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## Investigating the Effect of Harmer's ESA Elements on Reading Comprehension of Iranian EFL learners: A Task-based Approach

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### ABSTRACT

A number of scholars in applied linguistics and reading proficiency have regularly underlined the significance of reading as a prerequisite to academic achievement and success. On that account, numerous studies have attempted to investigate a best course of action into presenting a new way of teaching reading proficiency. The present contribution attempts to investigate the probable effect of employing Harmer's Engage, Study and activate (ESA) elements involved in teaching of tasks in developing reading comprehension of EFL learners. For this reason, two intact groups of each containing 15 Iranian EFL learners from Chabahar Maritime University were enrolled. Prior to the study, before the actual classes were inducted, participants were administered an FCE reading pre-test to ensure both groups equivalence and homogeneity. Consequently, the control group was instructed based on the principles of Grammar-translation method (GTM) and the experimental group was instructed through implementation of ESA elements involved in teaching of reading tasks. Eventually, at the end of the treatment period, a post-test of FCE reading comprehension was administered to investigate their performance in reading comprehension. The results of the statistical analyses, i.e. independent sample t-test showed that the experimental group has significantly outperformed the control group; the learners also showed a positive overall tendency towards the teaching method based on ESA elements. It is expected that the pedagogical implication of the study would make considerable contribution to the works of EFL teachers, Researchers, policy makers and curriculum designers.

**Keywords:** *Reading Comprehension, Harmer's ESA Elements, Iranian EFL Learners, Task-Based Approach, Proficiency*

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### 1. Introduction

The principal discussion of reading proficiency lies at the heart of learning in the subject matter. Literate people are expected to perform well in more than one language. Second language reading comprehension ability, specifically with English as the L2, is considerably in great demand as English continues to expand, not only as a universal language but also as the language of technology, science and advance research. (Grabe & Stoller, 2002). University teachers believe that high levels of reading comprehension are a prerequisite to learners' achievement and success. With the growing stress on the essentiality of widening access to higher education (HE), it is expected to come as no surprise that higher education requires learners to have wider range of reading abilities. (Snow, 2002)

According to Pressley and Block (2002) reading comprehension is typically

debated in terms of being a process which involves the amalgamation of decoding ability, word knowledge, previous knowledge of the topic studied, and relevant strategies to understand and comprehend a text. They believe that comprehension encompasses more than 30 cognitive and metacognitive processes such as predicting, drawing inferences, clarifying meaning, summarizing, etc.

In the current reading curriculum of schools, comprehension instruction plays an essential role. And, for the most part, present reading curriculum follows firmly the pattern regulated by basal reading programs—a pattern in which instruction entails allowing learners to rehearse skills independently on skill pages in order to get ready for criterion-referenced tests that look closely resemble to the skill sheets (David Pearson & Janice dole, 1987).

The main objective of reading is comprehension, or to arrive at meaning

from written text. Without comprehension, reading is an irritating, meaningless practice in word calling. It is no exaggeration to say that how well learners expand the ability to comprehend what they read has a great impact on their whole lives. On that account, a fundamental aim of reading comprehension instruction is to aid learners boost the knowledge, skills, and experiences they are to have if they are to become competent and eager readers (Anderson, R.C., Hiebert, E.H., Scott, J.A., & Wilkinson, I.A.G., 1985).

Over the last decades, studies in reading comprehension have provided the incentive for changes in our reflection on comprehension instruction. On that account, many research-based studies have been carried out to present a new way of reading instruction. However, most of these studies were inadequate in meeting learner's needs. Regarding the present study, new instructional schemes for teaching comprehension have been grown. Instructional studies affirm that we can teach reading comprehension more efficiently using these new instructional schemes than we can follow the traditional reading patterns (Pearson & Dole, 1987).

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. The Nature of Reading and Reading Comprehension***

Essentially, if you are getting ready for academic-level English, you are most wisely advised to focus on the breadth of your reading materials, in terms of knowledge and comprehension. These two key factors, associated with a dynamic, authentic interest and a curious, reflective mind, are the surest principles for learner success and achievement. Because of the range of general knowledge and analytical skills indoctrinated by English studies, EFL learners are commonly highly adored in terms of their abilities and well placed for most subsequent professions (Childs, 2008).

