

A CROSS-LINGUISTICS ANALYSIS OF THE ROLES OF LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE ON READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to find out the roles of linguistic knowledge on reading comprehension performances in Malay as a native language (L1) and in English as a foreign language (EFL). The study involved ten 10th Grade students at a public school in Malaysia. The roles of linguistic knowledge were examined by analyzing the difference in participants' reading comprehension performances in two conditions: Timed and Untimed reading of texts and completing the reading comprehension tasks. Two reading comprehension texts were used in the study: A text in the participants' native language (L1) and a text in the EFL. The reading procedures and the administration of comprehension tasks for both texts were similar for the Timed and Untimed conditions. The Timed condition duration was determined using Leslie & Caldwell's (2004, 2006) coding for grade-level fluency rate. A set of reading comprehension items for each reading text was constructed based on the selected texts and validated by two experts in both languages respectively. A scoring system was constructed in scoring the comprehension items for both texts. The comprehension scores for each participant obtained in both conditions were compared. The findings show that the participants' reading comprehension scores in the Untimed and Timed conditions for the L1 text are significantly better than their scores in the Timed and Untimed conditions for the L2 text. Based on the findings, it is inferred that the linguistic knowledge in the language of the text has its share in determining one's reading comprehension performance. The findings in this study have implications in curriculum design and procedure on the importance to include instructional elements that help enhance students' linguistic knowledge.

Keywords: Reading comprehension, linguistic knowledge, comprehension performance, cross-linguistics