

English for Specific Purposes, an approach to improve the Reading comprehension level of Psychology students at University of Cuenca

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Abstract

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a student-centered learning approach based on covering learners' needs and interests, since it focuses on their field of study. The goal of this research was to improve the English reading comprehension level of Psychology students at the University of Cuenca through ESP. The participants were 25 first level students. To gather information, this study used both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. From the data analysis, it can be said that students were motivated in reading texts related to their needs and interests because, according to their own perceptions, they improved their reading comprehension level. As a conclusion, ESP in EFL teaching- learning process can be significant for students since through the application of this approach they can become more competitive and independent in order to face the challenges of this globalized world.

Introduction

Nowadays, English is considered a universal language since it is used in different areas such as science, business, diplomacy, medicine, technology research, education, and tourism all over the world. For this reason, over the years, studies around the world have shown that one of the most important skills that ESL and EFL university students need to acquire is the ability to read and understand academic texts about their field of study [1]. In this context, the main theoretical foundations used to support this research study were: Reading Comprehension and Reading Strategies, and Content-Based Instruction + English for Specific Purposes. They were studied in detail to explain each one of their components.

Reading comprehension

According to Klingner, reading comprehension is “the process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of complex processes that include word reading, word and world knowledge, and fluency” [2]. In other words, reading comprehension is the ability to interpret words, understand the meaning and relationships between ideas carried in a text.

Reading strategies

There is a range of strategies that both teachers and learners should consider in their process of teaching reading in a foreign language. The most significant used in this study were: selecting reading material, generating and answering questions, monitoring comprehension, using mental imaginary/visualization, visual representation of text, talking about the text [3]; brainstorming before reading, making use of prior knowledge, predicting and pre-viewing, reading aloud while reading, using context clues while