EFFECTS OF TEXT TYPES AND READING STRATEGIES ON READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE

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EFFECTS OF TEXT TYPES AND READING STRATEGIES

ON READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSD	Case study design
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
GLOB	Global Reading Strategies
IBE	International Bureau of Education
L1	First language
L2	Foreign language
MARSI	Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies inventory
M	Mean
N	Number of students
PROB	Problem- solving strategies
RC	Reading comprehension
RS	Reading strategies
Text A	Narrative text
Text B	Expository text
SD	Standard deviation
SLA	Strategies language awareness
SORS	Survey of reading strategies
SPSS	Statistical packages for social science
SUB	Support reading strategies

KESAN JENIS TEKS DAN STRATEGI MEMBACA TERHADAP PRESTASI BACAAN DAN KEFAHAMAN

ABSTRAK

Fokus utama kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat sama ada kaedah teks naratif, teks ekspositori, dan kesedaran strategi membaca memberi kesan terhadap prestasi kefahaman bacaan. Sebanyak 31 orang pelajar sekolah menengah di sebuah sekolah Iraq di Kuala Lumpur menyertai kajian ini. Sekolah tersebut dipilih kerana ia terletak bawah bidang kuasa Kementerian Pendidikan Iraq. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk melihat dan menerangkan pelbagai strategi yang digunakan oleh pelajar Iraq dalam proses kefahaman bacaan bagi dua jenis teks, iaitu teks naratif dan teks ekspositori. Responden diminta untuk mengambil ujian kefahaman bacaan serta melengkapkan senarai semak dan borang kaji selidik. Seterusnya, bagi menganalisis kesan teks naratif dan teks ekspositori terhadap prestasi kefahaman bacaan pelajar, instrumen Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (SPSS) digunakan untuk mengira min dan sisihan piawai. Ujian statistik yang digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah ujian-t bersandar. Skor tinggi yang signifikan menunjukkan bahawa teks naratif didapati meninggalkan kesan yang lebih mendalam, melebihi kesan teks ekspositori terhadap kefahaman bacaan dalam kalangan pelajar. Kesedaran tentang strategi metakognitif bacaan yang menggunakan teks naratif dan teks ekspositori dianalisis dengan menggunakan data daripada Kesedaran Metakognitif bagi Inventori Strategi Membaca (MARSI) oleh Mokhtari dan Reichard (2002) dengan dua instrumen. Instrumen pertama merupakan senarai semak bagi melihat strategi membaca yang paling banyak digunakan serta strategi membaca yang paling kurang digunakan dalam proses memahami teks naratif dan teks ekspositori oleh pelajar Iraq. Instrumen kedua merupakan soalan kaji

selidik (MARSI) untuk menentukan tahap penggunaan strategi membaca. SPSS digunakan untuk mengira min dan sisihan piawai. Keputusan menunjukkan min dan sisihan piawai bagi tiga subskala kesedaran metakognitif strategi membaca. Bagi teks naratif, strategi membaca 'Global' (M=3.83) mempunyai skor tertinggi, diikuti dengan strategi membaca 'Penyelesaian Masalah' (M=3.13) dan strategi membaca 'Sokongan' (M=2.7). Data menunjukkan bahawa responden menggunakan strategi membaca 'Global' untuk membantu mereka memahami teks naratif dengan lebih baik. Seterusnya, bagi teks ekspositori, strategi membaca'Penyelesaian Masalah' adalah yang tertinggi (M=3.53), diikuti oleh strategi membaca 'Global' (M=3.33) dan strategi membaca 'Sokongan'(M=2.56). Data menunjukkan bahawa responden menggunakan strategi membaca 'Penyelesaian Masalah' untuk membantu mereka memahami teks ekspositori dengan lebih baik. Selain itu, data jelas menunjukkan bahawa terdapat pelbagai strategi membaca yang digunakan oleh pelajar Iraq untuk pelbagai jenis teks yang berbeza. Walau bagaimanapun, responden dalam kajian ini merupakan pengguna sederhana bagi strategi bacaan metakognitif dalam proses memahami teks naratif dan teks ekspositori. Akhir sekali, program bacaan teks serta arahan dan strategi membaca perlu dimasukkan ke dalam sukatan pelajaran kursus Bahasa Inggeris. Apabila pelajar diajarkan strategi ini, ia akan membantu mereka untuk memahami teks dengan lebih mendalam dan berkesan, selain membantu mereka untuk memberikan jawapan yang lebih baik ketika membaca teks yang diberikan di dalam kelas. Situasi seperti ini dapat membantu guru untuk merancang proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang lebih baik dan berkesan, seterusnya meningkatkan prestasi pelajar dalam kefahaman bacaan mereka.

