Gender Neutral Texts in Foreign Language Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

Since according to Bugel [1993], a neutral text is free of text bias, this inquiry attempted to explore the interaction effect of content familiarity and gender on reading comprehension of EFL students with two different content neutral texts. Data were elicited from 123 high school students (86 = female and 37 = male) ranging from 16-18 years old. Two gender neutral texts were given to the participants. One of the texts was familiar for the participants and the other one was unfamiliar for them. The subjects' reading comprehension was assessed through two different testing measures: recall protocol and cloze test. The participants were asked to recall what they read and complete a cloze test after reading texts. Using a between-subjects design and a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), the performance of two groups were compared. The findings of the study suggested that there was a two-way interaction effect between content familiarity and gender. Female and male students performed differently on the two different texts. Females scored higher on familiar text whereas males outperformed on unfamiliar text. The research discusses the results and explores classroom implications.