Reading Strategy Awareness and Use among EFL Gulf University Students

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This paper reports a study of the awareness and use of reading strategies among undergraduates at United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). Three research questions were addressed: (1) What is the frequency of individual and overall reading strategy use among UAEU students when required to read academic materials in English? (2) Do UAEU students display any trends or preferences in their choice of academic reading strategies? (3) Are there any differences in the reported use of academic reading strategies among UAEU students studying in different colleges? The participants were students majoring in the three largest colleges in UAEU: the College of Business and Economics, the College of Engineering and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The study was conducted using the Survey of Reading Strategies (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002). Collected data was subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS software, with the aim of identifying trends and patterns of statistical significance. Results of the analysis indicate that students in all three colleges have a high level of awareness of reading strategies, with a general preference for using problem-solving strategies rather than global strategies or support strategies. The pedagogical implications of these findings are briefly discussed.

Introduction

As various researchers have maintained (see, for example, the contributions in Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008), successful academic reading requires not only decoding skills such as word recognition and phonological knowledge, but also an awareness of and an ability to employ a range of reading strategies. It has been increasingly recognized that an important key to good academic reading is the cultivation of metacognition. Accomplished readers of academic