

The Intercorrelation between Text Typology and Strategy Use in Textual Reading among Moroccan English Department University Students

^[1] Mohammed Msaddek
Delegation of Salé, Morocco

Abstract— The present study is a succinct manifestation of the extent to which text typology (i.e., narrative, expository) can have an effect on English Department learners' strategy use during the reading act at the pre-testing as well as post-testing stages. Two selected Moroccan EFL groups, control (n=50) and experimental (63), majoring in English Language Studies, were addressed with a view to thoroughly investigating the issue at hand and reaching robust, comprehensive findings. For achieving this, a series of such research instruments as reading comprehension tests (i.e., pre-test, post-test), reading strategy instruction and reading comprehension texts (i.e., narrative, expository) were implemented throughout the conduct of this research. The findings revealed that text typology is a strong variable affecting the frequency of the use of some strategies among both EFL groups (i.e., control, experimental) at the pre-test and post-test levels. Finally, some useful implications and applications relevant to textual synthesis are presented and a few suggestions for future research are called upon.

Keywords: expository text, narrative text, reading comprehension, strategic reading, strategy use, text genre

I. INTRODUCTION

It is worthy of claiming that undertaking the reading comprehension act can only come into effect if strategic reading processes are invoked and tapped by EFL learners. As postulated by many reading researchers (e.g., Goodman, 1970; Olshavsky, 1976-77; Yang, 2006; Shang, 2011), reading is an active process in which the reader utilizes efficient strategies to understand the textual information. This reflects the view that the receptive skill of reading, which represents a huge part in the language learning process in any academic context, can be conducted in a successful way only if learners are highly acquainted with the underlying strategies that are deemed indispensable footsteps towards the achievement of textual comprehension. This being said, it is worthy of note that there exists an interactive interplay between the reading strategy use and the meaning-getting process.

Even if many reading research specialists have delved into a deep investigation of the reading act with respect to text genre (i.e., narrative, expository) in their studies (e.g., Goelman, 1982; Zabrocky & Ratner, 1992; Best et al., 2008; Baretta et al., 2009; Yoshida, 2012), they rarely, if ever, tend to cope with the extent of the frequency of diverse reading strategy use as to narrative and expository texts. In other terms, they postulate that some reading strategies are used more frequently than others among Moroccan EFL learners whilst processing academic texts of narrative and expository sorts is in need of academic

research support and sufficient corroboration. Additionally, throughout the existing reading research pertinent to text genre, the effect of the latter on a single reading strategy or some specific strategies is a common, constant investigation conducted by researchers. Thus, the present study tends to bridge the apparent research gap by exploring the correlation between the variable of text genre (i.e., narrative, expository) and such diverse strategies as predicting, inferring, visualizing, paraphrasing, rereading at the pre-testing and post-testing levels. This will manifest both the plain interplay of text genre and strategic reading mode among Moroccan EFL learners and the extent to which the text-based strategies are „genre-specific“.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Strategies

Strategies are viewed as “potentially conscious and controllable activities” (Pressley et al., 1985). By being engaged in a cognitive task, EFL learners, especially mature ones, deliberately select and employ strategies with the purpose of facilitating the process of reaching an adequate comprehension. In fact, the use of strategies is inextricably interwoven with both simple tasks which require a small amount of efforts and highly complex tasks that entail concentration and focused attention. This shows that the making use of strategies, as important footsteps to fully process information and make learning tasks

easier, necessitates intention and effort on the part of the learner. In this sense, Ellis (1994) notes that if strategies become so automatic that learners are no longer conscious of using them, they will lose their significance as strategies. This reveals that the component of „consciousness“ is primarily associated with the use of strategies. In the context of reading, Block (1986) admits that strategies “indicate how readers conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand”. In principle, strategies are primarily made use of by learners with a view to constructing a complete understanding of a particular written text. In this regard, strategies do assist readers to undertake their reading task in a successful manner by relating their previously acquired knowledge to the text content and by attempting to predict and infer the sought meaning. Additionally, paraphrasing, and comprehension checking are other strategies that readers employ in an attempt to attain textual understanding. Plausibly, strategies are the mental operations via which readers purposefully cope with the text and make sense of what they read (Barnett, 1988).

