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helping them develop the necessary skills, for example, for dealing with unfamiliar linguistic items in unmodified input.

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Recall that the lexically elaborated passages were longer than the lexically simplified passages and denser in words per sentence. In a sense, then, the subjects who read the lexically elaborated passages were at a disadvantage, for they not only had to read more during the allotted time but had to answer the comprehension questions faster than subjects reading either lexically simplified or baseline passages.

In light of the greater length and complexity of the lexically elaborated texts relative to the lexically simplified texts, the fact that the readers of the lexically elaborated passages did not do as well as the readers of the lexically simplified passages at advanced and intermediate proficiency levels is even more remarkable.

According to the findings of this study, EFL reading material developers as well as English teachers need to reevaluate the widely held assumption that linguistic simplification is the only viable way of modifying target language written input. The findings also suggest alternative, more reasonable criteria for the selection and preparation of reading materials for foreign language instruction. Instruction with lexically elaborated written input should accelerate the progression to fluent reading of unmodified materials by familiarizing nonnative readers with authentic features of target language input and by

comprehension test than did those at the same proficiency level who had read unmodified versions of the same passages. The second question was answered in negative because there was no significant difference between the scores of subjects who had read the lexically simplified passages and the score of subjects who had read the lexically elaborated versions by comparing between group scores. The third null hypotheses was rejected because there was a significant difference among six groups of readers.

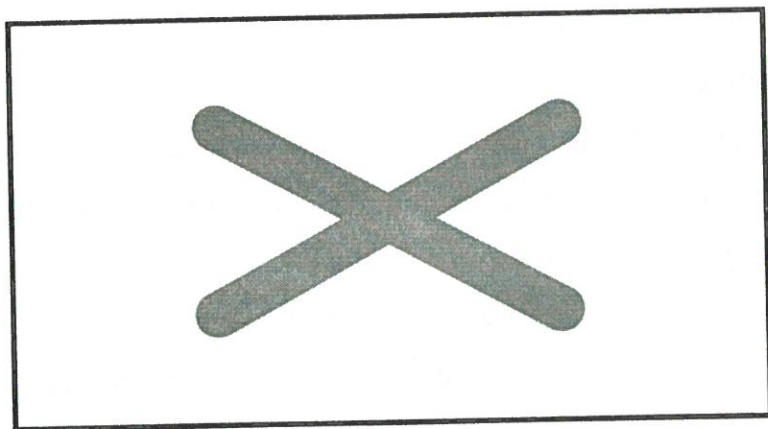
The result of the study indicate that lexical simplification facilitated the Iranian EFL learners' overall reading comprehension. Reduced complexity in Lexis seems to have contributed to the better performance of the students who had read the lexically simplified texts, as it did in studies by kim(1985), Lee(1986), Brown(1987), Tsang(1987), Yano et al.(1994) and Oh(2001).

Overall comprehension of the passages significantly improved among subjects at both proficiency levels as a result of the lexical elaborative modification, which provides further statistical support for the suggestive but not the conclusive results of Yano et al.(1994). Those in the advanced group of proficiency level seemed to do best on lexically elaborated passages. For the advanced subjects, the facilitative effect of lexical elaboration was comparable to

passages; those who read the baselines scored the lowest.

In the intermediate group, subjects reading the simplified texts performed better than those reading the elaborated texts, and those reading the baseline texts did the worst. More information is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Means of Total omprehension Scores



Based on these results, it can be concluded that there is an interaction between the type of lexical modification (simplification versus elaboration) and Iranian EFL readers' language proficiency.

Of the three research questions in this study, two involved the effect of the input modification type on overall reading comprehension. Question 1 was answered in the affirmative because the first null hypothesis was rejected. Subjects who had read lexically simplified and elaborated text type passages scored significantly higher on the

Intermediate	Simplified	18.87		
Advanced	Elaborated	25.40	13.32*	3.95
Intermediate	Elaborated	14.13		
Advanced	Baseline	17.67	*7.22	3.95
Intermediate	Simplified	18.87		
Advanced	Baseline	17.67	2.44	3.95
Intermediate	Baseline	11.60		
Intermediate	Simplified	20.20	*17.55	3.95
Intermediate	Baseline	11.60		
Intermediate	Elaborated	14.13	5.16*	3.95
Intermediate	Simplified	18.87		
Intermediate	Elaborated	14.13	9.67*	3.95
Advanced	Baseline	17.67		
Advanced	Simplified	20.20	5.16*	3.95
Advanced	Baseline	17.67		
Advanced	Elaborated	25.40	15.77*	3.95
Advanced	Simplified	20.20		
Advanced	Elaborated	25.40	10.61*	3.95

The final step was to compare each of the t-observed values. The results of the Table 6 show that the t-observed value for each of the above mentioned groups except intermediate simplified and advanced simplified or intermediate simplified and advanced baselines groups exceeds 3.95(t-critical value) so, the third null hypothesis was rejected at 0.05 level of significance.

