EXPLORING GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ONLINE METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGY USE AMONG ESL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DURING ACADEMIC READING

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the gender differences in online metacognitive reading strategy use among ESL university students while reading academic texts. The sample consisted of 80 male and 80 female Semester Two Diploma in Communication and Media Studies students, from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies in UiTM Alor Gajah. Firstly, this study investigates the online metacognitive reading strategies used by male and female students in UiTM Alor Gajah while reading academic texts in terms of types and frequency. Secondly, it examines the differences in the use of online metacognitive reading strategies between male and female in terms of types and frequency. This research study is a non-experimental cross sectional survey design. The independent variable is the gender of the participants and the dependent variable is the metacognitive awareness as measured by the Online Survey of Reading Strategies (OSORS) developed by Neil J. Anderson (2003) which comprised three sub-categories, namely global reading strategies (18 items), problem-solving strategies (11 items), and support strategies (9 items). The research questions were examined using quantitative data analysis which includes the descriptive statistics (Means and Standard Deviations) and the inferential statistics namely one-way repeated measures (within subjects) ANOVA, the Post-Hoc Bonferroni Adjusted Pairwise Comparison of Means test, as well as the Independent Samples T-tests. The findings indicated that male and female students use all the problem-solving strategies with high frequency and all the global and support strategies with moderate frequency. Male students used problem-solving strategies with the highest frequency followed by global strategies and then support strategies, while female students used problem-solving strategies with the highest frequency followed by both global strategies and support strategies with similar frequency. Next, there were no statistically significant differences in the frequency of use of the overall, global, problem-solving and support strategies between male and female students. However, among the 38 individual strategies used, male students used 2 strategies with significantly higher frequency than female students which are problem-solving and global strategies. Female students used only 1 individual strategy with significantly higher frequency than male students which is a support strategy. This study also discusses the pedagogical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Reading has been recognized as the most important skill in acquiring knowledge and information for learners at all levels. Due to its importance, reading is greatly emphasized in both first and second language learning and teaching. As for the second language learners, it is a necessity to master the skill in reading "in order to ensure success in academic learning as well as to make greater progress in other area of language learning" (Carrell, 1989 & Anderson, 2003). Moreover, reading in a second language in Malaysian education has been emphasized since English is widely used in all academic aspects, especially at university level. Over the past few decades, academic reading activity among university students is not only common on the printed materials such as textbooks, manuals, articles and journals, but also increasingly popular in the online environment. This is due to "the nature of literacy" which is "rapidly changing as new technologies emerge" (Coiro, 2003). In order to improve the proficiency of ESL university students, online reading is mostly encouraged to help them in searching for information in L2 and acquiring the language at their own pace. Thus, in manipulating the online reading materials, having certain skills and strategies are very crucial and necessary for the learners to help them in comprehending the target information better.