Most researchers have wished to place discussion of reading within the broader framework of literacy practices, as specific to particular sociocultural environments. This emphasis associated with the teachers whose students come to English language literacy with various experience of literacy in a first or other language. Some will be highly literate in a first literacy; others may be acquiring literacy through the medium of English. In either case, it is important to see reading and writing as part of language behavior beyond

the learning of specific skills or strategies. Street (1984) suggests a dichotomy between an autonomous model of literacy which regards reading and writing as the learning of skills which are apparently globally involved in literacy instruction, and a view of literacy which is called 'ideological' and by which reading and writing practices have prevalence and status, not due to any intrinsic value but due to social and historical factors specific to the cultural background.

Traditionally, reading was regarded as a passive process in which the readers solely decode the written symbols without employing their own internal language competence to interact with the text (Clarke & Silberstein, 1977). Anderson (2000) called these readers passive decoders of sequential graphic-phonetic-syntactic-semantic systems. As Goodman (1976) explained, reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game, in which the reader actively interacts with the text to create meaning. To sum up, reading is the act of constructing meaning while transacting with the text. Just as we use information stored in background knowledge to understand and interact with world around us, so do we use this knowledge to make sense of print.

Reading comprehension is essential, not just for comprehending text, but for more comprehensive learning, success in education, and occupation. It is also essential for our social lives when using emails and social networking sites. Reading comprehension is a complex task, which requires the organization of various cognitive skills and abilities. Necessarily, reading comprehension is dependent on at least sufficient word reading: readers will not be able to make sense of the whole text if they are unable to pinpoint (decode) the words in that text. In addition, satisfactory reading comprehension generally depends on the good apprehension of language understanding. This requires comprehension of the individual words and the sentences that they form. However, comprehension typically requires the comprehender to integrate the sense of these words and sentences into a meaningful whole (Oakhill & Elbro, 2014).

In reading comprehension, word reading and language comprehension are the main components which worth distinguishing. These two key components originally proposed by Gough and Tunmer (1986) are called The Simple View of Reading. As stated by Oakhill and Elbro (2014), *Word reading* (or decoding) refers



to the ability to read single words out of context. *Language comprehension* refers to our ability to make sense of the words, sentences, and text (p.2). The main feature of The Simple View of Reading is that modification in reading ability can be captured in only two elements: word reading (decoding) and language comprehension.

According to Oakhill and Elbro (2014), The Simple View of Reading does not denote that learning to read is a simple process but, rather, that it is a simple way of conceptualizing the difficulty of reading. More accurately, reading comprehension ability is dependent upon the by-product of the two elements:  $\text{Reading} = \text{Word Reading} \times \text{Language Comprehension}$  ( $R = WR \times LC$ ), not just on the sum of the two, which signifies that if one of the components (either word reading or language comprehension) is absent reading comprehension will not happen. Therefore, if a learner cannot read any words or does not hold any language comprehension skills, s/he is unable to read.

## 2.2. Definition of Reading and Reading Comprehension

### 2.2.1 Reading

To be a good teacher of reading comprehension entails an understanding of what reading is. What precisely takes place between text, brain, and eye when we get involved in this pleasant, amazing practice called reading?

Reading is the rehearsal of making use of text to create meaning. Creating and meaning are the two key words. That is, if there is no meaning being created, therefore, no reading would take place. As Johnson (2008, P.4) defines, *reading is "a constantly developing skill"*. In the same manner as any other skills, we can improve our reading skill by practicing. On the contrary, if we do not practice, we will improve our reading skill and our skills may even get worse.

*Reading consolidates visual and nonvisual information.* During the reading process, the visual information found on the page integrates with the nonvisual information accommodated in your head to produce meaning. In that way, what's in your head is just as important as what is on the page in the process of creating meaning (reading).

Johnson (2008) defines reading as *"the act of linking one idea to another"* (p.4). He further explains that putting ideas together to make a logical whole is the

important part of reading. In the same manner, Snow (2002) defines reading as "The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p. 11).