Subjects in the advanced group who read the lexically elaborated version of the passages scored the highest, followed by those who read the lexically simplified

Considering their proficiency level, the advanced students who had read the lexically elaborated passages performed significantly better than those who had read the lexically simplified and baseline passages(mean differences = 5.2, 7.73).

The subjects in the intermediate group who had read lexically simplified passages outperformed lexically elaborated and baseline passages(mean differences =4.74, 7.27)

The performance of students at both proficiency levels in the lexically simplified and elaborated passage conditions differ to a significant degree. More information is presented in table 6.

Table 6. Post –hoc Scheffe test for the interaction between language proficiency and modification type .

Comparison		Mean	T-Observed	T-Critical
Intermediate	Baseline	11.60	12.38*	3.95
Advanced	Baseline	17.67		
Intermediate	Simplified	18.87	2.71	3.95
Advanced	Simplified	20.20		
Intermediate	Elaborated	14.13	23*	3.95
Advanced	Elaborated	25.40		
Intermediate	Baseline	11.60	17.55*	3.95
Advanced	Simplified	20.20		
Intermediate	Baseline	11.60	28.16*	3.95
Advanced	Elaborated	25.40		

elaborated text type passages and readers of simplified versions.

According to the results of the two-way ANOVA on the comprehension scores, there was a strong relationship between learners' English proficiency and their reading comprehension scores ($F=132.776$, $df=1$, $p=.000$). More details are available in Table 5.

Table 5. ANOVA for the effect of language proficiency on reading score

Source of Variance	Sum of squares	D.F	Mean square	F-observed	F-critical	Sig.
Between groups	1792.356	1	1792.356	132.776	3.89	.000
Within groups	2402.844	178	13.499			

As Table 5. shows, F-observed value, i.e. 132.776 was much greater than the critical value of F, i.e. 6.76 at 0.05 level of significance and 3.89 at 0.01 level of significance, so it was concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the performance of two groups on reading comprehension test.

The results of the post hoc, Scheffe test, on the differences among the six groups' means indicated that the advanced subjects outperformed the intermediate subjects on all three types of passages to a significant degree.

Later, the Post-hoc, Scheffe test, was employed to locate the exact places of differences in different versions of the modified passages. More details are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The Scheffe test for comparing means of subjects in different types of texts

Comparison	Mean	D.F	T-Observed	T-Critical
Baseline Simplified	14.53 19.50	57	6.53*	3.69
Baseline Elaborated	14.53 19.77	57	6.88*	3.69
Simplified Elaborated	19.50 19.77	57	0.35	3.69

The results of table 4. show that the t-observed for baseline and simplified passages is 6.53 and this amount of t exceeds 3.69 (t-critical). The comparison of baseline and elaborated indicates that t-observed value is bigger than t-critical value (i.e., $6.88 > 3.69$) so, the rejection of first null hypothesis was confirmed again. The t-observed value for the comparison of simplified and elaborated passages is 0.35. This amount of t-observed is lower than the critical value of t (i.e., $.35 < 3.69$). Thus the second null hypothesis was not rejected and it was concluded that there is not any difference between Iranian EFL readers of lexically

By using ANOVA we can examine the difference among the means and decide whether those differences are likely to happen by chance or by a real factor. Table 3 shows the results of ANOVA for the effect of lexical modification on reading comprehension.

Table 3. ANOVA table for the effect of lexical modification

Source of variance	Sum of squares	D.F	Mean squares	F-Observed	F-critical	Sig.
Between groups	1042.53	2	521.26	29.26	6.76	.000
Within groups	3152.66	177	17.812			

As presented in table 3., the F-observed value for the effect of lexical modification , 29.26 at 2 and 177 degree of freedom is greater than the critical value of F, i.e, 6.76 at .05 level of significance. These results indicate that there is a significant difference between the performance of modified and unmodified readers.