EFFECTS OF TEXT TYPES AND READING STRATEGIES ON READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE

ABSTRACT

The main focus of this study is to investigate how narrative and expository texts and the awareness of reading strategies affect the performance of reading comprehension. Thirty first-stage secondary students studying at the Iraqi school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, took part in this survey. The school was selected due to the fact that it is officially under the purview of the Ministry of Education of Iraq. This study attempts to look at the types of texts, namely narrative and expository, and subsequently describe the strategies employed by Iraqi students to comprehend narrative and expository texts. Students were asked to take a reading comprehension test and complete checklists and questionnaires. In order to analyse the effect of narrative and expository texts on students' performance, the statistical packages for social science (SPSS) package was used to calculate the means and standard deviation. The statistical test used in this study is the dependent t-test. Significantly higher score indicates that the narrative text effect exceeds that of the expository text on the performance of reading comprehension. The awareness of metacognitive reading strategies with narrative and expository texts was analysed using data from the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies inventory (MARSI) by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) with two instruments; the first is a ticked checklist on reading strategies used to comprehend narrative and expository texts to determine the most and least used strategies employed by Iraqi students, while the second involves a standardized questionnaire (MARSI) to determine the level of usage of reading

strategies. The statistical packages for social science (SPSS) package was used to calculate the means and standard deviation. The results show the means and standard deviations for three subscales of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, with global reading strategies (M=3.83) having the highest score, followed by problem-solving strategies (M=3.13), and support reading strategies (M=2.7). The data imply that the respondents used global reading strategies to help them comprehend the narrative text. On the other hand, the problem-solving strategies were the highest (M=3.53), followed by global reading strategies (M=3.33), and support reading strategies (M=2.56). The data clearly showed that the respondents utilise problem-solving reading strategies to help them read and comprehend expository texts. In terms of the strategies used, the data clearly showed that there was varieties in the selected reading strategies being used throughout the study by Iraqi students for different text types; however, students in this study are moderate strategies-users of metacognitive reading strategies in comprehending the narrative and expository texts. Finally, reading comprehension text and reading strategies instruction should be included in the syllabus of English language courses. Teaching students these strategies will help them understand and comprehend texts in an effective manner and provide better answers when reading comprehension texts, which will be useful to teachers when planning their lessons. It can also be used to tailor teaching methods pertaining to reading, which will enhance the performance of the students' reading comprehension.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

For decades, the desire to learn English as a second or foreign language caught the attention of many educators around the world, and the learning of English has been an area of interest to many researchers, mostly in their quest to assist in the development of pupils' performance to use the language effectively.

However, due to the complexity inherent in reading, it is also a skill that is one of the most difficult to develop to a high level of proficiency. In a world that demands competency with printed texts, the ability to read at L2 is one of the most important skills required of people in international settings. The acquisition of reading at L2 is a priority for millions of learners globally. Many EFL students rarely need to speak the language in their day-to-day lives, but may need to read it in order to 'access the wealth of information' Zhou and Siriyothin (2011).

N. J. Anderson (2004) defines reading as a process of readers' combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to create meaning for comprehension. In L2 reading research, text type has been posited by many researchers as one variable that needs to be explored. The influence(s) of text types on L2 level reading are rather complex. Nevertheless, research on comprehension differences between texts of different types in L2 has been slim, as mentioned by Alderson and Banerjee (2001). Narrative and expository texts are those that attracted the attention of researches, due to the fact that both are found to be most different from the other; narration frequently uses description, while exposition often incorporates aspects of all writing domains. Narrative writing requires readers to focus on events and arrange the parts into time segments. In order to understand a

narrative text, students must learn ordering, beginning and ending, transition and balance, and suspense and climax. While reading an expository text, readers must be able to understand analysis, organization and development, logical argument, evidence, and sometimes, figurative language.W. Grabe (1988) asserted that an important part of reading is recognizing text. One of the factors that seem to make a difference in reading comprehension studies is whether the text being read is in narrative or expository form. The features of any given text have a large impact on comprehension (Snow, 2002). Strategic reading is defined as the ability of the reader to use a wide variety of reading strategies to accomplish a purpose for reading. Good readers know what to do when they encounter difficulties. The reader's background knowledge integrates with the text to create the meaning. The texts and strategies, combined, define the act of reading. Figure 1.1 represent this definition of reading, as indicated by N. J. Anderson (2004).
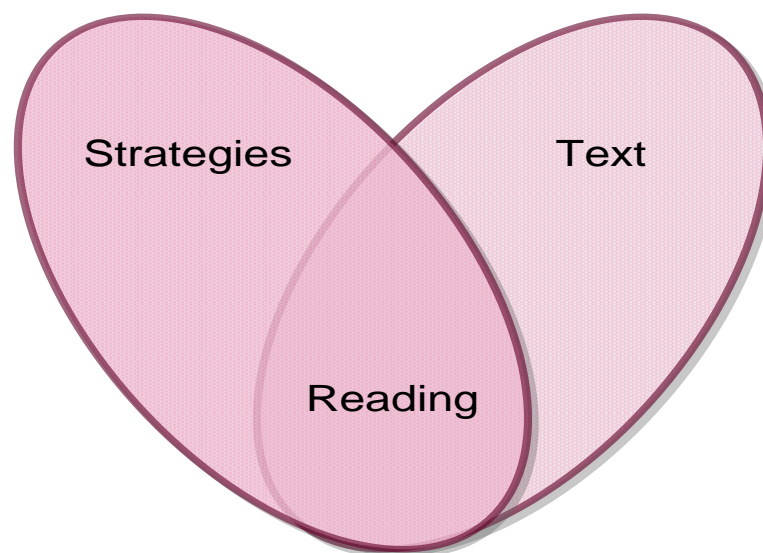
Figure 1.1   Reading Definition Framework Adapted from N. J. Anderson (2004)

