

## Abstract

### The Effect of Background Knowledge on Reading Performance

by

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The purposes of this study are to investigate the effects of the students' background knowledge on their performance on tests of reading comprehension, identify the strategies the students use in comprehending the text and completing the task, and examine those frequencies of strategies. Twenty second-year graduate students of the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA)—10 from the School of Development Economics and 10 from the Language Center—completed two Rational Cloze tests and two Technical Term Matching tests on economics. The subjects were asked to give verbal reports of their strategies in completing each item. The results indicated that the students with economic backgrounds performed significantly better than those with language backgrounds on both the Rational Cloze tests and the Technical Term Matching tests. In addition, the results obtained from the verbal reports suggested that the economics group relied heavily on their academic background knowledge but the language group relied on world knowledge only in completing both types of tests. Moreover, the economics group used their background knowledge with the highest frequency; whereas, the language group used context clues with the highest frequency.