, this study will have a global impact. I hope our work will encourage college English programme creators and teachers to teach reading strategies more explicitly. Decision-makers in higher education and the Ministry of Education will use the study's findings as a starting point. This study will be a starting point for other Iraqi studies in this area. Since L2 reading is the most important skill for EFL students in an academic setting, their inability to read L2 materials could hinder their professional and academic development if future programmes require them to access and acquire information in the target language. University EFL programmes in Iraq need to know how well their students can read to make good reading lessons.

Research questions

This paper aimed to examine whether Iraqi EFL learners with high and low proficiency use ESP and the EGP reading technique during their English learning courses. To do so the researcher tried to find answers for three research questions explaining the purpose.

1. Is there a difference in reading strategy use between students with low and high proficiency in EGP and ESP?
2. Does the extent of reading strategies employed by Iraqi EFL students in EGP and ESP reading differ?

Limitation

This study has several limitations that require further clarification. First, there were no pre-and post-tests and no randomization, so the generalizability of the findings in this study remains questionable. In light

of this, additional research design recommendations will be made. A self-perception questionnaire was also recommended for qualitative data collection. In addition, there appears to be a lack of consistency in study results despite using comparable instruments. So, when analyzing the data, confounding variables like test anxiety, the participants' background knowledge, and their cultural background should be taken into account, or at least their effects should be controlled.

Methodology

This study employed a correlational method to investigate the reading strategies employed by high- and low-level Iraqi EFL learners in EGP and ESP. This investigation compared ESP and EGP reading strategies. This research enables us to teach reading in ESP and EGP because it identifies the issues involved (Bassegy, 1999). The survey on reading strategies and two comprehension tests were used to incorporate data from multiple sources. Many participants filled out the questionnaires. According to Dornyei and Taguchi (2010), surveys are effective when the topic has not been extensively studied. Simple, quick, and efficient questionnaires speed up data collection.

Participants

A hundred Iraqi EFL students from Addiwaniyeh vocational school, Addiwaniyah province, participated in this study. There were 50 males and 50 females from the commerce and administration department who were 18 to 23 years old. All of them were of Iraqi origin, and Arabic is their primary language. Following the proficiency test, the individuals were divided into two categories: those with advanced skills and those with lower skills. The criterion for grouping was based on the mean score, where individuals scoring below the mean were assigned to the low group, and those scoring above the mean were assigned to the high group.

Instruments

This study will collect data using the following instruments:

OTP (Oxford Placement Test)

The Oxford Placement Test would measure participants' language skills (second version). The OPT has 60 grammar and vocabulary multiple-choice questions. The first section has 50 questions about elementary and intermediate grammar and vocabulary. The second section has ten comprehension questions. The OPT took 40 minutes. Cronbac's alpha=0.86 (see Appendix A).

Inventory of Metacognitive Awareness Reading Strategies

This study used (Mokhtari and Reichard's, 2002) MARSI. It is a self-reported questionnaire about students' reading awareness and strategies. This Likert-scale inventory has 30 statements. This questionnaire measures global, problem-solving, and support reading strategies. Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) said all three subcategories had 0.80 reliability indices (see Appendix B).

English comprehension test (for general purposes)

Six items were prepared for each paragraph of five New Interchange reading passages (30 items in total). Main ideas, vocabulary, and inferences were emphasised. If texts were too easy or challenging, they would bore and demotivate students (Scarcella & Oxford, 1990). Talebi's (2015) test was used in this study.

English comprehension test (for specific purposes)

ESP reading test passages were from "English for Computer Students" (Haghani, 2001). Students were tested on computer engineering reading passages. It used Talebi's (2015) test.

Findings and analysis

This study examined how Iraqi English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners with different levels of proficiency use reading strategies in English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The study included a total of 100 Iraqi students who were enrolled in Addiwaniyeh Vocational School and were studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Every student completed a background survey and took the Oxford Placement Test to gather their details and evaluate their language proficiency. The participants were categorized into two groups based on their language proficiency: high and low. After that, they had 30 minutes to complete the MARSI (Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory). Since there was no right answer and the participants' anonymity was kept, MARSI valued their honest comments.

Data Analysis

Once the data had been collected, it was transcribed and translated into a more manageable format. We analysed the data collected for this study using SPSS. It is now ubiquitous in scientific research due to its capacity to manage vast quantities of numerical data efficiently (Hinton et al., 2014). SPSS is a well-known and reputable programme that provides a number of tools for identifying patterns in numerical data. SPSS is one of the most popular programmes for analysing quantitative educational research data (among others). This is because it is relatively easy to use (i.e., data can be easily entered or imported into SPSS) and because it permits extensive statistical analysis of the data. Since SPSS was available for free at the

institution where the researcher was enrolled at the start of the survey, he or she did not have to worry about financial or time constraints when using the programme.

Discussion

We used SPSS version 25 to compare high-and low-proficiency Iraqi EFL learners in EGP and ESP. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show descriptive statistics for EGP, ESP, and MARSII scores. Reading tests and MARSII had high internal consistency reliability, 0.94 and 0.80. (Weinberg, 1995) The two groups' responses to the research questions were compared using independent sample t-tests. The administration of the research instruments produced the subsequent findings:

The initial research inquiry sought to determine whether Iraqi EFL students employed distinct reading strategies when engaging with English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) reading materials. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present descriptive statistics for the EGP and ESP reading comprehension and MARSII scores (measuring reading strategies).

