

Dedicated:

To *my father* and *my deceased mother*, who taught me love, patience, and perseverance, to my wife, *Simin* who enthusiastically and patiently supported me throughout my M.A studies, to my daughter, *Saghi*, the greatest motivator for studying my second field of study(ELT), to our nice twins, *Sayena* and *Arya*.

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The Impact of ESP Materials on Medical Students' Reading Proficiency

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Abstract

This study investigated teaching materials as one of the most controversial issues in language studies. The questions this study tried to answer were: whether using teacher-made materials resulted in a significantly better performance in Iranian medical students' reading comprehension tests; whether using original (international) materials resulted in Iranian medical students' higher performance in reading comprehension tests; whether using domestic (SAMT) materials resulted in any significant performance in reading comprehension tests taken by Iranian medical students and finally. To answer these questions, 150 junior students of medical science from the Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon (IRAN) participated in a pre-test of Reading Comprehension. 45 Of the students were randomly selected from among those who marked 16-18 Out of 20. They were assigned to three groups and were taught Medical English through three different teaching materials. Then, they participated in the same reading comprehension posttest and the data of the study were analyzed through the one-way ANOVA. The results obtained indicated that the participants' reading comprehension scores were higher in the group taught with original (international) text materials; also, there was a significant difference between the means of the three groups.

Key Words:

Medical Students, Teaching Materials, Domestic Materials, SAMT Materials, International Materials, Reading Comprehension

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	I
Acknowledgement	II
Abstract	III
Table of contents	IV
List of Abbreviations	VI

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Preview	2
1.2. Statement of the Problem	3
1.3. Significance of the Study	3
1.4. The Research Questions and Hypotheses	4
1.5. Limitations	5
1.6. Delimitations	5
1.7. Definition of key Terms	6
1.8. The Outline of the Study	10

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction	13
2.2. ESP vs. G.E	13
2.3. The importance of ESP in Language Pedagogy	14
2.4. ESP Background	16
2.5. ESP Teaching	17
2.6. ESP Testing and Evaluation	18
2.7. ESP Teacher Development	19
2.8. The Role of Textbook in EFL/ESL Classrooms	21
2.9. Textbooks and Textbook Evaluation	25
2.10 Checklist Approach to textbook Evaluation	26
2.11. The Reading Comprehension Skill	28
2.11.1. Definition	28
2.11.2. Purpose of Reading	31
2.11.3. Trends in Reading Comprehension	32
2.11.3.1. Realities in Reading	33

2.11.3.2. Reading Acquisition Research	34
2.11.3.3. Reading Comprehension Research	36
2.11.3.4. Unsupported Assertions	37
2.11.3.5. Controversies	38
2.12. Current Issues in Reading Comprehension	40
2.13. Role of Decoding in Comprehension Development	42
2.14. Teaching Reading Comprehension	47
2.15. Teaching Reading Comprehension	48
2.16. Reading Comprehension Models	52
2.16.1. Top- down processing	52
2.16.2. Bottom- up Processing	54
2.16.3. Interactive Model	54
2.17. Strategies of Successful and Unsuccessful Learners	58
2.18. Metacognitive Awareness and Reading Comprehension	59

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction	65
3.2. Restatement of the Research questions	66
3.3. Design	67
3.4. Subjects	67
3.5. Instruments and Materials	68
3.6. Procedures	69
3.7. Data Analysis	69

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction	72
4.2. The findings of the study	72
4.3. Hypothesis Analysis	77
4.4. Discussion	79
4.5. Discussion on the Finding of the study	79

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion and Pedagogical implications

5.1. Introduction	84
5.2. Conclusion	84
5.3. Pedagogical Significance of the Study	84
5.4. Suggestions for Further Research	87

Bibliography	89
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Appendices	93
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List of abbreviations

CLIL= Content and Language Integrated Learning

EAP= English for Academic purposes

EBP= English for Business purposes

EFL= English as a foreign language

EGAP= English for General Academic Purposes

ELT= English language Teaching

EMP= English for medical purposes

EOP= English for Occupational purposes

EPP= English for professional Purposes

ESL= English as a Second Language

ESAP= English for Specific Academic Purposes

EST= English for Science and Technology

EVP= English for Vocational Purposes

EWP= English for/in the Workplace

NRP= National Reading Panel

NRC= National Reading Council

SAMT= Sazmane motaleat va Tadvine kotobe darsi

SLA= Second Language Acquisition

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Chapter1

Introduction

Chapter1

Introduction

1.1. preview

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a need- based concept to determine which language skills should be profitably developed for academic and professional success of students. It takes into account certain basic questions like: ‘who the learners are, what their linguistic background or level of competence is, what their view to language learning is, what their purpose and expectations are what particular skill they will need in their actual on- the- job situation etc.’

