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# The evaluation of Pre-University English BOOK

## چکیده

در برخی از نظام های آموزشی، معلم کتاب درسی خود را انتخاب می کند. بنابراین فرصت دارد که کتاب دل خواه خود را براساس هدف ها و معیارهایی که در نظر دارد، برگزیند. اما از آن جا که کتاب های درسی در ایران به طور متمرکز و توسط وزارت آموزش و پرورش تهیه می شوند، معلم دغدغه ی انتخاب کتاب مناسب را ندارد؛ هرچند در چنین سیستم متمرکزی، معلم به عنوان فردی که در تمام سال تحصیلی در فرایند یاددهی-یادگیری شرکت دارد، نمی تواند مصرف کننده ی غیرفعال باشد. در واقع، وی آن چه را که مؤلفان کتاب ها مایل اند در مورد عملکرد کتاب بدانند، در کلاس های خود مشاهده می کند. پس می تواند کتاب ها را مورد ارزیابی قرار دهد تا از سویی، روش ها و تکنیک های مناسبی برای ارائه درس بیاید و از سوی دیگر، بازخورد مناسبی برای بهبود وضعیت کتاب های درسی به «دفتر برنامه ریزی و تألیف کتب درسی» ارائه دهد. چرا که مؤلفان از این طریق می توانند، کتاب های بهتری را طراحی و تدوین کنند. برای نیل به این هدف، محقق با استفاده از فهرست واریسی (چک لیست) معیارهای ارزش یابی کتاب های درسی موجود در کتاب سلس مورسیا (۲۰۰۱)، نقاط ضعف و قوت کتاب زبان پیش دانشگاهی ۱ و ۲ را بررسی کرده است.

کلیدواژه ها: کتاب درسی، ارزیابی کتاب درسی، خواندن و درک مفاهیم، طراحی و تدوین کتاب

## Abstract

In Iran, textbooks are prepared by the Ministry of Education; however, this doesn't mean that teachers should be passive in their career, they can evaluate the book and find the most suitable techniques to teach in the classroom and at the same time they can provide feedback to the Ministry of Education so as to improve the textbooks. This article attempts to evaluate the Pre-University English Textbook which has been taught for three years so far. Although this book is something different from and quite



has contaminated the teaching materials.

Also, as far as teaching methods and assessments are concerned most of teachers and language practitioners still resort to traditional strategies of teaching passages for reading comprehension. By virtue of the acquired results in this study and the researchers' class observations, educational authorities are required to train language instructors so that they might be able to avail themselves of cognitive strategies in their reading comprehension classes. Moreover, regarding language teaching and assessment the sex of learners is usually neglected in language textbooks and classrooms environments. The authorities of language teaching and learning are required to incorporate certain methodologies according to the sex of learners to facilitate the development of language teaching and learning.

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subjects and the methods of teaching on their performance on the post-test was rejected, and it could be claimed that there was a significant interaction between the two variables.

### Phase Two

A two-way ANOVA was run to investigate the effects of the gender of the subjects, their proficiency level and the interaction between these two variables on the performance of the subjects on the post-test.

Based on the gained results it could be concluded that there was a significant difference between the female and male subjects' mean scores on the post-test.

Thus, the null-hypothesis as there is no significant effect of the gender of the subjects on their performance on the post-test was rejected, and it could be claimed that the gender variable had a significant effect on the performance of the subjects on the post-test. The female students performed better than the male subjects on the post-test.

Accordingly, the null-hypothesis as there is no significant effect of the proficiency levels on the performance of the subjects on the post-test was supported, and it could be claimed that the proficiency levels did not have any significant effect on the performance of the subjects on the post-test.

The results also indicated that the gender of the subjects had a significant effect on their performance on the post-test only. The proficiency level did not have a significant effect and at all three proficiency levels the female subjects performed better than the male subjects.

