

Deepening ESP Reading Comprehension through Visualization

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Abstract—Teaching through visualization or in Tomlinson's (1998) terms "the ability to build mental pictures or images while reading" is known as an efficient strategy in language learning. Thus, this research was done to investigate the role of this strategy on ESP reading comprehension ability of Iranian students whose syllabus mostly focuses on this skill. To do so, two homogeneous groups of thirty served as the experimental and the control groups. Before treatment, pretest was performed in both groups. The participants in the experimental group were taught through visualization and the ones in the control group were taught through the conventional method common in Iranian ESP setting by the same teacher. At the end of the treatment which took twenty-four sessions of two hours during twelve weeks, a test of 30-item multiple choice in ESP reading comprehension was administered to both groups. Finally, drawing on t-test at the 0.05 level of significance, the researchers compared the participants' performances to study such an effect. The findings revealed the significant advantage of using visualization in promoting ESP reading comprehension ability of university students.

Index Terms—visualization, ESP, reading comprehension

I. INTRODUCTION

The essential position of reading comprehension in EFL settings has turned this skill to the most important one needed for the learners' success, in a way, it is often known as the main goal of English language learning in such contexts. Undoubtedly, ESP as a trend in the framework of ELT (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998) is not an exception to the rule and obviously the framework of ESP textbooks in such contexts reveals that the most important skill is reading.

Glancing at the current ESP textbooks in Iranian academic setting also indicates that reading comprehension has been the main skill for learners' success (Erfani, et al., 2010; Farhady, 2005). But, in spite of the prominent presence of this skill in Iranian ESP trend, the available findings in this scope show that focusing on reading based on traditional approaches has been the source of many problems. In Shokouhi's words (2005) inadequate approaches, including Grammar Translation Method (GTM), have been the basic approaches and frameworks for ESP textbooks, thus significant approaches, strategies and techniques which have shown to be effective in enhancing learners' reading comprehension ability, have mostly been neglected in these books.

While in such traditional approaches, reading has been considered as a receptive skill, thanks to the new findings it is strongly believed that reading comprehension cannot be confined to a receptive skill and like other skills is a productive and interactive one. In Ghazanfari's terms (2009) reading is now considered as an interactive skill as a process of active and internal thinking in which meaning is constructed through interactions between the printed page and the reader. In other words, the important role of reader in meaning construction is so essential that Bravanger and Lewis (1998) maintain that readers do not take in print and receive words off the page, but they actively engage with the text and build their own understanding. Thus, to meet this end, visualization (sometimes also referred to as visualizing, sensory imaging or imaging process) or the result of forming mental images while reading and recalling texts has been assumed to be one of the efficient strategies in reading comprehension. As Tomlinson (1998) asserts, visualization is functionally significant in L2 as well as L1 reading comprehension and recall.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

ESP courses favor a great deal of attention and emphasis among the EFL practitioners and learners especially at universities. Due to the problems with traditional approaches applied in ESP textbooks and classes from one side and

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