

The Online Reading Strategies Used by Five Successful Taiwanese ESL Learners

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The effective utilization of academic reading strategies is essential if second language learners are to succeed at the university level. Decades of research have shed light on the strategies used by good readers, thereby giving instructors tools to help their struggling students. However, most of this research has been done with print texts. Much reading in today's universities, in contrast, is carried out online. Even though there is extensive research on the strategies English as a second language (ESL) learners use while reading online, little of it concerns those whose first language is Chinese. Thus, instructors are left with few resources with which to guide Chinese ESL learners who ineffectively use reading strategies. The current study attempts to fill this void by examining how five successful Taiwanese ESL learners used strategies while engaging in verbal reports. Three results were noteworthy. First, participants relied on a handful of strategies; specifically, two individual strategies—paraphrasing and dictionary use—made up the majority of strategic episodes. Second, participants occasionally used two strategies concurrently. Such episodes involved either using a second strategy when the first one failed or using a second one to reinforce the knowledge gained from a previous strategy. Third, participants made frequent use of online (bilingual and monolingual) and hand-held (electronic) dictionaries. Pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.