

Examining the Links between Established Principles, Iranian Teachers' Perceptions of Reading Comprehension, and Their Actual Practice in English for Specific Purposes Courses

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Abstract : There is a strong belief that language teachers' actual practices in the classroom context are largely determined by the underlying perceptions they hold about the nature of language and language learning. That being so, it can be envisaged that teaching procedures of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teachers teaching reading comprehension will mainly be driven by their perceptions about the nature of reading. To examine this issue, four Iranian university professors holding Ph.D. in either TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) or English Literature who were teaching English to Engineering and Sciences students were recruited to participate in this study. To collect the necessary data, classroom observations and follow-up semi-structured interviews were used. Furthermore, the materials utilized by the teachers such as textbooks, syllabuses, and tests were also examined. Although it can be argued that their perceptions were partially compatible with the established principles, results of the study pointed to a lack of congruence between these teachers' perceptions and their practices, on the one hand, and between the established principles and the practices, on the other. While the literature mostly supports a metacognitive-strategy approach to reading comprehension, the teachers were mainly adopting a skills-based approach to the teaching of reading. That is, they primarily focused on translation as the core activity in the classroom followed by reading aloud, defining words, and explaining grammatical structures. This divergence was partly attributed to the contextual constraints and partly to students' lack of motivation by the teachers.

Keywords : English teachers, perceptions, practice, principles, reading comprehension

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