ESP is significant in that the ESP approach provides opportunities to the learners to acquire English naturally, by working with language in a context that they comprehend and find interesting through which English as a medium of instruction is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners, enabling them to use the English they know to learn even more English for all sorts of transactions. It is assumed that the ESP learners already have the basics of the English language and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular job- related functions.

The teaching of English for Specific Purposes has generally been seen as a separate activity within English Language Teaching (ELT), and ESP research as an identifiable component of applied linguistic research. The main concerns of ESP have always been, and remain, with needs analysis, text analysis, and preparing learners to communicate effectively in the tasks prescribed by their study or work situation. It is often said that ESP lacks an underlying theory, Dudley- Evans and ST John1998 believe that a theory of ESP could be outlined based on either the specific nature of the texts that learners require knowledge of, or on the basis of the needs-related nature of the teaching. It is, however, interesting and significant that so much of the writing has concentrated on the procedures of ESP and on relating course design to learners' specific needs rather than on theoretical matters.

What follows will be the statement of the problem, the rationale behind Iranian medical students' reading proficiency to become the subject of this study, research hypotheses and questions, theoretical and pedagogical significance of the study, and definition of key terms. Finally, there should be a summary of the whole chapter in order to have a review of the components of the chapter.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Choosing a course textbook is a daunting, sometimes overwhelming prospect for both program administrators and teachers. Nevertheless, it is a prospect that must be respected as it has significant impact on the ability of students to meet their language learning objectives. As is known, language proficiency refers to the overall language ability presented by a person in a real situation. One of the significant aspects of language proficiency is the reading comprehension skill by which learners will be able to interpret and understand the whole text. Regarding the curriculum represented by the Ministry of Higher education in Iran for English Reading courses, students of Medicine are supposed to get the main idea of the text, to discuss the main idea, to paraphrase the text, to find the meaning of new vocabulary items through the contextual clues, to do language focus, and to summarize the text. Instructional materials available do not seem to meet the objectives represented by the ministry. The purpose of the study here is to investigate the compatibility of the instructional materials currently used in Iranian reading comprehension courses with the aforementioned objectives.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Theoretically, the result of this study will be an innovation in material design for the curriculum designers in Iran to take into account which of the text materials will be more beneficial to meet the objectives represented for students of medicine in their Reading Course.

Pedagogically, it will be significant in three areas. First, it will encourage teachers to adopt an appropriate text for their students. Second, the result of the study will help the test makers to provide

suitable tests to be consistent with the medical students' instructional needs. Third, it will help the curriculum designers to plan an instructional program as appropriate as possible for teaching English in general, and proving Reading Course in specific for students of medicine.

1.4. The Research Questions and Hypotheses of the Study

The research questions of the current study, based on the problems stated, are as follows:

RQ1: Does using teacher-made materials result in a significantly better performance Iranian medical students' reading comprehension tests?

RQ2: Does using original (international) materials result in a significantly better performance in Iranian medical students' reading comprehension tests?

RQ3: Does using domestic (SAMT) materials result in a higher performance in reading comprehension tests taken by Iranian medical students?

The nature of the questions asked in this study as well as the type of problem that was intended to be investigated caused the four hypotheses of the study to be formed non-directionally (Null). The rationale behind the formation of such null hypotheses was that the result could not be pre-determined or predicted due to the sort of the treatment done before the posttest of the study. Thus, no specific direction was to be assigned to the hypotheses of the study and the researcher had to be waiting for the results. The null hypotheses of the study are as follows:

H0₁: Using teacher-made materials does not result in Iranian medical students' higher performance in reading comprehension tests.

H0₂: Using original (international) materials does not result in Iranian medical students' higher performance in reading comprehension tests.

H0₃: Using domestic (SAMT) materials does not result in a higher performance in reading comprehension tests taken by Iranian medical students.

1.5. Limitations

A number of limitations were necessary to be discussed regarding the issues in this study. First, there was the problem of the treatment of the study: the 5 sessions for each teaching material were difficult to be arranged. The reason was that there was no independent research center in the participant university, thus, the researcher was compelled to teach in the university main classes and had to conduct the treatment with a prior written permission from the university authorities.

Second, there was the problem of classes schedule interference: during some days of conducting the experiments of the study, the participants were to attend their other courses; hence, the researcher was forced to postpone the conducting sessions to other times, which caused the process to be unintentionally lengthened.

Finally, the researcher encountered a special sort of problem with the participants themselves: they were reluctant to write their names on the posttest papers since, they declared, they assumed they were being evaluated with future negative consequences. The researcher was to explain that the process was just a research experimentation and that nothing was going to happen as such.