Reading comprehension is a true essence of the reading process, and is a major process around which all other processes occurs. Snow (2002) defines reading

comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning via interaction and involvement with written languages.

Comprehension is the peak of reading skills, and the basis of all reading operations. The speed of reading depends on the absorption of the reader when reading and comprehending is an essential factor in controlling language arts.

Nelson, Smith, Taylor, Dodd, and Reavis (1991) pointed out comprehension and problems associated with it, which may be assessed by giving students a reading passage with a reading technique assessment. In the context of reading comprehension, there are two problems; the first is poor comprehension leading to poor decoding, which affects comprehension, while the second is the student not knowing how to read for comprehension, and they may not actively focus on the meaning of what they read or know in order to enable them to monitor their comprehension.

In terms of reading strategies, Pritchard (1990) defines it as deliberate actions that "readers take voluntarily to develop an understanding of what they read", and many researchers have categorized a lot of so called "good" reading strategies that "should be adopted" to enhance readers' comprehension of texts, and train less-efficient readers to use "good" strategies as they read. Mohammadi, Heidari, and Niry (2012) in their study, define metacognitive awareness as the readers' awareness of strategies during the reading process, which is the skill that a second language reader require while reading in order to make them better readers.

On the other hand, Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) describe metacognitive reading strategy awareness as indicative of the kind of strategies and the frequency of strategies used by pupils to enhance effective reading comprehension, and subsequently distinguish between global, problem solving, and support strategies.

Studies on metacognitive awareness of reading strategies have shown different degrees of awareness in terms of reading strategies.

The metacognitive awareness reading strategies inventory MARSI includes 30 statements about strategies students report using while reading academic or school related materials, such as text books, library materials, and magazine articles. Three types of strategies included in the questionnaire were global reading strategies (GRS), problem solving strategies (PS), and support reading strategies (SRS). The first factor (GRS) contained 13 items, and is represented by a set of reading strategies oriented toward a global analysis of text, such as, "I decide what to read closely and what to ignore". These strategies are regarded as generalized intentional reading strategies aimed at setting the stage for the reading act to be like: setting the purpose for reading and making predictions about reading content. The second factor (PS) contained 8 items refer to strategies used when the text is difficult to read. The third factor (SRS) contained 9 items related to the use of materials other than the text to help readers understand what is being read, such as dictionaries or other materials.

In light of this study, two factors will be examined, namely the texts type (narrative and expository) and the metacognitive awareness of the reading strategies when reading a passage in order to determine what are the problems and what affects the performance of Iraqi students' reading comprehension.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1   English Language Teaching in Iraq

The Iraqi learning and teaching system is a general system that tries to provide students with general knowledge about nearly all sciences and arts subjects. The education system in Iraq are based on values and principles derived from the

religious, humanistic, and national characteristics of the society, the most prominent of which is the belief that the education system is a social process.

The education system in Iraq is essentially divided into three levels: primary, intermediate, and secondary. The aim of primary education in Iraq is to provide children with basic knowledge on culture and help them discover and develop their capabilities and aptitudes. Pupils are registered in primary school when they are 6 years old. Primary level education, which consists of 6 years, starts with primary 1 and ends at primary 6. In the beginning stage, the Arabic language (mother tongue) is basically the main language of instruction. English is taught as a subject matter from level one, between 1–3 lessons in week. In the primary stage, teachers teach pupils English alphabets, some simple grammatical rules, vocabulary, conversational skills, and pupils in turn write simple essays. The examination is divided into Oral and written; the oral test begins with a dialogue between teacher and pupil, followed by a simple reading passage to read, and teachers ask pupils simple vocabulary meanings.