B. Importance of Strategy Use

The use of strategies in reading written texts has proved to be an efficient means of constructing a sufficient understanding of the included content. This view is supported by Huang, et al. (2009) who posit that “the effective use of reading strategies has been recognized as an important way to increase reading comprehension”. Put differently, the development and use of certain strategies can provide EFL learners with a solid basis upon which they approach various kinds of textual discourse (i.e., narrative, expository) and improve their reading performance in an efficient way. Accordingly, the functioning role of strategy use is embodied in facilitating the process of extracting the meaning from the text. Many studies have revealed a close link between strategy use and reading achievement (e.g., Barnett, 1988; Anderson, 1991; He, 2008; Huang et al., 2009; Li, 2010). In effect, the significance of the reading strategy use lies in enabling the learners to deal with a diverse range of written materials with a high degree of efficiency and perfection. In fact, since strategies represent “knowledge of procedures” (Pressley & Harris, 2008) that can be applied to any cognitive undertaking (e.g., text processing), they serve the ultimate purpose of accomplishing an effective comprehension of the textual content. They are deemed a potential medium via which learners can proceed in their reading process with a view to exploring the meaning of words/sentences and paragraphs more successfully. This reveals that the use strategies while tackling written texts of any type (e.g., narrative, expository) can be productive and useful.

C. Interactive View of Reading

The interactive approach involves “an integration and combination of both top-down and bottom-up approaches” (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000) since the task of textual reading, as a cognitive process, requires readers to rely on two diverse knowledge sources (e.g., background knowledge, textual information). This fact is espoused by Anderson and Pearson (1988) who posit that during the process of reading, the reader is expected either to find a mental „home“ for the textual information or to alter an existing mental „home“ in order to understand the new information (p.37). In this sense, reading written texts for attaining comprehension entails that readers match up what they already know with the text content. Thus, the process of depending on what is stated in the text and activating prior knowledge is the main principle upon which the interactive approach is strongly based. Research Objectives & Research Questions The current exploratory study has a two-fold purpose. It showcases the impact of text genre on Moroccan English department university learners“ strategy use during the reading process. It is also intended to reveal the extent to which strategy instruction can impact English department university learners“ strategy usage with regard to text type (i.e., narrative, expository). Accordingly, the following two research questions are deemed as a baseline for investigating the issue under critical consideration. 1- To what extent does text typology impact the Moroccan English department university learners“ reading strategy use? 2- To what extent does reading strategy instruction impact Moroccan English department university learners“ reading strategy use whilst reading narrative and expository texts?

III. METHOD

A. Participants

A sampled 113 Moroccan English department university students took part in the present study. The target EFL learners are at the first-semester level studying at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed V- Agdal in Rabat. Indeed, two groups were selected at random. One group consisting of 63 students was assigned to the experimental condition and the other group of 50 students, serving as the control group, received no treatment.

B. Procedure

Predicated on a pre-post-test design, the current exploratory study involves the administration of pre- and post-tests to the control and treatment groups. At the pre-testing stage, both groups (control &

experimental) were pre-tested on narrative and expository written discourse and given a „self-report questionnaire“. Following this, the control group (50) was exposed to the traditional instruction of reading comprehension without being initiated into any systemic training in strategy application. On the contrary, the treatment group (63) was instructed in basic reading strategies for a semester-long period (Fall Term/ 2012). This was accompanied with a „self-report questionnaire“ for measuring the learners“ strategy knowledge and usage throughout the course of text processing (i.e., narrative, expository). The data reported by the target subjects in the „self-report questionnaire“ were computed through the Excel software Program (version 2007) in an attempt to reveal the frequency of strategy use among both groups (i.e., control, experimental) during the processing of narrative and expository written discourse. The strategic processes reported by the sampled learners were numerically counted. Further, illustrative figures reflecting the attained findings were used.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

A. EFL Learners' use of predicting in text reading

Upon the examination of the target subjects“ retrospective insights as to predicting, it can be declared that the overwhelming majority of the EFL participants made use of this technique as an effective means of facilitating their understanding of the text. This is showcased in Figure 1.

