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The Effect of Pre-reading Activities on the Reading Comprehension Performance of Ilami High School Students

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Abstract

The present study was conducted for two purposes:(1) to compare the learners' comprehension ability before and after the implementation of two types of pre-reading activities, guessing reading content from asking pre- reading questions and vocabulary definition, (2) to investigate the learners' attitudes towards the implementation of two pre-reading activities. Research participants consisted of 60 grade- 10 students studying at Omol Habibeh high school in Ilam, Iran. A test of reading comprehension ability was administered to assign the subjects into two groups. The two groups were given different pre-reading activity, guessing reading content from asking pre-reading questions and vocabulary definition, respectively. The research instrument consisted of reading comprehension test (used as pre- and post- tests). The experiment using the two pre reading activities were carried out for 5 weeks two sessions a week .The data was analyzed statistically to identify means, standard deviation, and t-value. It was found that after implementation of the 2 pre-reading activities the subjects performed better in the post-test, at significant level of .05. When compared the results of the 2 pre-reading activities, it was found that the group receiving guessing meaning from pre-reading questions performed better than their counterpart who experienced vocabulary definitions, at .05. It was also found that both groups were satisfied with the activity they experienced.

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1. Background of the study

Reading as a major skill was ignored by pedagogues and researchers for a long period of time. Most of focus was placed on oral skills (listening and speaking). For example, the Audio lingual method which was developed in the United States during world war II when there was a need for people to learn foreign language rapidly for military purposes emphasized the oral skills ,ignoring reading and considering it a passive skill which was given no emphasis at all.

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When the Audio lingual Method failed in fulfilling its mission ,other teaching methods were devised and put to use. The Cognitive Method in the united states and the communicative Approach in Britain came into being during the late 1960s.Equal attension has been given to the four skills together(listening, speaking ,reading and writing).pedagogues and researchers started to put more emphasis on reading comprehension as a major skill for students of English all over the world.

Reading ,the mother of all study skills ,is a basic tool of learning and one of the most important skills in everyday life(Fry, 1997, p.9).As a matter of fact ,nearly all children begin school with the expectation they will learn to read ,and one of the most important things a child is asked to do is to read . Trelease (1989), perhaps the united states best-known advocate of reading aloud ,indicated that by booking a child with reading ,you influence not only his future health and financial circumstaces ,but also those of the next generation.

Nowadays English learning is essential because English is the international communication medium. The language is necessary for different activities, including education, politics, and socio-economics (Medgyes, 1994; Mckay, 2002). Its importance is well recognized in Iran. It is the need for curriculum and teaching process revision in order to prepare student for real life application in the information age. The teaching should accommodate the learners' development of the 4 language skills. Reading skill, in particular, is the most important skill in second or foreign language learning (Carrell, 1988). Sookchotirat (2005) suggested that reading skill is the most important skill as it is the basis of all the success in one's life. Good readers can gain more knowledge of any kind from reading. Reading makes the reader more knowledgeable, have wider perspectives and vision. Reading helps the reader get new ideas leading to cognitive development. When the readers transfer what they read to apply with their own idea a new perspective or idea is created. However, there have been problems in English teaching in all educational levels in Iran, including secondary and university level. Graduates of each educational level do not have reading ability they should have. Generally, it can be claimed that the problem was caused by the inadequacy of teaching and learning time. Teaching reading is a continuing process; it should be given continuously from the first to the highest educational level. Teaching reading to learners at very young age is, therefore, the basis for the higher level (Noysangsri, 1988). Chiramanee (1992) indicated that Iranian learners' reading ability was at a low level. It could be resulted from inappropriate teaching method, using outdated teaching techniques, which failed to help the learners understand the content of the reading materials. Chandavimol (1998) suggested that in general practice of teaching reading, the learners would be assigned a reading task to read by themselves and do the post-reading exercises. In such reading activity, the teacher did not provide any activities that could motivate the reader or achieve better comprehension. Chatwirote (2003) suggested that the teachers could provide reading promoting activities, such as the activities that interest the learners. The activities should contain the reading objectives that suit the learners and teacher's interest. Reading the process of teaching reading, the teacher should have suitable steps of teaching reading. There should be a pre-reading step to prepare the reader before they read the whole material. The instructor should provide them with the pre-reading the learners did not have any background knowledge it would be the teachers' responsibility to provide the background knowledge to the learners in order that they could achieve the most comprehension from the reading. The teachers should provide the learners with various pre- reading activities that help them have certain amount of background knowledge about the reading text because the schema would help the reader get better comprehension (Graves, Watts and Graves,1994), as shown in the following studies. Yeeding (2007) investigated the effects of pre-reading activities on learners' motivation and reading comprehension ability. Results showed that the activities subjects were highly motivated, enthusiastic to read. After the experiment, they scored significantly higher. In another experimental study Taglieber, Johnson, & Yarbrough (1988) provided the experiment subjects with 3 pre-reading activities: guessing reading content from pictures, learning vocabulary before reading, and pre-reading question. The control group did not receive any of the 3 pre-reading activities. A pre-test and post-test were administered to both groups. It was found that the experimental subject performed better than the control group. In addition, the reading scores from the reading with guessing reading content from pictures, and pre-reading questioning were better than the reading with learning vocabulary before reading.

2. Statement of the Problem

Learning English as a foreign language is, undoubtedly, a complex and difficult process. comprehension is the ultimate goal of teaching reading. However, experience of that most students of the 10th grade are poor readers

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