The intermediate stage is three years (grades 7-9), from 13-15 years old. Students who complete primary school are required to pass a national examination prior to continuing their studies in intermediate school. After completing the three intermediate programs, students who pass the national examination may enter a general secondary, vocational, or commercial school.

The secondary stage is a total of three years (10-12 grades), from 16-18 years old. There are two types of secondary schools: general and vocational. The general secondary schools are divided into two sections; the scientific section qualifies one for admission into science, engineering, and medicine, among others, while the literary section prepares a student for admission into liberal arts or humanities program at universities. The general secondary program leads to the General

Baccalaureate Examination, which is a requirement for university admission. The General Baccalaureate Examination for general secondary schools is nationwide examination administered by the Ministry of Education, and is probably the most accurate credential that represents an Iraqi student's competence (G.Sikhi, 2008). Secondary level students take 4 to 5 English classes per week, and each class is approximately 45 minutes. At the secondary stage, teaching English becomes more serious, and more complex vocabulary is used. A lesson is divided into oral practice, dictation, and pronunciation. The reading passages in this level are longer, with more complex vocabularies, and different kinds of texts are used, for example, narrative and expository texts. The examination is divided into oral and written exams. In the former, the use of dialogues and long passages are common, and subsequently, questions were asked, while the latter, includes grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, and also reading passages from outside the textbook that are expository in nature.

Many students faced a lot of problems with their studies due to their low English proficiency. They face problems while trying to understand texts written in English. In terms of reading, the interactions between readers and texts need to be highlighted, where most of the comprehension activities of effective readers take place at the metacognitive level. Reading comprehension represents the skills or procedures that students follow to understand texts in their books or other study materials, and extract the main ideas of the material. Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as a process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning via interaction and involvement with written language, as highlighted by recent research on reading strategies used by successful and less successful readers.

Researchers have begun to recognize the significant role of metacognitive awareness in reading comprehension (Carrell, Gajdusek, & Wise, 1998; Hudson, 2007).

Metacognitive awareness was first defined by Flavell (1979) as one's ability to understand, control, and manipulate their own cognitive process to maximize learning. Such awareness of this concept has offered great insights as to how learners manage their cognitive activities to realize comprehension before, during, and after reading (Wenden, 1998). It must also be taken into account how students follow certain strategies in order to comprehend texts in the best way; these strategies are called reading strategies, or comprehension strategies. Students in the sample (i.e., secondary school Iraqi students) do not place much importance on reading strategies, though they may use them off-hand (without noticing) when they read a text (Al-Qatrani, 2012). Therefore, there is a point to be considered at this juncture that reading comprehension in English can be problematic for Iraqi students, as the education system does require reading English for pupils.

1.2.2 English Language Secondary Curriculum in Iraq

Logically, the past is the foundation on which the present is created. So, it is useful to know something about the history of English teaching materials used in Iraq in previous eras (Kareem, 2009).

English was taught in Iraq for the first time in state schools in 1873. The numbers of schools were quite small at the time. When Iraq was mandated by Britain after the First World War, a decision was taken to expand the primary education and to confine teaching English to the towns. English was taught as a second language beginning from the first primary year during the first year of the British occupation, but later, it was decided to teach it from the fifth primary year and its statute was

changed from a second language to a foreign language. At this era, the textbooks were imported from Egypt and based on the Grammar–Translation Method. Undoubtedly, the pupils were supplied with ready-made compositions, a pattern(s) of a letter, examples of using certain words in useful sentences, and they were obliged to memorize them for examinations, i.e., the teacher's role was to prepare his pupils for examinations. It is also obvious that the primary skills to be developed were reading and writing. Little attention was given to speaking and listening, and almost none to pronunciation. These are the main features of the Grammar – Translation Method. The earliest ELT course was followed by three series of courses composed in Britain. The first series bears the name of "The Oxford English Course" by Oliphant, while the second bears the name "The Oxford English Course for the Middle East" by Faucet, and the third is entitled " The Oxford English Course for Iraq" by Hornby, Miller and an Iraqi expert Selim Hakim. The first two series were used until the mid-1950s, while the third were used until early 1970s. All of the aforementioned series are almost identical, and the material they present are similar. They are vocabulary–centered and manifest a clear bias towards the Direct Method, i.e., teaching English via reading. The books were divided into "reading texts". This means that reading was the chief activity in those books.

It is obvious from the titles that the first two series are unsuitable for Iraqi learners. They are for all learners who want to learn English as a second or a foreign language, while teaching a language should be practiced in the social context. With regards to the third series, it consists of ready – made materials compiled and abstracted from books and magazines instead of the basic structural patterns of the language. The main features of English learning – teaching process in Iraq during

this era were not much material in English beside the prescribed books, such as tapes and records, were used and limited to certain schools in large urban centers.