In addition to speaking, listening and writing, reading is one of the English skills. It is the way to make sense of written messages. According to Nuttal (2000) reading means "a result of interaction between the writer's mind and the reader's mind" (p.2). It is the way how the reader puts an effort to understand the message or the intended meaning from the writer. As stated in Pang, et al. (2003) reading is defined as "understanding written texts" (p.6). He holds that reading encompasses two interrelated processes: word recognition and comprehension. He defines word recognition as the process of understanding how written symbols constitutes one's spoken language while comprehension is the process of making the meaning of words, sentences and connected text. He states further and holds that the reader who has background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other strategies can aid them make sense of written texts.

In sum, according to the two definitions cited above reading can be defined as the instant recognition of several written symbol with the existent knowledge and it also can be defined as comprehension of the information and the ideas communicated. On these accounts, it can firmly be proposed that reading not only the process of making sense of the written symbols correlates with one's spoken language but it is also the process of interpreting words, sentences and linked text that can be termed as comprehension.

### 2.2.2 Reading Comprehension

There exist several definitions of reading comprehension approved by some writers. According to Klingner (2015) reading comprehension is "the process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of complex processes that included word reading, word and world knowledge, and fluency" (p.2). It denotes the ability in making sense of the words, grasping the meaning and the connections between ideas conveyed in a passage. He contrived a reading comprehension instruction for instructors as having a three-step procedure: mentioning, practicing, and assessing. It means that instructors point out the skills that the learners want to use, then they give



them opportunities to practice those skills through workbooks or work sheets, and eventually assess whether or not they use the skill successfully.

As Alderson (2000) states reading is "an enjoyable, intense, private activity in which the readers get much pleasure and can totally absorb the reading" (p.28). Pang, et al. (2003) defines comprehension as "the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text" (p.14). He states that comprehension is the processes of understanding the meaning of one word to another in a text. Readers usually utilize background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with a text and other strategies to aid them make sense of the written texts.

Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p.11). We employ the words *extracting* and *constructing* to highlight both the significance and the poverty of the text as a drawback of reading comprehension.

Comprehension consists of three elements:

- The *reader* who is doing the comprehending
- The *text* that is to be comprehended
- The *activity* in which comprehension is a part. (p.11)

With regard to the definitions above, reading comprehension can be summed up as the ability to find the stated or unstated writer's intention in the text. The nature of reading comprehension is to interpret all information conveyed by the writer. It also pertains to the ability to link between the words in a passage, to perceive the ideas and the connections between ideas conveyed in a text.

### 2.3. Importance of Reading Comprehension

The need for literacy skills is getting high and higher. The U.S. economy today necessitates a universally higher level of literacy accomplishment than at any other time in history, and it is logical to accept that the need for literate people will rise in the future (Snow, 2002).

Reading is an essential skill to aid people to learn from human knowledge and experience. It is through reading that knowledge has substantially played a part in the growth of mankind. According to Kuo, et al. (2001) reading is the rudimentary and fastest way to heighten people's educational level. They believe that reading is like

opening the door of understanding to mankind's past, where it can serve as a looking glass for our present. Reading also provokes the improvement of brain cells, boosts language skills, develops organizational abilities, ameliorates one's temperament and poise, and supplies strength to withstand frustration. In sum, reading is the simplest and only way of enabling humans to assimilate new experiences and replace old ways.

It seems essential to bear in mind that reading is not a constant skill, that there exist various types of reading skills which confirm to the many different intentions we have for reading. Rivers and Temperley (1978) set forth that L2 learners will want to read for the following purposes:

1. To obtain information for some purpose or because we are curious about some topic.
  2. To obtain instructions on how to perform some task for our work or daily life (e.g. knowing how an appliance works)
  3. To act in a play, play a game, do a puzzle.
  4. To keep in touch with friends by correspondence or to understand business letters
  5. To know when or where something will take place or what is available.
  6. To know what is happening or has happened( as reported in newspapers, magazines, papers, reports)
  7. For enjoyment or excitement
- (Adapted from Rivers & Temperley 1978: pp.187-8)

## 2.4. Reading Instruction

### 2.4.1 Teaching Reading

Brown (2000) defines teaching as "the activities to show or assist an individual to learn how to perform tasks, give guidelines, guide in the study of something, provide with the knowledge, cause to know, make sense of knowledge and provide with new knowledge. Additionally, he states that "teaching cannot be defined apart from learning" (p.8). Teaching is giving instructions and facilitating learning, enabling the students to learn and providing convenient conditions which can facilitate learning. Taking into account the definitions above, teaching can be defined as assisting, facilitating, and instructing how to learn and understand something or to promote knowledge. Here the teacher is the subject in carrying out those propositions owing to the fact that the teacher is obliged to aid the learners getting or acquiring the L2 that is English.