The first null hypothesis suggesting that there is not any effect of lexical modification(i.e., simplification and elaboration)on reading comprehension test administered in this study is rejected, and it can be concluded that lexical modification affects subjects performance on reading comprehension.

groups, from two different proficiency levels, advanced and intermediate. The following table on the next page depicts a schematic representation of this study.

Table 1. Subgroups Mean Scores on the Reading Comprehension Test

Group	Type of passage	Number of Subjects	Mean	Std. Deviation
Advanced	Baseline	30	17.67	1.561
	Simplified	30	20.20	2.310
	Elaborated	30	25.40	1.589
Intermediate	Baseline	30	11.60	1.354
	Simplified	30	18.87	2.330
	Elaborate	30	14.13	2.063

As shown by the mean scores on the 30-item comprehension test, students in the advanced and intermediate groups who read the lexically elaborated and simplified version of passages scored highest, followed by those who read the baselines.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for three versions of passages

Passage Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Baseline	60	14.63	3.385	0.437
Simplified	60	19.53	2.397	0.309
Elaborated	60	19.77	5.967	0.770
Total	180	17.98	4.800	0.358

Data analysis

The obtained data through the procedure described above were classified into groups according to both the students' proficiency (Advanced, Intermediate) and the form of the reading passages (Baseline, Simplified, Elaborated) that they were given. This produced six groups: (1)Intermediate-Baseline,(2) Intermediate - Elaborated,(3)Intermediate -Simplified, (4) Advamced - Baseline, (5)Advanced -Elaborated,(6)Advanced-Simplified. Data from 30 participants from each group were randomly selected for statistical analysis; thus the performance of 180 students on the reading comprehension test constituted the data set for the study.

In this study, the type of text (simplified, elaborated and baseline), language proficiency were independent variables and reading comprehension was our dependent variable, so the obtained data were analyzed by using two-way ANOVA). Post-Hoc comparison (Scheffe test) was carried out to check the performance of each group in different types of modifications to see whether the results are significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As mentioned earlier, a two way analysis of variance

reading into slow careful reading. Therefore the time factor was carefully controlled.

Ensuring that there was no difference among passages, modification of passages were conducted. After constructing the multiple choice comprehension test on the six reading passages it was time to assure that multiple choice tests constructed by the researcher were appropriate for the subjects under investigation, 20 students from two proficiency levels at Shokouh language institute were chosen and given the tests. The rational behind it was to validate the newly developed tests against the criterion, i.e., the Cambridge English proficiency test and to estimate the reliability of the test. As a result of item analysis process, defective items were improved. Then KR-21 formula was used to estimate the reliability of the tests, and finally scores of the newly developed tests were correlated with those of the proficiency tests to make sure of its reliability. The results are given in table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the results of pilot study

Test	Mean	Std. Dev	Reliability	DF	Correlation Coefficient	P.Value
Reading	30.52	9.44	0.846	19	0.8633	0.000
Cambridge	71.75	12.57	0.881			

comprehension test the following features were also borne in mind:

- 1) Length of texts: The length of the selected texts were not longer than those generally given in the typical English reading test.
- 2) Content: Among 12 passages, those whose content was generally understandable to all students were chosen. In other words, the effects of background knowledge was controlled.
- 3) Difficulty level: The average length of sentences in passages, the number of new words a passage contained and the grammatical complexity of the languages used in passages were regarded in selection of passages. *Fog index of readability* was used to estimate the readability of passages.
- 4) Genre: Since the passages were from the pen of a single writer, and adopted from the same book, they were of the same genre.
- 5) Interests of students: The piloting phase showed that the texts were interesting to students.
- 6) Form of the items: A multiple-choice format was used to construct items.
- 7) Time: The time allotted for each reading test was 40 minutes. This time limit was determined in the piloting stage. Too much time allowed changes rapid expeditious

Simplified	
Intermediate Baseline	41
Intermediate Elaborated	46
Intermediate Simplified	43

They were not aware of any possible difference among passages. The students' comprehension of the passages was measured with 30-item multiple-choice test consisting of five items for each of six passages. All the students in the main study took the same test irrespective of the form of the reading passage they read.