Hence, the null-hypothesis as there is no significant interaction between the gender of the subjects and their proficiency levels on the post-test was supported, and it could be claimed that there was not any significant interaction between

the two variables.

### Phase Three

Phase three dealt with the qualitative investigation of the study. In this phase the researchers availed himself of a closed ended questionnaire to elicit the needed data. The analytical procedures appear hereunder.

**Table 1:** Distribution of Choices Made by Female and Male Subjects.  
GENDER\*CHOICES CROSTABULATION

			Choices					Total
			Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	
Gender	Female	Count	19	92	178	266	349	904
		% within Gender	2.1%	10.2%	19.7%	29.4%	38.6%	100.0%
	Male	Count	89	156	222	241	191	899
		% within Gender	9.9%	17.4%	24.7%	26.8%	21.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	108	248	400	507	540	1803	
	% within Gender	6.0%	13.8%	22.2%	28.1%	30.0%	100.0%	

Thus, the null-hypothesis as there is no meaningful relationship between the gender of the subjects and the answers given to the questionnaire was rejected, and it could be concluded that male and female subjects had answered the items on the questionnaire differently.

### Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The prominent pedagogical implications in this research correspond with what the following scholar believes in.

Wood (1996, p. 76) is persuaded that guidelines for good practice in schools should not focus on discriminating between boys and girls, i. e. offering actual as well as formal equality of opportunity. Accordingly, the problems of equity and equality toward different sexes and their specific cognitive abilities have remarkably been ignored in the prevalent educational curriculums. The bias and unfairness toward one of the sexes



subjected to sundry types of questions based on their reading passages so that the researchers might almost gain the reading comprehension ability of the subjects.

In phase three of this research the researchers distributed a cognitive questionnaire to 60 male and female senior students-30 males and 30 females-majoring in teaching English at the Islamic Azad University of Garmsar to illuminate the difference between these two sexes while answering the questions.

## **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

### **Phase One**

Following an ANOVA test it was unraveled that the four groups were homogeneous in terms of their language proficiency prior to the administration of the treatments.

Next, a two-way ANOVA was run to investigate the effects of the gender of the subjects, the teaching methods of reading and the interaction between these two variables on the performance of the subjects on the post-test.

Based on the results it could be concluded that there was not any significant difference between the female and male subjects' mean scores on the post-test. The mean scores for the female and male

students were 69.31 and 67.65, respectively.

Thus, the null-hypothesis as there is no significant effect of the gender of the subjects on their performance on the post-test was supported, and it could be claimed that the gender variable did not have any significant effect on the performance of the subjects on the post-test.

Based on the F-observed value the null-hypothesis as there is no significant effect of the method of teaching on the performance of the subjects on the post-test was supported, and it could be claimed that the methods of teaching did not have any significant effect on the performance of the subjects on the post-test.

However, the F-observed value for the interaction between the gender of the subjects and the teaching methods on the performance of the subjects on the post-test indicated that the traditional and cognitive methods had significant effect on the performance of the female subjects only. The traditional method decreased the female subjects' performance, while the cognitive method increased their performance. However, the two methods were of almost equal importance for the male subjects.

Thus, the null-hypothesis as there is no significant interaction between the gender of the



## Method

### Subjects

In order to investigate the first, and the second null hypotheses forming the **phase one** of this study, 120 Iranian male and female students- 60 males and 60 females- between 19 and 25 years of age served as subjects. They were enrolled in a general English course at the Islamic Azad University, Shahr-e-Ray branch. These subjects were categorized in four separate classes-two 30-male student classes and two 30-female student classes. So, each class included almost the same number of male and female participants.

On the other hand, to investigate the third, the fourth, the fifth null hypotheses and to observe the pertinent findings 400 Iranian students volunteered to take part in this phase of study. They were about 20 to 25 years of age and were all studying at the B.A level majoring in English translation-juniors and seniors-at the Islamic Azad University, Varamin branch. The researchers needed about 180 subjects but in order to obviate the experimental mortality he decided to randomly select 200 subjects. This was called **phase two** of this study.

