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Abstract
This study aimed to explore the effect of different marginal glosses on Taiwan's junior high school students' English reading comprehension and vocabulary learning.
135 junior high school students participated in this study and were further divided into three groups: Chinese glosses, English glosses, and no glosses. The three groups were guided to read four authentic storybooks. After reading every book, every student had to finish a written recall protocol, a multiple-choice reading comprehension test, and an immediate vocabulary test. After finishing the four books, each had a delayed vocabulary test. The marginal glosses effects were evaluated through the two reading comprehension measures and two vocabulary measures (one for incidental vocabulary learning and the other for vocabulary retention). The students' attitudes towards glosses were investigated through questionnaires. The major findings were as follows:
1. Concerning reading comprehension, the Chinese glosses significantly profit the students, while the English glosses did not obviously benefit the students.
2. With regard to vocabulary learning, the Chinese glosses could foster the students' incidental vocabulary learning and enhance the students' vocabulary retention, but English glosses showed no obvious difference from no-glosses.
3. L1 translation was more meaningful and had more associations for learners than through L2 explanation alone.
4. The great majority of the students reported their preference to not only Chinese marginal glosses but also comprehensible English marginal glosses.
The findings can give some inspirations to English teachers, textbook writers and teaching magazine designers while helping learners to acquire vocabulary through reading. It is also hoped that the results can benefit English teachers in preparing marginal glosses to motivate students to do more independent reading.
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