

Abstract

The present study aims to investigate the question types of the English reading comprehension tests in the BCT and to conduct an experiment on the effectiveness of related reading skills and strategies. The findings and suggestions of the present study may be helpful for the reading instruction in junior high school.

A total of 60 ninth graders in a junior high school in Jing-mei, Taipei participated in this experiment. They are from two different classes; one is the control group and the other is the experimental group. According to the categorization of the reading skills from Mo (1987) and Johnson (2004), the present study examined the question types of the English reading comprehension tests in the BCT and the frequency distribution of different question types. The reading pretest included all the reading passages and items from 2002 to 2004, and the participants were asked to take the pretest as a formal exam. Then, the experiment of the present study lasted for 13 weeks, two class periods a week. The participants in the experimental group received the instruction of the reading skills and strategies while the participants in the control group were taught the vocabulary, the grammar, the structures and their meanings in the same reading passages. After the formal reading instruction, the participants took both of the BCT in 2006, and their performances may reflect the effectiveness of the formal reading instruction.

There are several findings for the present research. First, six different question types are identified in the English reading comprehension tests of the BCT and they are identifying the main idea, finding the detailed information, determining the meaning out of context, finding the targets of the reference, drawing implications and inferences and drawing correct conclusions. But the last question type drawing correct conclusions was not identified in the BCT of 2006. Second, there existed an unbalanced distribution of these question types. Nearly half of the reading questions can be classified as the type finding the detailed information, and the proportion of the question types related to the literal skills was much larger than those of the question types concerning the critical skills. Moreover, the results of the reading pretest