In **Phase three** of this study 60 male and female Iranian students-30 males and 30 females-were invited to answer the items of a questionnaire. These students were all seniors studying at B.A level majoring in teaching English. Their age range stood between 20 to 30 years of age and were studying at the Islamic Azad University, Garmsar branch.

### Instrumentation

The instruments of this research study were as follows:

A. The instruments of the first phase were:

1. Sixteen intermediate piloted reading passages with the level of difficulty determined through the Fog index model.

B. The instruments of the second phase were:

1. Nelson Standard Reading Test version (c), 1977
2. TOEFL Reading Test (Sharpe, 1989)
3. Sixteen elementary reading passages, sixteen intermediate reading passages, and sixteen advanced reading passages.

The level of difficulty of all the reading passages were determined through Fog index model. On the other hand, these passages were all piloted on the subjects with similar characteristics in order to remove the malfunctioning points and stabilize the proper ones.

C. The researchers used a cognitive based questionnaire entailing thirty closed form items on the Likert scale involving five rating scales: always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. The items were constructed based on Oxford and O'Malley's recommendations on cognitive strategies of reading (Oxford, 1990), (O'Malley, 1990).

### Procedures

By the virtue of phase one of the study the researchers aimed to know whether the readers would show the same reaction while answering the questions after being exposed to the two rival treatments of reading approaches-cognitive strategies versus traditional strategies-or not.

In phase two of this study the junior and senior students studying English translation had been invited.

After designating six groups based on their determined levels, the researchers prepared 16 reading passages for the high-level readers and 16 reading passages for the medium-level readers and 16 reading passages for the low-level readers through Fog index model recommended by (Farhady et al., 1994).

All these subjects were taught the passages through cognitive strategies of reading. It is noteworthy to mention that the six groups were

foreign language learners want to be able to read for information, pleasure, their careers, and study purposes.

Harmer (1998, p. 68) and Jacobs (1997, p. 25) hold that reading is useful for other purposes too: any exposure to reading is a good thing for language students. At the very least, some of the language sticks in their minds as part of the process of language acquisition, and, if the reading text is especially interesting and engaging, acquisition is likely to be even more successful.

Celce-Murcia (2001, p. 154) stipulates that various models and theories explain what is involved when we read. She also postulates that current researches generally view reading as an interactive, sociocognitive process.

### Statement of the Problem

Ary (1996, p. 13) holds that the issue of teaching reading is one which has puzzled educational language practitioners for many years. Some teachers still use the old traditional approaches to teach reading passages. Some other teachers, who are familiar with new developments in educational psychology, try to employ cognitive approaches and strategies in teaching this skill. On the other hand, most teachers are not aware of the reality that males and females are cognitively different and they are likely to show different reactions to the reading passages. By and large, these teachers adhere to the traditional approaches of teaching reading passages paying no attention to the difference between males and females from a cognitive point of view. So, this study aims to investigate this hotly debated topic in the domain of foreign language learning and teaching.

### Statement of the Hypotheses

In order to investigate the aforementioned issue and to arrive at logical conclusions the following

quantitative hypotheses were developed:

1. There is no significant difference between traditional strategies and cognitive strategies in reading comprehension when sex is concerned.
2. There is no interaction between sex and method of teaching on the achievement of reading comprehension.
3. There is no significant difference in the amount of comprehension of reading passages between elementary male/ female readers when they employ cognitive strategies.
4. There is no significant difference in the amount of comprehension of reading passages between intermediate male / female readers when they employ cognitive strategies.
5. There is no significant difference in the amount of comprehension of reading passages between advanced male / female readers when they employ cognitive strategies.

In order to complete our investigations the following qualitative hypothesis was also developed:

6. There is no significant difference between advanced male / female readers' answers when they are exposed to a questionnaire based on cognitive strategies.