	High-proficiency (N = 100)		Low-proficiency (N = 100)		Total (N = 200)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Reading tests						
EGP	17.58	1.47	14.56	1.71	16.07	2.20
ESP	16.23	1.96	10.44	2.79	13.34	3.77

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics related to the EGP and ESP reading comprehension tests

	High-proficiency (N = 100)		Low-proficiency (N = 100)		Total (N = 200)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
MARSII (Total)						
EGP	116.95	17.84	74.45	10.06	95.70	25.74

ESP	94.97	10.79	62.89	17.15	78.93	21.51
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Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics related to the EGP and ESP MARSII (reading strategies) scores

A statistical analysis using an independent sample t-test was conducted using SPSS version 25 to address the initial research question. The inferential statistics are in Table 4.3. The table displays the results for EGP and ESP students regarding their usage of reading strategies. EGP students had a mean score of 116.95 with a standard deviation of 17.84, while ESP students had a mean score of 94.97 with a standard deviation 10.79. The t-test, conducted on a sample size of 200, yielded a t-value of 7.06 and a p-value less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference in reading strategy usage between the two groups. Students employed more strategies in the EGP (English for General Purposes) course than in the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) course.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>P value</i>
EGP	116.95	17.84	385.589	7.069	.000
ESP	94.97	10.79	62.89	17.15	78.93

Table 4.3. Results of the independent samples *t*-test between the EGP and ESP MARSII scores

For the second research, question that compared low- and high-proficiency L2 EGP learners' reading strategies. The table below demonstrates that high- (M = 116.95, SD = 17.84) and low-proficiency EGP students employ different reading strategies; $t(200) = 20.74$, $p < 0.05$. Low-proficiency L2 EGP readers likely did not always use reading strategies. Respondents preferred no reading strategy. These learners may have used L2 reading strategies more often if they were emphasised more.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>P value</i>
EGP	116.95	17.84	385.589	7.069	.000

	116.95	17.84			.000
High			156.239	20.747	
	74.45	10.06			
Low					

Table 4.4 presents the t-test results on random samples comparing high and low EGP MARSII scores.

Part 2 of question 2 asked if low- and high-proficiency L2 learners used different reading strategies in ESP. Table 4.5 shows ESP descriptive and inferential statistics below. The table shows a statistically significant and meaningful difference in reading strategy use between high- and low-proficiency ESP students; $t(200) = 15.82$, $p 0.05$.

ESP	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>P value</i>
High	34.97	10.79	166.782	15.828	.000
Low	52.89	17.15			

Table 4.4 presents the t-test results on random samples comparing high and low ESP MARSII scores

Discussion

The initial research question sought to ascertain whether Iraqi L2 learners utilized distinct reading strategies when examining ESP and EGP. The inquiry elicited a favorable reply. There was a noteworthy and positive correlation between the ESP and EGP groups concerning the utilization of reading strategies. The EGP group of EFL students employs a greater variety of reading strategies than the ESP group. In contrast to the results obtained by Talebi and Fallahi (2018), this study needs to identify any statistically significant distinctions between the two cohorts. In the Persian, EGP, and ESP reading proficiency domains, they observed no significant differences between L2 learners with high/low proficiency levels. While there is evidence that the general proficiency level of L2 is a substantial predictor of reading performance in L1 (Persian), EGP, and ESP, it is also essential to consider motivation and attitude towards reading in L1 and L2.

The second research inquiry investigated whether there were disparities in strategy utilization between L2 learners with high and low proficiency in EGP and ESP. The responses to the second and third research inquiries indicated that students with high and low ability in EGP and ESP utilized significantly different reading strategies. The results of this study align, albeit to a lesser degree, with those of Talebi and Azadegan (2020), who similarly observed no statistically significant distinction between high-achieving and low-achieving groups in ESP reading ability, but did identify a significant difference in EGP reading proficiency between the two groups. Cook (2003) states that acquiring a foreign language in its native tongue is more time-consuming and less fruitful. However, if their L1 foundation is substantial, more students will advance to L2. Hence, college students must acquaint themselves with the L2 code to read and comprehend texts of diverse general and specialized genres autonomously.

Conclusion

Reading strategies for ESP and EGP exhibited a substantial positive correlation. Compared to the ESP group, the EGP group comprises EFL students who employ more reading strategies. A notable distinction also existed between students who possessed high and low levels of proficiency in EGP and ESP and those who utilized reading strategies of the former. The most and least prevalent reading strategies employed by Iraqi EFL students in the EGP group are "going into the text with a specific purpose in mind" and "verifying the accuracy of my hypotheses." The approaches that Iraqi EFL students in the EGP group utilized support reading strategies "I take notes while reading to help me understand what I am reading" and "I ask myself questions I would like answered in the text" were the most and least frequently employed. The problem-solving strategies used most and least often by Iraqi EFL students in the EGP group are as follows: "I read slowly but carefully to ensure that I comprehend what I am saying" and "I reread challenging texts to improve my comprehension," respectively.

Implications

Ghaith (2018) stated that student-centered cooperative learning Self-efficacy increases with academic and personal support and a respectful student-teacher environment. Readers with low self-efficacy delay or skim, but kids are motivated (Nevill, 2008). Reading comprehension improves with self-efficacy in EFL. EFL teachers' mindsets can boost students' confidence and reduce reading anxiety, improving reading comprehension. Planning is essential for ESP beginners. Learning L2 reading strategies

with explicit instruction and modeling is effective. The reading strategy helps struggling readers monitor comprehension and use background knowledge: the teacher models and EGP reader's practice. Although not habit-forming, some reading is improving.

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