

Reading Skill in an ESP Context

Norho'jaeva M
Senior teacher UzJCMU

Abstract. The research aims to investigate how the combination of Critical Pedagogy approach and computer technologies can enhance ESP reading comprehension skills of university learners. The research problem formulated is whether the Internet-integrated application of Critical Pedagogy techniques can influence ESP academic reading comprehension skills of learners. The methodology includes a pilot study with two groups of ESP students, one attending Internet-integrated Critical Pedagogy language classes and the other attending traditional language classes. Both groups studied the same ESP programme and were interviewed about their learning experiences, reading comprehension abilities, and motivation to read. At the end of the programme, a post-test was taken to evaluate their progress in ESP reading comprehension. The results show that the Internet-integrated instruction of Critical Pedagogy strategies positively influenced learners' reading comprehension and contributed to ESP academic reading skills development in Social Sciences. The research confirms the hypothesis that the principles of Critical Pedagogy in a computer-networked environment can be an efficient methodology for elaborating ESP academic reading skills in Social Sciences.

Key words: Critical Pedagogy, Critical Discourse Analysis, teaching methods, technologies, reading comprehension skills, English for Specific Purposes.

The new prospects for academic and educational community development, which are opening up with the transition to a knowledge society (Maximova, 2016, pp. 1003-1010) impose new requirements on linguistic competence of modern specialists. It should be noted that the intensification of cultural globalization processes makes it necessary to provide high school graduates with skills of intercultural activity and international communication. It is quite obvious that in the context of globalization, a high level of proficiency in a foreign language becomes a factor in increasing competitiveness in any profession at the labor market. In addition, the "internationalization" of education and increasing academic mobility requires the skills to continue learning after graduation in accordance with «Life Long Learning» concept, as well as skills to carry out professional activities in a foreign language environment.

A key element in the training of a specialist in Social Sciences and Humanities is the achievement of a balanced combination of professional skills with linguistic competence. It is worth mentioning that the development of linguistic competence in the sphere of

professional communication contributing to deeper assimilation of knowledge, expansion of general and professional erudition of the future specialist is a priority for teaching foreign languages in higher education (especially in the field of the Humanities and Social Sciences).

The development of reading comprehension skills of professionally-oriented texts is one of the most important educational task in teaching English for specific purposes (ESP). First of all, reading comprehension is a must in contemporary post-industrial societies. In the era of digitalization students need to upgrade their skills and strategies (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010, pp. 179-225). Secondly, there is a significant diversification of texts that students have to deal with: along with conventional, “paper” texts, “electronic” texts are becoming widespread. As reading strategies vary depending on the type of text, the teaching methods for reading comprehension development should be adjusted. There are many additional difficulties in teaching academic reading in Social Sciences and Humanities for learners and teachers as they are challenged with different styles, formats and genres

An educational strategy called cooperative learning tries to divide classroom activities into social and intellectual learning opportunities. Cooperative learning has been defined as "organizing positive dependency," but it involves much more than just putting students into groups. To accomplish activities collectively and achieve academic objectives, students must collaborate in groups. Students who learn collaboratively might benefit from one another's resources and talents (such as soliciting information, assessing one another's ideas, supervising one another's work, etc.) in contrast to individual learning, which can be competitive in character. The teacher's responsibility shifts from imparting knowledge to supporting students' learning. When the group succeeds, everyone wins. Successful cooperative learning exercises are thought-provoking, imaginative, open-ended, and require higher order thinking tasks, according to 3. Romero, G.,2017)

Pre-reading exercises help kids read effectively because they are relevant to their backgrounds, which makes comprehension easier. Pre-reading exercises can ease students' cognitive load when reading because previous conversations will have been integrated, according to Lebauer (1998:5).

Reading is often taught as a skill in its own right including sub-skills and the use of those reading skills is important and useful to facilitate reading for students and thus to gain better understanding of a text. In one part, Greenall and Swan (1986:1) state that the lack of vocabulary knowledge among readers is not the only challenge that faces them but also ‘a deficiency in one or more of a number of specific reading techniques.’ Additionally, Scrivener (2005:184) asserts that trying to understand every word in a text in order to achieve a complete understanding of every detail does not necessarily mean better readers.

As far as English Language Teaching is concerned, it is important to determine the position of English as an academic language and its role in engineering studies. Students in general have clear reasons for learning English and why it is necessary. For example, engineers need to stay in touch with the new developments in their respective fields and most importantly students need to use books and journals available only in English and need English in order to advance and succeed in their careers. (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987).

The methodology includes the overall approach to conducting the research, including the theoretical framework, research design, data collection methods, and data analysis

techniques. In this study a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were chosen. The pilot study was conducted with two groups of ESP students, one attending Internet-integrated Critical Pedagogy language classes and the other attending traditional language classes. The participants were interviewed about their learning experiences, reading comprehension abilities, and motivation to read. A post-test was taken at the end of the programme to evaluate their progress in ESP reading comprehension.

It was also considered ethical considerations in the research design, such as obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and ensuring that the research did not cause any harm to the participants.

Overall, the methodology used in this study was appropriate for the research problem and allowed for the collection of reliable and valid data. The mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the Internet-integrated application of Critical Pedagogy techniques in enhancing ESP academic reading comprehension skills of learners.

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