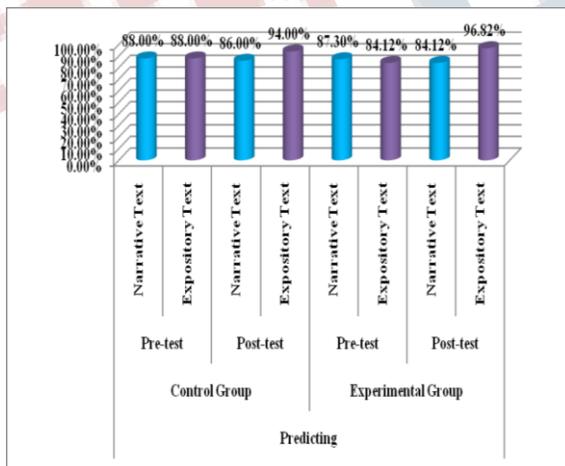


Figure 1. Frequency of predicting use among EFL groups“ at pre- and post-test levels

It is obvious that the strategy of predicting the content of the given written texts (e.g., narrative, expository) was reported to be relied on by a great majority of the participating subjects (i.e., control, experimental). This indicates that, prior to being engaged in the reading text,

EFL learners usually formulate a preliminary overview about what is incorporated in the textual input. For instance, most of the subjects relied on predicting as a gateway into text ideas and views with different percentages for the narrative and expository texts at both pre-testing and post-testing. This fact reveals that predicting the text meaning is not genre-specific given its extended use across text type (i.e., narrative, expository) among EFL learners. It is executed by learners in tackling any given textual input (Afflerbach, 1990; Berardo, 2006).

B. EFL Learners' use of inferring in textual reading

As was the case with meaning prediction, inferring the meaning of words/sentences whilst coping with written discourse is effected by the learners on a regular basis. This is illustrated in the following figure.

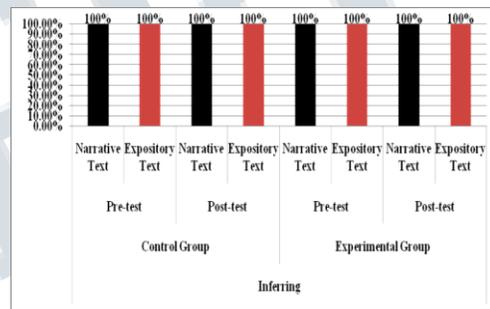


Figure 2. EFL groups“ frequent use of inferring at pre- and post-testing

As shown in Figure 2, all the target readers resorted to inferring the meaning of words and sentences. However, this inferential process can be executed in various ways as the primary recurrent moves learners have recourse to in their endeavor to interpret the textual content involves mainly „guessing the meaning from context“ and „reading the whole sentence“ or „relating the sentences to other ones“. In fact, both the control and experimental groups had recourse to the inferring strategy while processing the text content (i.e., narrative, expository) at the pre-testing and post-testing levels. Thus, as claimed by many researchers (e.g., Moreillon, 2007; Baretta et al., 2009), the achievement of understanding is closely interrelated with the extent to which the readers can draw accurate inferences from the content of the texts.

C. EFL Learners' Use of visualizing in text reading

Visualizing is invariably used by EFL learners in the act of reading. Its use by the groups (control & experimental) was primarily associated

with the processing and synthesis of the narrative written texts. This is displayed in figure 3.