1.6. Delimitations

Measures were taken to delimit the limitations of this study: as for the treatment problem, all the necessary permissions were taken beforehand from the university authorities. For the arrangement problem, the researcher managed to postpone the experiment sessions to the off-days in the participants' weekly calendar, consequently, they could all attend the sessions on a regular basis. Finally, for the test problem, the students were asked to assign a code instead of their names on the test papers.

Further, the concept of 'Material' in this study was delimited to 'Textbook' due to the fact that the dependent variable of the study-the reading comprehension skill-could only be represented in the form of a textbook rather than any other form of materials, particularly, in the Iranian educational context (system).

This study was delimited in terms of the population selected from the Islamic Azad University at Tonekabon for achieving the highest practicality of the treatment as well as the posttest of the study and the accessibility to the participants of the study.

1.7. Definition of Key Terms

1.7.1. ESP

According to Celce- Murcia 2001: "English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a movement based on the proposition that all language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language use needs of identified groups of students—and also sensitive to the socio-cultural contexts in which these students will be using English. Most of the movement's practitioners are teachers of adults, those students whose needs are more readily identified within academic, occupational, or professional settings. An increasing number of ESP practitioners live and work in English-speaking countries, teaching in Programs offering vocational ESL (VESL) or for Occupational Purposes (EOP) programs for new immigrant and refugee populations or in contexts emphasizing academic (EAP) or business language (English for Business purposes).

ESP (English for Specific Purposes) has been referred to as "applied ELT" as the content and aims of any course are determined by the needs of a specific group of learners. ESP is often divided into EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes). Further sub-divisions of EOP are sometimes made into business English, professional English (e.g. English for doctors, lawyers) and vocational English (e.g. English for tourism, nursing, aviation, bricklaying).

According to Dudley-Evans (2001) the absolute characteristics of ESP are:

- ESP is designed to meet the specific needs of the learners.
- ESP makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the specialism it serves.
- It is centered not only on the language (grammar, lexis, register), but also the skills, discourses and genres appropriate to those activities.

- ESP practitioners are also becoming increasingly involved in intercultural communication and the development of intercultural competence.

For Dudley-Evans (2001) the defining characteristic of ESP is that teaching and materials are based on the results of a needs analysis. The key questions are:

- What do students need to do with English?
- Which of the skills do they need to master and how well?
- Which genres do they need to master either for comprehension or production purposes?

Traditionally ESP courses were typically designed for intermediate or advanced adult learners. Nowadays many students can start to learn academic or vocational English at an earlier age and at a lower level of proficiency. ESP has become increasingly important as:

There has been an increase in vocational training and learning throughout the world.

With the spread of globalization there is an increasing use of English as the language of international communication. More and more people are using English in a growing number of occupational contexts.

Students are starting to learn and therefore master general English at a younger age, and so move on to ESP at an earlier age.

An increasing number of learners are taught in English medium schools using approaches such as CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning).

In some English speaking countries governments are launching initiatives to help economic migrants obtain the practical English skills necessary to function in the workplace. For example, the new ESOL for Work Qualifications in the UK are designed to help employers and employees access courses which offer them the functional language skills demanded across a variety of employment sectors. Content includes topics such as customer care and health and safety.

Some teachers are afraid of making the transition from teaching general English to teaching ESP. There is also the danger that the novice ESP teacher will only use materials that they feel comfortable with and will not stretch their learners.

Bell (2002) argues that the depth of knowledge of a subject matter that a teacher requires depends on a number of variables which include:

How much do the learners know about their specialism?

Are the students pre-experience or post-experience learners?

How specific and detailed are the language, skills and genres that the learners need to learn?

Although people perhaps don't need to be an expert in a specialist area, they do need to have some awareness and feel for a particular vocational area. Bell (2002) advocates the three Cs for helping teachers to improve their knowledge and skills in a particular area of ESP, namely Curiosity (The teacher should be interested in the subject area and want to learn more), Collaboration (Teachers should seek out subject specialists, show them their work and ask for their feedback) and finally, Confidence (which will grow as teachers explore the new subject matter, engage with subject specialists and learn from their learners).

Harding (2007) stresses that the general skills that a general English teacher uses e.g. being communicative, using authentic materials and analysing English in a practical way are also applicable to ESP. He also suggests that teachers should:

- Think about what is needed and don't just follow an off-the-shelf course or course book.
- Understand the nature of their students' subject area.
- Work out their language needs in relation to their specialism.
- Use contexts, texts, situations from their subject area.
- Use authentic materials.
- Make the tasks as authentic as possible.
- Motivate the students with variety, relevance and fun.
- Take the classroom into the real world and bring the real world into the classroom.