It is worth mentioning that most textbooks prior to the 1960s and 1970s rely on the teachers' experience. They have ample materials to teach, but most of them take it for granted that the teacher knows how to teach the material. This means that a "Teacher's Guide" was non-existent or available. In short, those syllabuses did not satisfy the learners' needs and interests, and simultaneously, they did not conform to the sociological, religious, and political factors of Iraqi society.

Moreover, the Ministry of Al-Maarif (Education) lacks the right to revise and modify the syllabuses as they belong to the authors instead of the ministry. As a matter of fact, those in charge of the education policy need to study these aspects carefully in order to improve it. The Foreign Languages Department at the Higher Teachers Training College in Baghdad (in the 4th decade of the 20th century) marks a new era in English language teaching in Iraq on the way of improving the foresaid situation. In the context of a literary reader, as far as the researcher is aware, teaching them began from the intermediate stage instead of the preparatory stage as is common now. For instance, in 1966–1967, pupils in the first grade of the intermediate stage had to read a short story entitled 'Carel and Tom', which is suitable for their age, making it quite interesting to them. It was also taught separately once a week.

"The Oxford English Course for Iraq'' was used until the early 1970s when book -1- of the New English Course for Iraq (NECI, for short) was first put to use at that time to be taught for the pupils of the Primary 5[th]Grade, and every year, a new book of the NECI series began to replace its counterpart in the old series of books. Consequently, a new era in the history of the Iraqi educational sector in authorship

began, called "The Era of the Nationalizing the Syllabuses of English in Iraq", as all the authors of this series and the advisory board are Iraqi.

In May 1970, the Ministry of Education formed a committee to draw up the objectives of a new English program in Iraq. The committee specified the objectives and the main features of the program. It stressed that the items in the textbooks should be graded in terms of value and difficulty. Value should come first, while difficulty is to be decided in terms of the possibility of interference from the native language, as well as the degree of deviation from the established patterns of English. In the same year, another committee was formed to re-examine the situation, and they recommended a new syllabus to the Education Board, who endorsed them prior to 1972.

The new series consists of eight books, called" The New English Course for Iraq''. It was designed based on the structural approach and a new method of teaching called" The Audio-lingual Method", which is recommended for teaching this program. The program starts in the 5^{th}year in all primary schools. The syllabus was to be applied experimentally in all schools, and then modified post-application. As a result of this, NECI was adopted after being proven to be more efficient compared to the old textbooks. Starting 1973, the books were introduced to the schools at a rate of one annually. The last of the books (Book 8) is intended for the teachers and pupils at the beginning of academic year 1980-1981(Kareem, 2009).

This step is considered as a great accomplishment for the Iraqi specialists in ELT and the pride of the Iraqi Ministry of Education. The authors of English syllabuses in most the Arab countries are foreigners. This historical opportunity paved the way for Iraqi ELT team to prove their mettle in teaching English. Locally produced textbooks are of great characteristic. They are the property of the Iraqi

Ministry of Education, which gives them the right to revise and modify the content should the need arise.

On October 1ˢᵗ,1970, The Institute for the Development of English Language Learning in Iraq (henceforth IDELTI)was established by the Ministry of Education and began operating in 1972. One of its main functions is to assist in the improvement of English textbooks in Iraq. There was working committee that held their regular meetings, looking into suggestions pertaining to revisions and modification. This institute also issued the IDELTI Journal No. (1) in 1973. This journal, which covers English language teaching in Iraq, was published quarterly. The entire editorial board was made up of Iraqis, with the exception of Mr R. E. Underwood. NECI series are not readers (not readers–centered) as previous syllabuses. Instead, reading is just one of the activities included in the book. The activities of a reader are usually limited to reading and answering written questions, while in a language book of NECI, there are a lot of activities, such as dialogues, oral practice, pronunciation, reading, spelling, punctuation, writing a paragraph or a composition and written work. Standard British English is used throughout the series, as it is known as the standard of speech of the educated class.

In the NECI series, it has been found that teachers need guidance and instructions for teaching English; therefore, a teacher's guide was designed as per each book of the series. During the first half of 1980, the Directorate of Curricula and Textbooks commenced wider discussions on school textbooks in all specialties, including English. Therefore, a questionnaire and a critique of English textbooks were distributed to more than fifty scholars. There were lengthy discussions of the benefits and disadvantages of the NECI textbooks and suggested alternatives. In the wake of that meeting, a small committee of eight specialists was formed to formulate

a definite opinion. The committee found that it was necessary to retain the NECI set of textbooks and attempt to improve them in two separate ways:

A. constant revision and enrichment.

B. Experimenting with different set of textbooks, which are to be compiled by a special committee,

For (B), the committee submitted the items of a new syllabus, but they were rejected. The NECI series was retained, but were modified. It was subjected to modification on the basis of feedback from all those concerned, i.e. it was just a "patching up" operation.