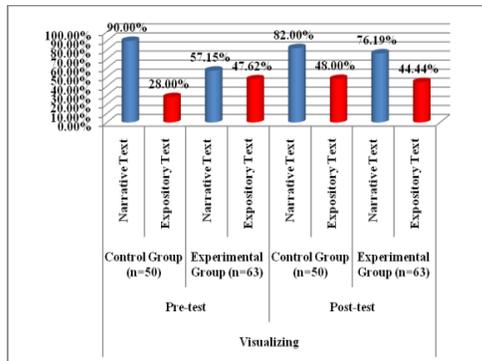


Figure 3. EFL groups' frequent use of visualizing at pre- and post-test stages

It is evident that most subjects (i.e., control, experimental) did not show heavy dependency on this mental process, namely in reading the expository text. This evinces the extended degree of implementing the visualizing strategy in tackling the narrative written discourse. Most notably, it can be acknowledged that the strategy of visualization was more frequently used by EFL learners in processing the narrative texts since the content of this genre entails the building up of mental images which extensively facilitate the comprehension process in varying ways. The fact that visualizing is bound up with the analysis of the narrative text is in concordance with Denis's (1982) claim that "one interesting feature of narrative texts in particular is that they appear to induce visualization in the reader as part of the reading process".

D. EFL Learners' use of paraphrasing during reading
Paraphrasing was basically recruited by the participating EFL learners during the analysis and synthesis of both types of written texts (narrative & expository) at both the pre-testing and post-testing levels. The results are manifested in Figure 4.

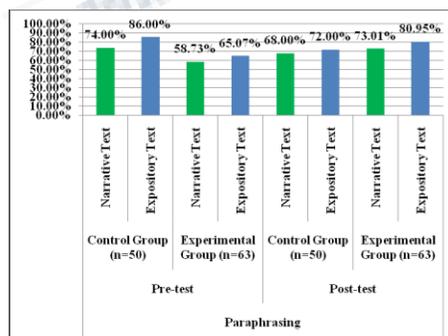


Figure 4. EFL groups' frequent use of paraphrasing at pre- and post-testing

In effect, though paraphrasing was used by the target

groups in reading the narrative written discourse, a highly significant number of the learners in both groups did recruit the paraphrasing technique during reading the expository text in a substantive way. This features that by rephrasing some difficult statements and ideas set forth in expository written texts, EFL learners can make the textual content more accessible and easier to digest in an effective manner. This reveals that this strategic step can assist the target learners to interpret the message that the author/writer intends to convey via the text. However, paraphrasing is performed by the learners slightly better in the narrative than expository EFL text since the latter type requires more frequent use of paraphrasing which facilitates the achievement of adequate understanding (e.g., Geva & Reyan, 1985; Zabucky & Ratner, 1992).

E. EFL Learners' use of rereading

Occupying a fundamental part of the textual comprehension procedure during textual analysis, it is apparent that rereading was relied upon by a greater number of the control and treatment EFL groups in an attempt to strengthen their mastery of the assigned texts' content. The frequent usage of text reprocessing among the sampled EFL learners is shown in the ensuing Figure.

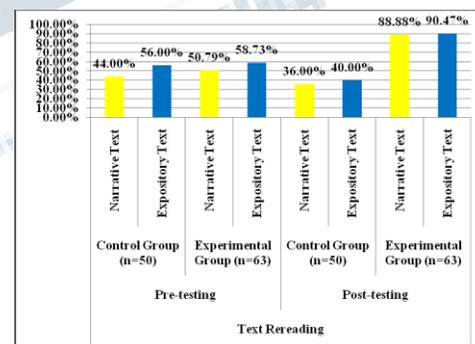


Figure 5. EFL groups' frequent use of rereading at pre- and post-testing stages

As manifested in Figure 5, the dominant use of rereading is embodied in processing expository texts among both groups along the pre-post-test continuum. One plausible explanation for the EFL learners' engagement in somewhat extensive rereading whilst handling the expository texts is that the latter include difficult sentences/ paragraphs. When faced with many difficult sentences, learners opt for re-analyzing the entire paragraph or the text so as to have an overall overview of the core ideational content. Though the narrative written text requires learners to reread the content for the sake of