Effective instruction is the most influential means of developing proficient



comprehenders and avoiding reading comprehension deficiencies. Narrowly defined, comprehension instruction develops the capability to learn from the passage. Broadly speaking, comprehension instruction gives learners access to culturally significant domains of knowledge and provides a means of seeking emotional and intellectual objectives. A principal aim of research agenda proposed in this research agenda is developing classroom instruction in comprehension, both by investigating how to confirm the wider implementation of instructional techniques known to work and by setting up a research base to apprise the outline of new instructional paradigms (Snow, 2002). She believes that effective teachers of comprehension perform exercises that portrait the organization of knowledge about readers, purposeful activity, texts and contexts for the purpose of promoting students' reflective, competent, and motivated reading.

In an attempt to alter the way reading comprehension is taught, alterations will be required in curriculum materials, instructional strategies, assessments, instructional support systems, professional learning, and instructional coaching. For instance, in order for the learners to personalize their learning teachers will be required to engineer instruction so that small group, cooperative learning groups, whole class, and individual support and feedback opportunities are accessible to learners (Rothman, 2013; Snow & O'Connor, 2013). In addition, teachers will be required to pinpoint research-based reading comprehension strategies that get learners engaged in comprehension activities (Shanahan, 2013). Consequentially, teachers will need to get ready to explicitly teach the strategies to different student population. In order to meet the needs of learners with disabilities like those living in poverty, and those whose L1 is other than English, instruction will need to be explicit (Allington, 2011; Archer & Hughes, 2011).

The method by which either mechanically or strategically a teacher teaches reading comprehension is essential in making certain the efficacy of comprehension instruction. According to the observations of EFL instructors several times over the course of a school year by Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, and Rodriguez (2003) imply that teaching variables including (1) skill instruction in

comprehension, (2), small-group instruction (3) teacher modeling, and (4) coaching for teachers described substantial modification in learner achievement and success. They also found out that instructors who stressed higher-order thinking contributed to greater reading progress.

Results from this current review of the research demonstrate that how teachers teach reading is very important. Teachers who engage their students in learning to read, provide small group instruction and explicit skill instruction in comprehension, and provide modeling and coaching yield learners with better achievements in learning to read. With regard to earlier research studies, Guthrie and colleagues (2006) showed that linking motivation practices with strategy instruction in comprehension promotes reading comprehension. Consequently, multitudinous studies show that novice readers could successfully transfer knowledge of comprehension strategies from one literacy activity to another after repeated exposure, explicit explanation, teacher modeling, and questioning.

### *2.5 ESA Approach as an Instructional TEFL Methodology*

Over the last decade, EFL instructors have employed PPP model of Presentation, Practice and production as their desired model of teaching. This model of teaching happened to be effective; however, it proved to having numerous demerits. One of the important demerits attributed to this model of teaching is that it could not meet the learners' needs in communicative classes. This is because of its inability to work well when learners are asked to produce complex language problems at the levels larger than sentences. Secondly, the amount of teacher talking time is high compared to that of the learner talking time. Another disadvantageous attributed to this model is it puts much emphasis on accuracy over fluency when the learners attention is on language use rather than usage. Eventually, the PPP model does not allow for a recap. It means that it does not allow for movement within different stages. Ultimately, it can cogently be affirmed that ESA approach can be preferred.

In response to the shortcomings directed toward PPP model, Harmer (2007) proposed a more influential and utilitarian substitute model of teaching. His different trilogy of teaching elements which he terms

as a principled eclecticism is called ESA: Engage Study, and Activate.

- E stands for Engage. In this phase teachers need to prompt learner's curiosity, participation, attentiveness, feelings and interests. In this phase, teachers can utilize learner engagement activities such as: games, interesting anecdotes, storytelling, recordings, and picture descriptions and so on. Based on the said propositions Harmer (2007) state that "unless students are engaged emotionally in what is going on, their learning will be less effective" (P.66). He also believes that successful language learning is heavily grounded on a sensible integration of subconscious acquisition of language.