Piloting

As a preliminary step, two pilot studies were conducted four weeks before the main study. The purpose of the first pilot study was to choose six of twelve passages that were appropriate in difficulty and content for use in the main study and to identify vocabularies that need modification. As a pretest twelve passages were selected from *Fluency in English* (Alexander, 1967) and through applying the index of readability, the existence of any probable difference among passages were checked and six passages were selected. The next six passages in order to construct reading

deviation on the normal distribution curve (i.e., 59 – 71) were taken as intermediate and those whose scores were above +1 Standard deviation (i.e.,the 84- and above) as advanced group. According to the results of the TOEFL test, 54 students whose scores were lower than one standard deviation below the mean and 20 students who participated in the pilot study were excluded from the main study. More information is presented in Table A.

Table A: Statistics for the Cambridge proficiency test:

TEST	DF	MEAN	Std. Deviation
Cambridge	334	71.13	12.03

The identified subjects at each proficiency level were randomly put into three subgroups and the main study was conducted with the following number of students in each subgroup:

TableB: The number of subjects in each subgroup

Subgroups	Number of subjects
Advanced Baseline	39
Advanced Elaborated	41
Advanced	40

the TOEFL test of proficiency and the test of reading in English in the piloting stage for the purpose of having a valid test, concurrent validity, this test of reading turned out to be suitable for this study. To have the most appropriate test, item characteristics, that is item facility and item discrimination, were also studied.

Design

Since this type of study attempts to determine the causes for and consequences of differences that exist in groups of individuals and also there is no treatment in this study, the design of this study is ex post facto. The independent variables in this study are input modification (i.e., lexical simplification and elaboration) and proficiency level of students whose effects would be studied on students' reading comprehension in English.

Procedure

The major objective of the study was to focus on the effects of lexical modification in reading comprehension and its possible interaction with language proficiency with the hope to expand EFL passage developers' knowledge of the direction of text type modification for EFL learners. In order to achieve this goal, first proficiency level of subjects was determined according to Cambridge preparation of TOEFL test. Among the students taking this test, two groups of intermediate and advanced were identified, that is, those whose scores were between -1 and $+1$ Standard

vocabulary and reading comprehension. All parts were in the form of Multiple-Choice questions. There were, in all, 100 items and the time allotted was 90 minutes.

B. Test of reading comprehension:

The six passages adopted for the study were selected from *Fluency in English* (Alexander, 1967). Passages that required no specific background knowledge (e.g., episodic stories) were selected to minimize the possible influences of content schema on the reading task. Three forms of each passage – baseline, lexically simplified and elaborated – were prepared. Lexically simplified texts were made in a way that low frequency words were replaced by higher frequency words. Lexically elaborated versions were produced by adding redundancy, paraphrase and repetition of original information, synonyms and definition of low frequency words contained in the baseline passages.

To select baseline reading comprehension passages the following features were borne in mind: To ensure that this test is an appropriate one in terms of text difficulty level to be given to the both groups of proficiency, Fog's readability formula was run for 12 passages to obtain an index of readability for them. The mean index turned out to be 22.41. Then the readability formula, was run for the above mentioned test of Cambridge, which turned out to be 23.87 and seemed quite suitable for the purpose of this

and the number of subjects for intermediate proficiency level was 134. According to the results of language proficiency test, 54 subjects were excluded because their scores were lower than one standard deviation below the mean. Of the all students participating in each proficiency level in the study, three subgroups of students in each proficiency level were randomly assigned to different versions of the same six passages: baseline, simplified or elaborated . Thus there were six groups in all: (1)Advanced - Baseline, (2) Advanced - Elaborated, (3) Advanced-Simplified, (4) Intermediate–Baseline, (5)Intermediate–Elaborated, (6)Intermediate – Simplified.

To verify that all students in each group were homogeneous at each proficiency level, the mean scores of each group on the Cambridge test were analyzed. The result indicated no statistically significant difference among the Cambridge scores of the three subgroups at each proficiency level. The age and sex variables were not controlled.

Instrumentation

A. Language proficiency test:

In order to make sure of the homogeneity of subjects in terms of English language knowledge, a TOEFL test (Cambridge preparation of TOEFL test, 1993) after being piloted on a similar group of twenty students, was

Statement of the hypotheses

Regarding the above mentioned questions, the following null hypotheses are formulated to investigate the answers for these questions:

- 1) There is not any effect of lexical modification (i.e., simplification and elaboration) of text type passages on reading comprehension of Iranian EFL readers.
- 2) There is not any difference between Iranian EFL readers of a lexically elaborated text type passages and readers of the simplified versions.
- 3) There is not any interaction between the type of lexical modification (simplification versus elaboration) and Iranian EFL readers' language proficiency.

