

Hidden Transfer: Indicators of English Reading Performance among Taiwanese Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the thesis aims to discuss whether English reading ability will be influenced by English proficiency or Chinese reading ability or not. Threshold level of language proficiency by Clarke (1979) specified that learners found it difficult to transfer their L1 reading strategies to L2 reading when they fail to reach threshold level. Furthermore, Alderson (1984) argued that the threshold level varies with different tasks, testing techniques, social, cultural, educational variables and so on. So far, the study that explored how educational variables relate to the threshold level has not been done yet. Therefore, the researcher attempted to find out the relationship between them. This study tried to make a comparison between two different educational levels, and thus 78 junior high school students and 65 college students were recruited. The results of this study showed that threshold level of English proficiency existed in junior high school students, but not in college students. This meant that junior high school students' English reading performance was dependent mainly upon their English proficiency, and then upon whether or not they were better at transferring their Chinese reading strategies to English reading. On the other hand, the reason why threshold level did not exist in college students was because their English proficiency was more even compared with junior high school students. For both junior high school and college students, however, as their English proficiency increase, the correlations between their English and Chinese reading abilities increase. Second, it was found from multiple regression analysis that for both groups only English proficiency could predict English reading ability, while Chinese reading ability could not. Last, descriptive statistics were used to analyze both groups' differences between their separate English and Chinese reading strategies. The outcome of the analysis showed that junior high school students were apt to use less efficient strategies, such as consulting the dictionary, re-reading the text, and reading word-by-word. On the other hand, the outcome showed that college students tended to use more advanced strategies such as guessing the word or sentence meaning through discourse, or temporarily ignoring words less important for getting the main idea. The results also disclosed a fact that most Taiwan students still could not apply their efficient Chinese reading strategies to their English reading. Quite a few college students were even found using similar inefficient strategies as junior high school students'. Therefore, if Taiwan students intended to get the same pleasure from English reading as from Chinese reading, they had to not only improve their English proficiency but also learn more reading strategies.

Keywords : threshold level hypothesis ; language transfer ; reading strategies

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