### Significance of the Study

In conducting this study the researchers' aimed to ameliorate and improve the language teaching environment through the following contributions:

First, language teachers should beware of traditional strategies of teaching the reading comprehension passages. Second, language teachers should get enough training on the cognitive strategies of teaching the reading comprehension passages and endeavor to employ these strategies in their classes. Third, they are expected to distinguish the discrepancy between the males and females' cognitive abilities.

بر مبنای نمره‌های زبان پیش‌دانشگاهی در مرحله‌ی اول، دو تست تافل و نلسون در مرحله‌ی دوم، نمرات درس خواندن پیشرفته در مرحله‌ی سوم، تدریس ۱۶ متن استاندارد شده از طریق روش‌های سنتی و استفاده از راهبردهای شناختی در مراحل اول و دوم، توزیع پرسش‌نامه‌ی تدوین شده براساس راهبردهای شناختی در مرحله‌ی سوم، و استفاده از روش‌های آماری مناسب و انجام عملیات آماری مربوطه نتایج زیر به دست آمد:

۱. ارتباط معنی‌داری بین جنسیت دانشجویان ایرانی رشته‌ی آموزش زبان انگلیسی و روش‌های تدریس و خواندن متون برای درک مفاهیم وجود دارد و معلوم شد که دانشجویان دختر، بهتر و بیشتر از راهبردهای شناختی در این مورد سود می‌جویند.
  ۲. ارتباط معنی‌داری بین جنسیت دانشجویان و سطح تحصیلی آن‌ها وجود ندارد و در هر سه سطح مقدماتی، میانه و پیشرفته، دختران بیشتر و بهتر از راهبردهای شناختی برای درک مفاهیم متون استفاده می‌کنند.
- با توجه به مطالب مذکور می‌توان نتیجه‌گیری‌های زیر را به منظور بهبود وضعیت آموزش متون برای درک مفاهیم در مدرسه‌ها و دانشگاه‌های ایران به کار گرفت. در مورد آموزش متون برای درک مفاهیم و ارزش‌یابی، مدرسان باید:
- از تفاوت‌های شناختی بین پسران و دختران آگاه باشند.
  - برای استفاده از راهبردهای شناختی در تدریس خود، آموزش‌های لازم را ببینند.
  - فرصت‌های مساوی را در محیط‌های آموزشی در اختیار دانشجویان پسر و دختر قرار دهند.

کلید واژه‌ها: روش‌های سنتی، توانایی شناختی-یادگیری زبان خارجی، راهبردهای شناختی

## Abstract

Reading is an important skill and it receives a special focus in many second or foreign language teaching situations. Obviously, there are two problems in teaching reading skill in educational centers in Iran: 1) most teachers still employ traditional methods in teaching this skill; 2) teachers are not aware of the differences between their male and female students' cognitive abilities that play an indispensable role in their reading comprehension. Thus, the present study aimed at: 1) investigating the differences between the traditional method and the cognitive strategies of teaching reading comprehension passages to Iranian EFL students; 2) investigating the differences between males and females' cognitive abilities that have a crucial impact on their reading comprehension in Iran's EFL environments; 3) investigating the difference between the Iranian EFL male and female students' cognitive abilities in reading comprehension in three grades-that is, elementary, intermediate, and advanced.

Statistical analyses revealed that: 1) female students employed the cognitive strategies of reading much more than their male peers in the process of reading. 2) female students employed the cognitive strategies of reading more than the males in all the three levels. 3) the female students used the cognitive strategies before, while, and after reading process remarkably more than the male students.

By and large, the acquired conclusions indicate that substantial and fundamental changes are indispensable in the language teaching and learning environments, in general, and opening new doors to the cognitive strategies of reading passages is taken for granted, in particular.

**Key words:** cognitive abilities, cognitive strategies, EFL (English as a foreign language), traditional strategies.

## Introduction

Renandya (2002, p. 273) postulates that reading receives a special focus in many second or foreign language teaching situations. There are a number of reasons for this issue. For example, many