In 1980s, Iraq participated with Arab Gulf States in unifying the English language curriculum in seven states, which included Iraq (Education Development in Iraq, June,1990:98), and it was decided that this project is to be discussed in a meeting in Kuwait on 1st January 1990.

In late March 1990, the decision to adopt the syllabus and begin the process was made in a conference. Unfortunately, this effort ended in vain due to the political and military situation in the region arising from the Kuwaiti − Iraqi conflict.

In 2001, the Ministry of Education formed a committee of Iraqi specialists in ELT curriculum, The committee decided that the new syllabus that bears the name "Rafidain English Course for Iraq''(henceforth RECI) to be designed on the communicative approach, and it succeeded in putting Book 1 in use in the academic year (2002–2003) despite a lot of difficulties arising from the economic sanctions and embargo imposed on Iraq at that time. Some of the difficulties were the need for a foreign expert in ELT to read and comment on the manuscripts of the new series, and the need for native speakers to record the material.

Pupil's Book 1 of RECI starts with "Introductory Unit", where the teacher took three or four weeks to present some commands verbally, and the pupils respond physically, while teaching them the English alphabet. The aim is to train the pupils' ears to recognize the accurate pronunciation of some words and realize their meaning i. e. to develop listening skills. In addition to the Introduction Unit, it consists of fifteen units. Each unit is composed of several linguistic activities, such as short conversations, games, songs and rhymes. Each 5[th]unit reviews the four previous ones, which means that units 5, 10, and 15 are regarded as the 'review' units.

This is illogical due to the developments in linguistics and ELT methodology, and also due to the changing needs and wishes of learners. Assuredly, what was acceptable way back in the 1970s is not going to be acceptable in 2000s. Therefore, the syllabus must be continuously reviewed by making use of feedbacks from both teachers and learners.

Indeed, this is not preferable, because it is a 'patching – up' operation. Accordingly, it is preferred that each new syllabus not be used more than ten years in order to leave the door wide open for other Iraqi specialists to think of constructing another series to account for continuous changing conditions in all fields of life (Al-Hamash 1990; Kareem, 2009).

After the war on Iraq, which started on 20th March 2003, Iraqi Curriculum changes by the invading force led by the United States, which officially ended by their subsequent withdrawal in December 2011.The eight and half years of war had damaged much of the schools and colleges, and now, there was a need to rebuild the schools and its curriculum. UNESCO Iraq Office initiated this large project in 2011, relying on technical support of the UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE). This new curriculum framework was necessary, as the world is changing

rapidly in terms of research methodologies, communication technologies, increasing the need to learn to live together and acquisition of up-to-date knowledge. There was also a dire need to ensure that Iraqi curriculum meets international standards and are in line with up-to-date teaching methodologies, and provide Iraqi children with the same or better learning opportunities as children in other countries. In other words, the Iraqi Curriculum Framework was developed in line with the requirements of the Iraqi Educational Philosophy and the Iraqi National Education Strategy (Ahmed, Puteh-Beha, & Sidek, 2015).

Changes had been made in the school curriculum so that every learner will have knowledge in various fields. This is in line with the changing environment in the field of education and industry; hence students have to acquire the latest technologies. Iraqi Curriculum Framework states that in order to flourish as a nation, students should be successful life-long learners. They should be able to operate confidently in a knowledge-based economy and a rapidly changing environment. They should also be confident and productive individuals that are able to work with others and contribute to society.

Analysis of the Iraqi secondary reading curriculum, the emphasis is now on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approaches, which is closely related to Communicative Language Teaching. The framework does not state categorically that communicative approach or methodology should be used. In other words, old and new teaching approaches and methodologies need to be used, and as a matter of fact, it is a mixture of both the old and new methods. The Iraqi Curriculum Framework states that it is the responsibility of the teachers to find local contexts and examples to enhance students' learning. In the context of teaching and learning strategies, there

is now a shift of emphasis from teaching to learning towards more active and personalized learning (G.Sikhi, 2008).

Therefore, this study aimed to assess the level of reading comprehension performance of Iraqi students' secondary school with regards to the effect between two factors; text types and metacognitive awareness of reading strategies to comprehend the text. Reading comprehension text and reading strategies instruction should be included in the syllabus of English language, and these strategies will help students to understand and comprehend texts in an effective manner and provide better answers in reading comprehension tests, which is useful for teachers to plan appropriate lessons and apply relevant method of teaching in order to enhance students' reading comprehension performance.

1.3 Problem Statement

English is taught as a foreign language in Iraqi schools, while all other subjects are taught in Arabic. Therefore, students learn English approximately four lessons in a week, with each lesson lasting 45 minutes. Although the goals of the Iraqi English language curriculum is to develop language skills, published studies show that Iraqi EFL learners come across problems and difficulties in actually applying English Language skills. Subsequently, reading is viewed as the one the most important tool for students in the classroom context and extracurricular environment (W. P. Grabe & Stoller, 2013).