having a clear perspective of what stated, they cope with this genre of text with somewhat greater facility. This view supports Geva and Reyan's (1985) claim that the learners experience greater difficulty in discovering the logical relations in the expository texts than the narrative ones. Overall, it seems that text genre has an impact on the sampled EFL students' strategic reading behavior throughout the conduct of the comprehension process. In fact, it is manifest that the disparity at the level of strategy use frequency in coping with narrative and expository reading texts is a consistent variable among EFL learners. Given that some strategies (i.e., predicting, inferring) were recruited with roughly similar percentages in text reading, it is fairly observable that other strategies (e.g., visualizing, paraphrasing, text rereading) were used with rather different proportions across the narrative and expository reading texts included in the pre-test and post-test. For instance, the control and treatment subjects depended on the strategy of visualizing in reading the narrative text in an intensive way, whereas in processing the expository written text, the subjects did make use of this strategy with a minimal degree. Also, the use of paraphrasing and rereading appears to be „genre-oriented“ since recourse to these strategic moves while analyzing the expository written texts at the pre-test and post-test levels was made with a high proportion among both groups. This attested view is in utter concert with some researchers“ (e.g. Duke, et al., 2011) assertion that readers engage in different processes when reading different kinds of texts. It is of note that the influence of the text type on strategy usage had been consistent throughout the reading strategy intervention. The wide scale of the application of these „genre-specific“ strategies (i.e., visualizing, paraphrasing, rereading), which involve cognitive and critical thinking on the part of EFL learners, rests on the genre of the text under thorough analysis. Indeed, many researchers (e.g., Francis & Hallam, 2000) maintain that learning in higher education is impacted by many variables such as subject prior knowledge, learning approaches and the ability to deal with text type. This shows that the influence of text genre can be deemed one major factor, among others, in the reading process.

V. CONCLUSION

It can be claimed that the target learners' reading strategy use was not uninfluenced by the text genre (narrative & expository) they were exposed to. During the cognitive act of reading, recourse to some strategies was more frequent and higher in reading the narrative text than reading the expository text and vice versa among the target EFL subjects. This shows that differential frequency at the level of strategy use when reading differing text types (e.g., narrative, expository) is a common mode of strategic behavior among EFL learners. This is in concert with

previous pertinent research (e.g., Geva & Reyan 1985; Zabrocky & Ratner, 1992; Best et al., 2008; Yoshida, 2012). Indeed, the influence of the component of text type on the use of some strategies (i.e., visualizing, paraphrasing, rereading) did persist from the pre- to the post-test stage. This can be mainly attributed to the nature of text genre which entails the frequent use of some text-based techniques. The implied perspective is that the EFL university learners are to be exposed to differential text types (e.g., narrative, expository) on a frequent basis. This leads them to invoke some „genre-specific“ strategic moves that aid in the sense-making act. Also, by enabling EFL learners to strategize the content of varying text types (e.g., narrative, expository), along with strategy training, they can have a substantive degree of awareness as to the strategic requirements of each given text type. Hence, it is recommended that a wide range of narrative and expository written texts be assigned to the first-semester English department learners. In brief, granted that the study is undertaken within the context of the Faculty of Letters & Humanities in Rabat, it is of critical import that other higher education institutions be representative case studies in future related research. Further, the postulate that either EFL female or EFL male learners could resort more frequently to some strategic moves while coping with academic texts of narrative and expository sort can be taken into consideration in prospective reading-oriented research.

REFERENCES

- [1] Afflerbach, P., "The influence of prior knowledge and text genre on readers' prediction strategies". *Journal of Reading Behaviour*, vol. XXII, no. 2, pp.131-148, 1990
- [2] Anderson, N., "Individual differences in strategy use in second language reading and testing". *Modern Language Journal*, vol.75, no. 4, pp. 460-472, 1991
- [3] Anderson, R., C., and Pearson, P., D. A schematic view of basic processes in reading comprehension. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine, and D.E. Eskey (Eds.), *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading* (pp. 37-55). New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988
- [4] Baretta, L., Tomitch, L. M. B., MacNair, N., Lim, V. K., and Waldie, K. E. "Inference making while reading narrative and expository texts: An ERP study". *Psychology and Neuroscience*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp.137-145, 2009