In engagement phase of ESA reading instruction, the teacher's role may include:

1. Motivate students through activities that may increase their interest— book talks, dramatic readings, or displays of art related to the text— making the text relevant to students in some way

2. Activate students' background knowledge important to the content of the text by discussing what students will read and what they already know about its topic and about the text organization  
Correspondingly, Students may:

1. Establish a purpose for reading.
2. Preview the text (by surveying the title, illustrations, and unusual text structures) to make predictions about its content.
3. Think, talk, and write about the topic of the text.

- S which stands for Study bases its principal objective on language usage. The tasks at this are specially designed to emphasize forms of the language. The study phase of ESA focuses on learner-led grammar discovery that is, eliciting grammar from learners rather than teacher-led presentations. The activities of this phase can be regarded as a type of discovery learning. Since the activities are developed from communicative tasks where learners attention on forms is drawn from the teacher-led discussions or through their own noticing activities. Activities of this type include relative clauses, specific intonation patterns to collocation of a particular word or the way a lexical phrase is made or used.

Regarding this phase of the ESA approach, the teacher's role is to:

1. Ask questions that keep students on track and focus their attention on main ideas and important points in the text.
2. Focus attention on parts in a text that require students to make inferences.

3. Call on students to summarize key sections or events.

4. Encourage students to return to any predictions they have made before reading to see if they are confirmed by the text.

On the part of students' role, they may:

1. Determine and summarize important ideas and supportive details.

2. Make connections between and among important ideas in the text.

3. Integrate new ideas with existing background knowledge.

4. Ask themselves questions about the text.

5. Sequence events and ideas in the text.

6. Offer interpretations of and responses to the text.

7. Check understanding by paraphrasing or restating important and/or difficult sentences and paragraphs.

8. Visualize characters, settings, or events in a text.

- At last, A which stands for Activate is the stage at which learners get involved in more communicative and authentic tasks. Regarding this phase, learners need to use the language communicatively and as free as they can. They are engaged in fluency activities.

In this phase of the teaching procedure, the teacher may:

1. Guide discussion of the reading.

2. Ask students to recall and tell in their own words important parts of the text.

3. Offer students opportunities to respond to the reading in various ways, including through writing, dramatic play, music, readers' theatre, videos, debate, or pantomime.

Here, the learners getting the teacher's assistance:

1. Identify and discuss difficult words, phrases, and concepts in the text.

2. Evaluate and discuss the ideas encountered in the text.

3. Apply and extend these ideas to other texts and real life situations.

4. Summarize what was read by retelling the main ideas.

5. Discuss ideas for further reading.

The last but not the list, as with any effective instruction, good comprehension instruction needs to be associated by formative assessment. Teachers should





make an ongoing assessment and monitor students' use of comprehension strategies and their success or failure at making sense of what they read. According to this assessment and monitoring, teachers will, in turn, receive feedback as how many students have learned and will be notified about their instruction. When a specific strategy goes on to be used ineffectively, or not at all, the teacher should respond with further instruction or an alternative instructional approach. Concurrently, students self-monitor their own learning, be aware of their strengths and weaknesses as being involved in the process of developing reading comprehension abilities (Duke & Pearson, 2008).

### 2.6. Task

In teaching reading skill, performing tasks has recently received much attention. Nowadays, most of the state assessments and standardized reading tests include items pertinent to completion of particular tasks. Some of the reasons this type of reading has gained in importance are clear. First, with a focus on the uses of reading both in and out of school, the frequency of reading so that we can produce something else or perform a task is highlighted. In the field of adult literacy, this kind of reading has been termed "functional reading," as it has very practical uses. On-the-job skills are often based on being able to do what written instructions require, whether in a factory, a law office, or a McDonald's. In elementary teaching, there has been an ongoing interest in students' being able to read to "follow direction" whether that be in science or math or in reading maps and charts to build understanding of larger concepts. Another functional task that students need to perform includes reading schedules to find programs on TV or bus routes (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008).