METHOD

Subjects

This study was conducted in Pand , Shokouh and Simin language institutes, the Babol branches. Through administering a TOEFL test (Cambridge Preparation for the TOEFL Test, 1993) on 334 subjects, 270 students were homogenized and chosen for the purpose of this study.

The students were divided into two proficiency levels: intermediate and advanced on the basis their scores falling within one standard deviation below the mean and those whose scores were higher than one standard deviation above

modification type and language learners' proficiency remains an important issue. Might lower level learners need simplification while advanced learners need elaboration to extend their competence? The present study intends to investigate what role lexical modification has on Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension. The focus of this study is on "What kind of lexically based text type modification appears to improve learners' comprehension and provide them with the rich linguistic form they need for further language learning?" and the interaction between text type modification and Iranian EFL students' language proficiency will be investigated.

Research Questions

On the basis of what was mentioned in previous sections, the present study investigates the following questions:

- 1) Is there any effect of lexical modification (i.e., simplification and elaboration) of text type passages on reading comprehension of Iranian EFL readers?
- 2) Is there any difference between Iranian EFL readers of a lexically elaborated text type passages and readers of the simplified versions?
- 3) Is there any interaction between the type of lexical modification (simplification versus elaboration) and Iranian EFL readers' language proficiency?

statements such as “The tall man purchased the crackers that had been lying on the top shelf,” “The bald man read the newspaper in order to look for a hat sale,” and “The funny man liked the ring that squirted water.” Then, both groups were given questions such as “ Who bought the crackers?” “ Who read the newspaper?” and “Who liked the ring?” Students who read the unelaborated statements could answer almost no questions, while those who read the elaborated text could answer nearly all of them. The idea that elaborations facilitate comprehension and recall makes good sense, and the facilitative effects of elaborated text have been empirically documented (Bransford & Johnson, 1972; Reder, Charney, & Morgan, 1986; Yano, Long & Ross, 1994; Oh, 2001). However, as we noted above, shorter texts sometimes produce better comprehension and memory than longer ones. The matter of just when elaborations help and when they hinder is not yet resolved. It appears to be the case, though, that shorter texts may be more effective if the goal is simply to remember material, while elaborated texts may be more effective if one needs to thoroughly understand material, for example to write about what he or she has read or apply it in some real world context such as operating computer software (Charney & Reder, 1988).

In addition to questions about the value of different types of elaboration, there are also questions about the

pragmatic solution to linguistic simplification is to work with vocabulary and structure lists thought to represent the actual attainment of learners at different levels-readability formulas, of course, bring considerable help to the simplifier in this case. Such lists are based on studies of widely used large extent, from standard frequency lists are based on studies of widely used large extent, from standard frequency lists and structural limitations from a checklist of allowance structures (Honeyfield,1977).

Texts can be written so that they present concepts without much explanation so that they present concepts along with a good deal of explanatory material — examples, analogies, and linkages of various sorts. Elaboration refers to a certain sort of explanatory material(Yano, Long, & Ross, 1994). Elaborative information is information that explains the reasons behind the bare bones information presented. Elaboration makes information more meaningful and understandable, and information that is more understandable is more memorable(Graves & Graves, 2003). The concept is an important one and worth an example. Here is an example from a psychological experiment on elaboration (Bransford & Johnson, 1972). In the experiment, some students were given unelaborated statements such as “The tall man bought the crackers,” “The bald man read the newspaper,” and “The funny man liked the ring” and other students were given elaborated

process (Long , 1985; Loschky, 1994; Olaofe, 1995; Krahen, 1997; Prabhu, 1997).

Attempting to investigate this hypothesis in a way that holds promise for developing pedagogical materials, researchers have explored the effects of various forms of input modification on learners' comprehension to identify the characteristics that make input more comprehensible to second / foreign language learners. As a result of input modification, different studies focused on linguistic modification of written texts on comprehensibility and utility of language learners. Limitations of readability based approach to text modification are becoming more widely recognized, but this greater awareness has as yet had little impact on the design of commercially published reading materials for second and foreign language learners(Campbell, 1987; Lucas, 1991).