- [5] Barnett, M. *More than Meets the Eyes: Foreign Language Reading*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall Regents, 1988
- [6] Berardo, S., A. The use of authentic materials in the teaching of reading. *The Reading Matrix*, vol. 6, no.2, pp. 60-69, 2006
- [7] Best, R. M., Floyd, R. G., and McNamara, D. S. "Differential competencies contributing to children's comprehension of narrative and expository texts". *Reading Psychology*, vol.29,no.2, pp.137-164, 2008
- [8] Block, E. "The comprehension strategies of second language readers". *TESOL Quarterly*, vol.20, no. 3, pp. 463-494, 1986
- [9] Celce-Murcia, M., and Olshtain, E. *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching: A Guide for Language Teachers*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000
- [10] Denis, M. "Imaging while reading text: A study of individual differences". *Memory and Cognition*, vol.10,no.6, pp.540-545, 1982.
- [11] Duke, N., K., Pearson, P., D., Strachan, S., L., and Billman, A., K. Essential elements of fostering and teaching reading comprehension. In S.J. Samuels & A.E. Farstrup (Eds.), *What Research Has to Say about Reading Instruction* (4th ed., pp.51-93). Newark, DE: The International Reading Association, 2011.
- [12] Ellis, R. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- [13] Francis, H., and Hallam, S. "Genre effects on higher education students' text reading for understanding". *Higher Education*, vol.39,no.3, pp.279-296, 2000.
- [14] Geva, E., and Ryan, E. B. "Use of conjunctions in expository texts by skilled and less skilled readers". *Journal of Reading Behavior*, vol.17, no.4, pp. 331-346, 1985.
- [15] Goelman, H."Selective attention in language comprehension: Children's processing of expository and narrative discourse". *Discourse Processes*, vol. 5, no.1, pp.53-72, 1982.
- [16] Goodman, K. "Reading as a psychologicistic guessing game". In H. Singer and R. b. Ruddell. (Eds), *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*. Newark, N.J.: International Reading Association, 1970.
- [17] He, T. "Reading for different goals: The interplay of EFL college students' multiple goals, reading strategy use and reading comprehension". *Journal of Research in Reading*, vol.31, no.2, pp.224-242, 2008.
- [18] Huang, H., C., Chern, C., L., and Lin, C., C. "EFL learners' use of online reading strategies and comprehension of texts: An exploratory study". *Computers & Education*, vol.52, no. 1, pp.13-26, 2009.
- [19] Li, F. "A study of English reading strategies used by senior middle school students". *Asian Social Science*, vol.6, no.10, pp.184-192, 2010.
- [20] Moreillon, J. *Collaborative Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension: Maximizing your Impact*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2007.
- [21] Olshavsky, J., E. "Reading as a problem solving: An investigation of strategies". *Reading Research Quarterly*, vol.12, no.4, pp. 654-674, 1976/1977.
- [22] Pressley, M., and Harris, K., R. (2008). Cognitive strategies instruction: From basic research to classroom instruction. *Journal of Education*, vol.189, no.1/2, pp.77-94, 2008.
- [23] Pressley, M., Forrest-Pressley, D., Elliot-Faust, D. L., and Miller, G. E. "Children's use of cognitive strategies, how to teach strategies, and what to do if they can't be taught". In M. Pressley and C. J. Brainerd (Eds.), *Cognitive Learning and Memory in Children* (pp.1-47). NY: Springer-Verlag, 1985.
- [24]Shang, H., F. "Exploring the relationship between EFL proficiency level and reading strategy use". *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol.1, no.3, pp.18-27, 2011.
- [25]Yang, Y. "Reading strategies or comprehension monitoring Strategies?" *Reading Psychology*, vol.27, no.4, pp. 313-343, 2006.
- [26]Yoshida, M. The interplay of processing task, text type, and proficiency in L2 reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, vol.24, no.1, pp.1-29, 2012.
- [27]Zabrucky, K., and Ratner, H. H. Effects of passage type on comprehension monitoring and recall in good and poor readers. *Journal of Reading Literacy Research*, vol.XXIV, no.3, pp.373-391, 1992.