

## The Effect of EFL Students' Reading Styles on their Reading Comprehension Performance

Aly Anwar Amer and Naguib Khouzam  
Sultan Qaboos University

Kirby's theory of reading (1988) was used to investigate differences between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at two levels of reading comprehension performance (i.e., meaning memorization and meaning generation) with respect to their reading styles. Forty-eight English major senior students at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) participated in the study. After reading two texts, students performed three tasks for each text. The first, writing a summary, aimed at measuring meaning generation; the second, description of strategies used in reading, aimed at identifying reading styles; the third, answering the Sentence Verification Technique (SVT) Test, aimed at measuring meaning memorization. Results revealed the presence of the global and analytic reading styles and the absence of the synthetic style. The levels of students' performance on meaning memorization and generation were low. No significant differences were found between the two styles with regard to meaning memorization. There were slightly significant differences in favour of the global style with reference to meaning generation.

### INTRODUCTION

For many students reading is by far the most important of the four language skills in a second (SL) or a foreign language (FL). Certainly if we consider the study of English as a FL around the world – the situation in which most English learners find themselves – reading is the main reason why students learn the language. In order to succeed, SL or FL readers should possess solid reading proficiency. Thus, effective reading in SL or FL is critical (Carrell 1989: 1).

Research on effective reading in FL and SL has emphasized the importance of identifying readers' comprehension problems such as preserving meaning in memory after reading a text (meaning memorization), and recalling ideas and main ideas included in the text (meaning generation). Research in reading comprehension has identified two major approaches to sources of reading problems (Kirby 1988: 232). The first is the traditional approach which emphasizes that poor readers either lack specific skills (e.g., recognition of words, encoding meaning of sentences, or making inferences), or they do not try hard enough (a question of motivation). This implies that what poor readers need to do is to try harder and practice the skills in which they are poor. In other words, the only correct path toward competent reading comprehension performance consists of improving skills.

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Aly Anwar AMER is an associate professor of EFL methodology at Sultan Qaboos University College of Education, Oman. He has a Ph.D in TEFL from London University. He has published articles in *Forum*, *Language Testing* and *Reading in a Foreign Language*.  
Naguib KHOUZAM is an associate professor of Educational Psychology at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. He has a Ph.D in Educational Psychology from Ain Shams University, Cairo.