Most students do not read texts in the English language, except the books they read in the classrooms. Therefore, contact with English Language materials is rather limited. Teachers in the secondary level focus on teaching students grammatical

rules because most teachers' believe that grammatical rules can be used for communication (Al-Qatrani, 2012).

Well-developed prior vocabulary knowledge is needed for reading. As a corollary, text types such as science, mathematics, or even geography (examples of expository text types) would presuppose a prior vocabulary. Nevertheless, it would be foolhardy to assume that narrative texts do not presuppose a prior vocabulary base, although the usage of the same words may be in a slightly different presentation. Expository texts are mostly concerned with explaining a phenomenon or a new concept, whereas narrative texts discuss an event. During later years in school, students will have established comfort with printed text and are able to construct meaning from text and Passage types accordingly with their grade level. As readers move up the grade, their performance becomes better at narrative texts than at expository levels (Adler, Wagner, & McAdams, 2007).

Comprehension instruction tends to be emphasized less in subject-matter classrooms where teachers are focused on content. These texts may not have been designed explicitly for reading comprehension purposes, but comprehension of these texts may be crucial if students are to understand or learn from them. (M. R. Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Snow, 2002).

In Iraq, teachers normally instruct their students to read passages and memorize difficult and new vocabularies. Teacher award marks for word pronunciation and reading fluency without paying attention to the meaning of the passages, and generally teachers and pupils do not pay much attention to reading comprehension. Generally, due to how reading in English Language is taught and learned in Iraqi schools, students faces difficulties in reading comprehension.

Durkin (1978) suggested an observational study of teaching reading comprehension. She established that the usual comprehension instructions consist of the mentioning, performing, and assessment processes. Specifically, teachers would point out the skills they expect students to practice. Then, they would offer learners chances to practice that skill with an exercise book, and at that point, the teacher would assess whether or not learners are effectively employing the skill. Durkin (1978) stated that: 'comprehension instruction is anything that is done to help children acquire reading ability. Within this very broad framework, instruction concerned with such things as whole word identification, word meanings, and phonic and structural analyses belongs under the umbrella called "comprehension instruction" (p. 9)

In this context, Flavell (1979) pointed out that metacognitive awareness among children are quite limited, and they relatively do little monitoring of their own memory, comprehension, and other cognitive enterprises. Metacognitive knowledge is one's stored knowledge or beliefs about oneself and others as cognitive agents, about tasks, about actions or strategies, and about how all these interact to affect the outcomes of any sort of intellectual enterprise.

Wright and Jacobs (2003) for example, found that instructional method using metacognitive strategies decreased reading difficulties and improved reading performances. Therefore, teachers need to determine the pupils' awareness on metacognitive strategies, which is important to the pupils in enhancing their reading comprehension. The application of suitable reading comprehension strategies is important to help teachers improve reading competency among the students.

It is apparent that Iraqi students lack awareness about reading strategies and which strategies are suitable for them when dealing with reading comprehension. In

fact, some teachers lack information pertaining to reading strategies (Al-Qatrani, 2012). Students' problems in comprehending texts must be well understood before planners and teachers can help students perform better when dealing with reading tasks.

Therefore, this study hopes to explore their use of reading strategies, type of texts, and subsequently find problems affecting reading comprehension ability among Iraqi pupils in their quest to learn English Language, specifically in the area of reading comprehension.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study focuses on the two factors of reading comprehension performance among Iraqi students. The first factor is the texts type narrative and expository to determine which text type has an impact on reading comprehension. Alderson and Banerjee (2001) pointed out that narrative and expository may be the two text that attract research attention, because these two types are found to be most different from each other.

W. Grabe (1988) asserted that an important part of reading process is to recognize text. Most studies either utilize narrative passages or expository material to elicit comprehension scores. Although work has been done comparing narrative and expository texts, very little has addressed the question of whether vocabulary and fluency differentially predict comprehension of narrative and expository texts (Degand & Sanders, 2002; Scott & Windsor, 2000).

The second factor is to examine readers' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies to comprehend the narrative and expository texts.Wright and Jacobs (2003)

found that instructional method using metacognitive strategies decreased reading difficulties and improved reading performances.

1.5 Research Objective

This study aims to look at the two factors that may affect reading comprehension ability among Iraqi students, specifically, these objectives:

1. To investigate the types of texts that may affect reading comprehension performance;

2. To find the awareness level of reading strategies; and

3. To develop a strategic framework based on the factors studied to enhance reading comprehension performance among Iraqi pupils.

