

IN THE NAME OF GOD

**THE EFFECTS OF TWO TYPES OF PRE-  
READING ACTIVITIES ON EFL READING  
PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

BY

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**TO MY DEAR PARENTS,  
WIFE & SONS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Effects of Two Types of Pre-reading Activities on EFL Reading By Iranian Pre-university Students**

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This study investigated the effects of two pre-reading activities (pictures, and vocabularies) and a control condition on the reading comprehension of 94 Iranian pre-university EFL students. The students were selected from among 283 students on the basis of their gained scores on a proficiency test including: grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension sections. Then these selected students were randomly assigned to three conditions: two experimental and one control. Two prose passages were selected and two types of pre-reading activities (pictures, and lists of key words) were prepared for the two mentioned passages. Moreover, the pictorial condition consisted of two types of pictures. For one passage the students received a series of five pictures and for the other they received a general picture. So all three groups read the same passages, but under different conditions. After reading the passages, participants answered the relevant multiple-choice comprehension questions.

The results of the experiment revealed that both pre-reading activities produced significantly higher scores than the control condition. Vocabulary pre-teaching resulted in increased comprehension compared with the control, but was significantly less effective than the other strategy. Then the data gathered from the first condition (pictorial) for two types of pictures (General theme and Multiple) were subjected to the statistical procedures of t-test. It was indicated that Multiple condition gained higher scores. The findings of the present study offer some implications to language teachers, and textbook compilers, and can be added to a growing body of schema theory research.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction to the Study**

#### **1.0. Introduction**

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part discusses the preliminaries. The second and the third parts open with objective and significance of the study and the last part explains th organization of the study.

#### **1.1. Preliminaries**

Reading seems to be the most important and useful activity in any language class, especially for the students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). According to Rivers (1981), reading is not only a good source of information and enjoyable activity, but a valuable means of extending and consolidating one's knowledge of the language as well. As it goes with other language skills, reading is a process involving the activation of relevant knowledge to accomplish an exchange of information from the writer to the reader. Therefore, it is called a receptive skill because the reader is receiving a message from a writer by focusing attention on the text and integrating his previously acquired knowledge and skills. Some researchers have referred to reading as a decoding skill. Here, the language is considered as a code that must be deciphered to arrive at the meaning. Recent researchers in reading assign a greater role to the reader

than to the written text. As Chastain (1988: 216) states “Recent researchers in reading describe the reading process in a way that implies an active reader intent upon using background knowledge and skill to recreate the writers’ intended meaning”.

We usually use the word reading to refer to two different processes or activities. In one case, students read aloud or enunciate the sounds symbolized by written marks on the page. This is considered to be *reading*. Such an activity is one aspect of reading which students are trained for, but it is a minor goal. In the other case, the students are taught to derive meaning from word combinations and sentence relationships in the passage, without necessarily vocalizing what is being read. This is considered to be *reading for comprehension* which is a topic of frequent discussion in L1 and L2 literature (Rivers, 1981).

In traditional views of foreign language comprehension, emphasis has been on the language to be comprehended and not on the comprehender. However, comprehension has recently been considered differently. From Hammadou’s (1991: 27) view point more interactive models of comprehension, currently, have been developing, and “they attempt to describe features of language (lexical, syntax,...) and features of the comprehender (e.g., goals, prior knowledge,...) and the way in which these features interact in the process that is called comprehension.” In Barnett’s (1989:111) opinion comprehension depends on the reader’s “content and formal schemata”, “linguistic proficiency”, “first language skill”, “reading strategies” and “interest purpose”

in reading the text.

It can be said that the thoughts that rush through the minds of readers, the searches and struggles for meaning, the reflections and associations, are hidden from the outside observer. Yet this struggle and search are the core of reading comprehension. With regard to recent views, Faerch and Kasper (1986: 264) identify three kinds of information necessary for comprehension processes: “linguistic and other communicative input” , “the recipient’s linguistic and other (socio-cultural, world) knowledge”, and “contextual information deriving from the situational context and linguistic co -text.” They also believe that reading comprehension depends crucially on the reader’s being able to relate information from the text to already existing background knowledge.

Regarding the effects of pre-reading activities and context on reading comprehension, Mayer (1984) asserted that studies of pre-reading activities for native speakers have demonstrated the facilitative effects of activating readers’ prior knowledge relevant to understanding the new text. Taglieber et al. (1988) indicated that these activities facilitate EFL students’ comprehension, and suggested that in order for the students to understand a text, we should provide them with some assistance before reading the text which in turn results in familiarity with a schema.

## **1.2. Objectives of the study**

Since reading plays a very important role in language learning, and it is also a good source of information, it is logical and important to apply appropriate methods of teaching reading to language classes, especially in EFL situations. Believing in background knowledge as an indispensable part of reading comprehension and as an influential factor to facilitate the reading comprehension, it will be reasonable to accept the importance of pre-reading activities to establish background knowledge in decoding the text.

According to Carrel (1983: 184), "Much less research has been done to date investigating the role of schemata or background knowledge in second language reading comprehension". Therefore, this study intends to investigate the effects of different types of pre-reading activities on the reading performance of the pre-university students. Two pre-reading techniques (pictorial and vocabulary pre-teaching) that seemed most practical for EFL learners are examined in this research. These techniques have been shown to improve the comprehension of native speakers of English under some circumstances (Hudson, 1982). Specifically, the main questions are: Do different pre-reading activities result in different scores on a reading comprehension test? Is there any difference between using one general picture based on the main theme of the text as pre-reading, and using a series of five or more pictures depicting all the events in the text?

Based on the above questions, the following null hypotheses can be formulated:

H01: Statistically, there is no significant difference between two different types of pre-reading activities and students' reading comprehension performance.

H02: Statistically, there is no significant difference between applying a general picture and a series of specific pictures.

The assumption is that pre-reading activities may help the EFL students in comprehending English texts. However, to become sure and prove this assumption this empirical research is conducted.

### **1.3. Significance of the study**

In the field of foreign language teaching and learning, reading for comprehension is considered by all to be the single most important skill of L2 learning. As Rivers (1981: 260) describes:

Justification for an emphasis of the development of the reading skill is not hard to find. In many countries foreign languages are learned by numbers of students who will never have the opportunity of conversing with native speakers, but who will have access to literature and periodicals, or scientific and technical journals, written in the language they are learning. Many will need these publications to assist them with further studies in their work.

If the students' ability to read for comprehension is developed appropriately, they can maintain it at a high level without further help from the teacher. Through this skill in EFL situation, it is possible for students to increase their knowledge and understanding of the topics in their field of study. Through