The notion of simplification has been a familiar one in language teaching for a long time. It underlies not only the production of simplified readers but also the whole process of syllabus design, whose purpose is simply to ease the task of learning. It is a kind of 'intralingual translation' (Widdowson, 1979, p.185) whereby a piece of discourse is reduced to a version written in the supposed interlanguage of the reader. Simplification is commonly thought to be of two principle forms : (a) simplification of language, (b) simplification of content. The professional literature is

should be less than three percent of the whole. Nuttall (ibid.) recommends that a passage should contain no new words because learners cannot respond completely to unknown items. However, if one of the objectives of the lesson is to teach learners to guess the meaning of unknown lexical items from the context, the passage would have to include some unknown words and phrases. In general it is recommended that the number of unknown lexical items be kept to a maximum of no more than one or two words per page. This recommendation is based on the premise that the purpose of the reading lesson is reading, not vocabulary development.

A central issue in the theory of language acquisition is how learners' experience of a target language contributes to their language learning." All types of linguistic data from a target language that learners are exposed to and from which they learn are called input" (Oh, 2001,p.69). Language input is apparently a necessary condition for both first and second language learning, so considerable attention has been paid to the role of input in second / foreign language learning (Chaudron, 1983; Leow, 1993; Ellis, 1995; Salaberry,1996; Carrol, 1999). Specifically, much second or foreign language research has focused on input comprehension, motivated by the hypothesis that the learner must comprehend if it is to assist the acquisition

SQ3R(Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review) technique (Nuttal, 1996 , p.129), or ultimately between the reader and the writer through a text.

Lexical knowledge is one of the most important elements that determine a text readability. It is clear that as the number of unknown lexical items in a reading passage increases, the more difficult it is for students to read it with comprehension. However, lexical knowledge is among the more controversial factors in selecting a reading passage. Its controversial nature stems from two issues involved with lexical knowledge. The first concerns how to determine the degree of difficulty of the vocabularies of a reading passage. The second is the number of unknown words that is acceptable in a reading passage.

One way of assessing students vocabulary is through the use of a scanning exercise, whereby students identify in some ways difficult or unknown words in a passage. Over time, this will help teachers determine the lexical knowledge of their learners. The second issue, how much new vocabularies should be in a reading passage, depends at least partly on the type of reading program extensive or intensive and also on the objectives of the reading lesson. Nuttall (1982:26)defines new lexical items as words and idioms or compound phrases and recommends

modification had a significant effect on students' reading comprehension. There was also a significant interaction between learners' proficiency and modification type. Considering their proficiency level, the advanced students in reading lexically elaborated passages performed significantly better than lexically simplified passages and intermediate students who read lexically simplified passages outperformed readers of lexically elaborated and baseline passages.

Key words: Lexical simplification, Lexical elaboration, Reading comprehension, Language Proficiency.

Introduction

Reading is by nature an interactive process. Whether in a native language or in a second language, it involves three different kinds of interaction. The first interaction takes place on a linguistic level; linguistic elements (words, phrases, and sentences) in a discourse or text interact with each other to create textuality (Halliday & Hassan, 1976; Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). The second interaction takes place on a cognitive level within the reader. A successful comprehension of a text requires the interaction between bottom-up processing and top-down processing (Eskey, 1988) or between linguistic knowledge and background knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). The third interaction takes place on an interpretative level between the reader and a text (Papalia, 1987) through the

The Effect Of Lexical Modification On Reading Comprehension Regarding Language Proficiency

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Abstract

This study investigates the relative effects of two types of lexical modification (i.e., lexical simplification and elaboration) of text type passages on Iranian EFL students' reading comprehension with reference to language proficiency. To this end six English reading text type passages in one of three forms(a) baseline, (b) lexically simplified, or (c)lexically elaborated; were presented to 250 students, who were divided into two proficiency levels (i.e., advanced and intermediate) on the basis of their scores in TOEFL test. Comprehension was assessed by a 30-item multiple-choice test, which included items for assessing (a) general, (b) specific and (c) inferential comprehension.

In order to probe the hypotheses formulated in the study, the data gathered were analyzed by a two way ANOVA and Sheffe test that was used in post hoc analyses. The obtained results support the suggestion that lexical