The Effect of Genre Preference on Reading Comprehension of Intermediate Level Students

A Case Study in Noor Institution of Sousangerd City

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Abstract: This study was performed to investigate the probable effects of genre preference on reading comprehension on intermediate students attending the institution of Noor in Sousangerd city. Twenty-two participants were identified and given a test of Nelson English and then based to their scores, they were considered as intermediate level students. The questionnaire contained three genres; Drama, Comedy and Science Fiction. It was given to participants for them to choose their favorite genre. Then the researcher used these three genres of Drama, Comedy and science fiction as 3 English authentic short stories. After giving each story to the participants, comprehension questions were given as a post-test for the participants to answer. The data then was analyzed according to the average of participants to the whole of the class and the average of participants to participants that favored the same genre group. Interesting facts were yielded from calculating the above-mentioned averages of participants' scores. The results revealed that genre preference had no effect on reading comprehension in intermediate level students and that other criteria should be evaluated to master the whole theme in this field.

Keywords: reading comprehension, genre preference

Introduction

Recently there has been wide interest in second language reading. Reasons this could be sociopolitical, cognitive and pedagogical. The effect of genre preference on reading comprehension has not been studied extensively in recent decades. The ability to read is recognized as the steadiest and longest lasting of the second language modalities (Bernhardt, 1991). Rumelhart has expressed that reading, whether in in the context of a first or second language involves many variables such as the reader, the text and the intention between the reader and the text. Swaffar (1991) wrote that the use of authentic texts facilitates language acquisition. She claimed "The sooner students are exposed to authentic language, the more rapidly they will learn that the comprehension is not a function of understanding every word, but rather of developing strategies for selecting and identifying multiple verbal and non-verbal cues, strategies essential in both oral and written communication." In The Storytelling Handbook (Ellis and Brewster, 1991, p.1) states that stories are motivational and fun; they create a deep interest and a desire to continue learning. Most studies either focused on facilitated and authentic texts, or use strategies in reading comprehension. In spite of all the above-mentioned issues, there were few studies on genre or text preference in reading comprehension; hence, the necessity for additional and more complete studies in this area. The present study focuses on kinds or genres of texts that the students liked or preferred and on the way they learned and comprehended them.

2. Method

2.1 Research question and hypothesis

The research question of this study was as follows: Does genre preference affect reading comprehension? The null hypothesis was formulated as: genre preference has no effect on reading comprehension.

The study involved 22 intermediate level participants attending the Noor institution. To assess their language proficiency a student test of Nelson English was given to them and based on their scores, they were classified as intermediate as predicted by the researcher. Five of them were female and the rest were male students.

2.3 Instrument

In this study, after presenting the proficiency test that was mentioned in the previous part, a questionnaire was given to participants to choose their favorite genre. Three genres were presented; "Drama", "Comedy" and "Science-Fiction". The stories according to the genres were as follows: "The Ninny" by "Anton Chekhov" for the drama genre; "The luckiest time of all" by "Lucille Clifton" for the comedy genre and "Zoo" by Edward D. Hoch for the science-fiction genre. Comprehension questions were presented to the participants after each story.

2.4 Procedures

The participants were provided with the first story in the science-fiction genre and after students had read the story they were presented with a sheet of comprehension questions containing 12 questions. 20 minutes was the time allowed for reading each story and for answering the related questions. The questions were

was divided into two categories. Five questions were essay-type questions and the rest were True/False questions.

3. Result and discussion

By performing the statistical calculations on the participants' scores, interesting facts were revealed. Ten participants chose the science-fiction genre, seven participants chose the comedy genre and five participants chose the drama genre. The average score of participants in science-fiction genre to all the class was 10; also, the average score among the participants in this genre was 10. The average score of participants in comedy genre to all the class was 7.90; and the average score among participants of this genre was 8.42. The average score of participants in the drama genre to all the class was 9.13; and the average score of the participants among this genre was 9.8. Table 1 shows these statistical scores in perspective. As we are heading to express more ideas in the conclusion section, it seems to be only necessary here to express that these findings have important pedagogical implications. EFL teachers are encouraged to devote sufficient time for students to interact, manipulate ideas and express their understanding of the text. (The students in here were deprived of that). Students should also have time to discuss their understanding with peers. This discussion helps raise awareness of their level of comprehension, determine their level of comprehension and to self-correct their mistakes.

Table 1. *The average of obtained scores of the participants in the three genres*.

Comedy	The average score of the participants to all the participants	7.90
	The average score among the participants within genre	8.42
Drama	The average score of the participants to all the participants	9.13
	The average score among the participants within genre	9.8
Science fiction	The average score of the participants to all the participants	10
	The average score among the participants within genre	10

4. Conclusion

The present findings suggest the truth of the null hypothesis mentioned previously in this paper. Although there was difference among participants and some of them scored best in their chosen genre, the complete statistical outcome of participants shows that genre preference had no effect on the level of reading comprehension of an authentic text on intermediate level students at the Noor institution. Further studies must be done in various genres and various levels of students to ensure other outcomes and other numerical achievement. Furthermore, the researcher found that students had some difficulty with perception and comprehension of the authentic text that truly affected the results. The researcher presumes that if the text had been easier or an exact authentic text had been given to advanced English learners the outcomes of this research would have changed significantly. While writing these lines the researcher desires to present a special thanks to his great teacher even if it violates the APA Style of writing the R.A.

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