Guthrie and colleagues (2006) confirmed that numerous stimulating tasks promoted student motivation and that motivation has a positive effect on reading comprehension. They also asserted that in order to increase students' motivation effectively, tasks must be essentially linked to the content of texts and students' interests. Reading comprehension instruction that explicitly associates motivation practices with strategy instruction promotes reading comprehension compared with traditional instruction.

## 3. Methodology

### Research Question

With regard to the theoretical and practical perspectives discussed up to now, the present study puts an effort into answering the following research question: Q1: Does application of ESA elements on tasks have a significant effect on reading ability of Iranian EFL learners?

### Research Hypothesis

Considering the pedagogical implications of the study, the following null hypothesis is derived:

H01: Application of ESA elements on tasks has no effect on reading ability of Iranian EFL learners.

### 3.1. Method and Design of the Study

Taking a quick look at the topic, research question and hypothesis proposed earlier, it can be said that the present study is quantitative in nature and attempts to show the effect of applying ESA elements within the framework of task-based teaching on the reading ability of EFL learners. Randomization was not possible and the experimental and control groups had already been placed in their courses. In other words, the two groups enrolled in the study were intact groups which were administratively defined with regard to the curriculum, level and classroom; the study adopted a quasi-experimental design.

### 3.2. Participants

The population of this study is chosen from two intact classes both male and female; with the same level of proficiency studying English translation at Chabahar Maritime University. They have the same amount of exposure to English language learning. They are learning English as the second language and are native speakers of Farsi. A total of 30 students were recruited for the purpose of this study. Generally, their ages ranged from 19 to 24. These subjects were assigned into two groups: experimental (15 subjects) received instruction through ESA procedures and control group, with the same number of subjects, received regular instruction. Both groups were given the same amount of instructional time i.e. three sessions every week, each session lasted 60 minutes for 12 sessions.

### 3.3. Data Collection Instruments

Regarding the research question posed earlier, the present study used the following data instruments:

- A lesson plan designed and prepared with regard to the basic tenets of the ESA approach in order to be utilized in

the experimental on the required reading skills. The written lesson plan entails the basic lesson plan paradigms objectives, techniques and strategies of teaching used in ESA and task approach, activities (Appendix A).

- A proposed TOEFL general proficiency test (PBT) taken from Phillips (2001) to make certain they were all intermediate EFL learners (Appendix B).
- A pre-post ESOL English language FCE reading proficiency test for measuring overall reading ability of both control and experimental group at the beginning and end of the treatment. The tests were adopted from Official Examination Papers from University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (2008); (See Appendix C).
- FCE result course book (2008), Get on Track to FCE (2002) working on reading tasks.
- Three Task-based testing activities which are prerequisites of FCE reading test. They include: multiple-choice, multiple-matching and gapped text tasks (Appendix D).

#### 3.4. Procedure

The procedures involved in the conduction of this study attempts to investigate the effectiveness of implementing a task-based ESA approach in teaching reading comprehension EFL learners. In order to meet the objectives of the study, two freshmen intact groups majoring English translation chosen from chabahar maritime university were enrolled in the study. Prior to the study, a TOEFL general proficiency test was administered to establish their homogeneity and to ensure that learners are at the same level of proficiency. However, their homogeneity has already been established. Consequently, after making sure that they were at the same level of proficiency, a pretest of FCE reading was administered to subjects of both groups to ensure their equivalence before the study and to compare their scores with the scores of the posttest. Then, the two intact classes were selected randomly as one serves the control and the other as the experimental group. After that, both experimental and control group were treated differently. The learners in the control group were taught based on the tenets of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and the experimental group received the treatment i.e. implementation of ESA elements involved in teaching of reading comprehension tasks. The lesson

plan prepared to meet the objectives of the study entailed a detailed explanations and step by step ESA procedures required to teach reading comprehension. At the end of the treatment session, an FCE reading posttest was administered to participants of both groups to ensure whether the treatment had significant effect on reading performance of EFL learners after the study. Finally, the data obtained through test results were analyzed using different kinds of statistical tools which are processed through statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) software. An independent sample t-test was run to find out whether there is a significant difference between the performance of control and experimental group.