1.6 Research Questions

In line with the primary aim of this study to examine factors that may affect reading comprehension ability, therefore the research questions are as following:

1. Is there a significant difference between the narrative and expository texts comprehension levels of first grade students?

2. Which reading strategies are used by the Iraqi students to comprehend narrative text?

3. What is the level of Iraqi student's awareness of reading strategies to comprehend narrative text?

4. Which reading strategies are used by the Iraqi students to comprehend expository text?

5. What is the level of Iraqi student's awareness of reading strategies to comprehend expository text?

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study emphasizes the importance of reading to learn English Language and the importance or effect of the two factors being studied.

Firstly, this study is important because it examines the effect of text types, and findings from this study might be able to change the manner reading comprehension is taught and assessed in the future.

Secondly, this study may help students understand and comprehend texts and study materials more effectively, and help pupils provide better answers when taking reading comprehension tests. Eventually, readers who understand the materials well will have the ability to express the ideas that they understand on paper. Eggen and Kauchak (1988) maintained that metacognitive knowledge create good thinkers, and ultimately, good learners. Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) asserted that information on metacognitive awareness increases pupils' awareness of reading strategies while reading, and subsequently improve their understanding of the reading process and instill confidence in their own reading ability and competency.

Finally, this study will be useful for teachers and educational planners. Knowledge of the reading strategies used by pupils can help teachers plan appropriate lessons and apply relevant methods of teaching reading in order to enhance pupils' reading comprehension, and when pupils can understand materials quicker than before, it will minimize teachers' time in classrooms and give them more opportunities to develop their pupils' performances and skills.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

This study is not without its limitations. Nevertheless, these limitations would not undermine the significance of the study.

Its limitation is basically that it is a case study; therefore, the samples are relatively small in size. The samples were taken from one Iraqi school in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. There are 30 pupils in the first level of the secondary school, and most of student family postgraduate students are in constant contact with multi-cultural Malaysia, which means that the results of this work cannot be generalized to all Iraqi students.

1.9   Conceptual and Operational Definition of Terms

1.9.1   Reading

Is defined as decoding and translating symbol, which are letters in order to extract meaning from the text for different goals, learning, work, entertainment or other purposes, as explained by Cline, Johnstone, and King (2006). Reading is a cognitive process based on the dismantling of symbols called letters to create meaning and reach the understanding and awareness stage. It is part of the language, and language is a means of communication or understanding. In this study, reading is basically reading of texts generated by the Iraqi English Language textbook governed by the Iraqi EFL syllabus.

1.9.2 Reading Comprehension

Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. It consists of three elements: the reader, the text, and strategies. In this study, reading comprehension is based on the text types used to examine students' comprehension performance.

1.9.3 Text

The representation of the texts includes the surface code (the exact wording of the text), the text base (idea units representing the meaning of the text), and mental models (the way in which information is processed for meaning) embedded in the text. The text genres might or might not be limited to narrative, expository, persuasive genres (Snow, 2002). In this study, six passages from the curriculum are used, and they are limited to the narrative and expository texts types. Narration frequently uses description, while exposition often incorporates aspects of all writing domains. Narrative writing requires readers to focus on events and to arrange the parts in time or order frame. In order to understand a narrative text, students must learn about ordering, beginning and ending, transition and balance, and suspense and climax. While reading an expository text, readers must be able to understand analysis, organization and development, logical argument, evidence, and sometimes-figurative language.

1.9.4 Reading Strategies

Reading strategies is defined as the mental operations involved when readers approach the text effectively and make sense of what they read (Barnett, 1988). In

this study, reading strategies refer to the choices that pupils choose when confronting reading comprehension task. According to Turnbull et al. (2010), strategy refers to a plan of doing something so that the objectives would be achieved. Therefore, reading strategies are the plan used to read and understand texts.

1.9.5   Metacognitive Strategy

Metacognitive is the awareness of the readers own learning process that can be regulated and monitored (Harris, Hodges, & Association, 1995). Iwai (2011) believes that metacognitive reading strategies is crucial in reading comprehension as readers use planning, monitoring, regulating, and evaluate their reading process.
"Metacognitive reading strategies are classified into three groups of planning (pre-reading), monitoring (during reading), and evaluating (post-reading) strategies, and each group has a variety of strategies that require readers' metacognitive processing" (Iwai, 2011). In this study, the use of (MARSI) to measure metacognitive awareness (glob reading strategies, problem solving reading strategies, and support reading strategies) will be utilized (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

1.10 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the study on the effect of text types and reading strategies on the performance of reading comprehension. It achieved this by providing some of information on the background of the study, problem statement, and limitations of the study, significance of the study, research questions, research objectives, and the definition of the terms of the study. The next chapter will

discuss the literature review pertaining to this study. With these deliberations, the foundations for the study will be established.