Acronyms in ESP:

CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)

EAP (English for Academic Purposes)

EBP (English for Business Purposes)

ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes)

EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes)

EMP (English for Medical Purposes)

EOP (English for Occupational Purposes)

EPP (English for Professional Purposes)

EST (English for Science and Technology)

EVP (English for Vocational Purposes)

EWP (English for/in the Workplace)

1.7.2) Text books

A textbook is a teaching tool (material) which presents the subject matter defined by the curriculum. A university textbook is required to contain the complete overview of the subject, including the theories, as well as to be of a more permanent character. A university textbook has to be approved by the university Commission for Scientific and Instructional Literature, based on the opinion of three reviewers. Cambridge Advanced Learners' Dictionary defines a textbook as: a book that contains detailed information about a subject for people who are studying that subject.

1.7.3. The Reading Comprehension Skill

Reading is a process involving the activation of knowledge and related language skills to accomplish an exchange of information from one person to another (Chastain 1998). Reading requires that the readers focus attention on the reading materials and integrate previously acquired knowledge and skills to comprehend what someone else has written. Sometimes enormously called a passive skill because the reader does not produce messages in the same sense as a speaker or writer, reading nevertheless requires active mental processing for communication to occur. Thus, referring

to reading as a passive skill perpetuates a misconception that can only mislead students and harm their perception of what their role in the reading process is.

Reading is a receptive skill in that the reader is receiving a message from a writer. In the past various writers have also referred to reading as a decoding skill. This terminology derives from the idea of language as a code, one which must be deciphered to arrive at the meaning of the message. Although this term points out the active role the reader must play in reading, it does not tell the whole story. Recent researchers in reading describe the reading process in a way that implies active reader intent upon using background knowledge and skills to recreate the writer's intended meaning. Perfetti (1984, pp. 40-41), for example, defines reading as 'thinking guided by print'. Reading is a basic and complementary skill in language learning. Second-language students need to learn to read for communication and to read greater and greater quantities of authentic materials. Students can probably learn to read more easily than they can acquire any other skill, and they can use reading materials as a primary source of comprehensible input as they learn the language.

1.8. The Outline of the Study

The present study consists of five Chapters. Chapter I titled as Introduction, introduces the variables in the topic of the study, states the problem to be investigated, and clarifies the significance of the study. Chapter II reviews the related literature to the present study. Chapter III, restating the research questions and hypotheses, introducing the subjects, and describing the method adopted for data collection and analysis, deals with the methodology of the study. Chapter IV elaborates the results of the current study and discusses the obtained results on the basis of assumed hypotheses mentioned in chapter I. Chapter V deals with the concluding remarks extracted from the results of the study and numerates some pedagogical implications of the study. The remaining of this text is devoted to the bibliography and appendices.

Summary

This chapter introduced the variables in the topic of the study and stated the problem to be investigated by discussing the significance of textbooks as major classroom instruments on the one hand; and the problem of medical students' reading comprehension on the other hand. Accordingly, the related research questions and hypotheses of the study were mentioned and the major key terms of the study were briefly but rather completely defined: first the concept of ESP and textbook were defined, next, the second variable of the study i.e. the reading comprehension skill was also defined. Finally the outline of the study was mentioned.

The next chapter will review the literature of this study via elaborating on the trends in ESP and textbook evaluation from various and broadened perspectives, also, describing the theories and models regarding the Iranian students' major concern in language studies namely the reading comprehension skill. Further, different views and ideas from the experts and scholars regarding the variables of the study will be stated and discussed.

CHAPTER2

Literature Review

Chapter 2

Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the literature of the current study has been reviewed from a rather broadened and elaborated perspective. Firstly, the concept of textbook and some procedures of its evaluation will be stated; next, general considerations about the reading comprehension skills will be elaborated on. This will include the definition of the reading comprehension skill, the models of reading comprehension and finally, trends in teaching the reading comprehension skill. The next section will elaborate on the concept of textbook and the procedures to its evaluation.

2.2. ESP vs. G.E

"ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning". If we agree with this definition, we begin to see how broad ESP really is. In fact, one may ask 'What is the difference between the ESP and General English approach?' Hutchinson et al. (1987:53) answer this quite simply, "*in theory nothing, in practice a great deal*". When their book was written, of course, the statement was quite true. At the time, teachers of General English courses, while acknowledging that students had a specific purpose for studying English, would rarely conduct a needs analysis to find out what was necessary to actually achieve it. Teachers nowadays, however, are much more aware of the importance of needs analysis, and certainly materials writers think very carefully about the goals of learners at all stages of materials production. Perhaps this demonstrates the influence that the ESP approach has had on English teaching in general. Clearly the line between where General English courses stop and ESP courses start has become very vague indeed.

ESP differs significantly from G.E in the way that it conceptualizes genres and draws from more eclectic theoretical foundations (Swales, 1990, 2004). ESP teachers are concerned with the communicative needs of particular academic and professional groups and so genres are seen as the