#### 4. Results and Findings

In order to analyze the data obtained in the study, a number of statistical procedures were used. Descriptive statistics were run in order to obtain the mean and standard deviation of the scores. Independent sample t-test was also run to compare the results of the pre-posttests of the both groups. The statistical procedures were run to process the data obtained from each of the research instruments. The SPSS software was used for statistical analysis of the data collected from all of the research steps.

##### 4.1. Data Analysis Prior to the Experiment

To meet the objectives of the study, 30 intermediate EFL learners were enrolled as the subjects of the study. The subjects were in two intact group design each consisting of 15 learners. In order to measure the participants' language proficiency and homogeneity, TOEFL general proficiency test was administered. Additionally, in order to ensure the comparability of the groups an FCE reading pretest was administered as well.

##### 4.1.1. Performance of the Participants on the TOEFL General Proficiency Test

Prior to the study, in order to make certain that all the participants were at the same level of proficiency, subjects were administered a TOEFL general proficiency test. The estimated language proficiency mean of all subjects equaled to 437.67. On this account and based on the TOEFL paper-based scoring scale, it can be concluded that all the subjects are at the intermediate level.

*Table: 1 Results for the TOEFL general proficiency test*





Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mini mum	Maxim um	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	30	350.00	530.00	4.3767E2	47.24721
Valid N (list wise)	30				

#### 4.1.2. Performance of the Participants on the FCE Reading Pretest

After making sure that the subjects were all at the intermediate level, it is now time to ascertain the comparability of both groups. To this end, the control and experimental group's performance were compared. Both groups were administered an FCE reading test to ensure both groups were comparable.

As table 2 indicates, the language proficiency mean and the standard deviation for the control group equaled to 14.13 and 1.72, in order listed, and the estimated mean and standard deviation for the treatment group amounted to 13.93 and 1.90, in order listed. In order to determine any significant difference between the mean scores, an independent sample t-test was run.

Table: 2 Descriptive statistics for the results of FCE reading pre-test

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	15	11.00	17.00	14.1333	1.72654
Experimen tal	15	10.00	17.00	13.9333	1.90738
Valid N (list wise)	15				

Table: 3 Independent sample t-test results for the FCE pre-test of the treatment and control group

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Variable	Equal variances assumed	.252	.620	.301	28	.766	.20000	.66428	-1.16072	1.56072
	Equal variances not assumed			.301	27.727	.766	.20000	.66428	-1.16132	1.56132

According to the table 3, the P value is greater than 0.05 which suggests that both groups are comparable and there are no mathematically significant variations between the control and experimental groups on the pretest in overall reading comprehension performance. Conclusively, it can be construed that the two groups were

relatively at the same level of proficiency in reading comprehension. As a result, any discrepancy between the two groups that may arise after the implementation of the program will be attributed to it.

#### 4.2. Posttest Findings

This study attempted to explore the probable impact of implementation of ESA elements on tasks in boosting reading comprehension of EFL learners. It was hypothesized that this type of instruction has no significant impact on intermediate Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension development.

##### 4.2.1. Performance of the Participants on the FCE Post tests

Table 4 and 5 show the results of the post-test for both treatment and control groups. The estimated reading performance development mean and standard deviation of the subjects in the control group amounted 14.60, and 1.68, respectively. And the computed reading performance improvement mean and standard deviation of the subjects in the treatment group amounted 16.53, and 1.40, respectively. An appraisal of the mean scores showed that there was a significant difference between the treatment group and the control group in terms of overall reading comprehension performance. Likewise, the independent-samples t-test analysis exhibited that this variation was statistically significant ( $p=0.002$ ). On that account, it can be firmly be argued that there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups on the post- test in overall reading comprehension performance in favor of the experimental group. Consequently, the null hypothesis which proposes that, implementation of ESA elements on tasks has no significant impact on promoting reading comprehension performance of intermediate EFL learners is rejected.

Table: 4 Descriptive statistics for the results of the FCE reading posttest

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	15	12.00	18.00	14.6000	1.68184
Experimental	15	14.00	19.00	16.5333	1.40746
Valid N (list wise)	15				

Table: 5 Independent samples t-test results for the FCE posttests for both groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Variable	Equal variances assumed	.199	.659	-3.414	28	.002	-1.93333	.56625	-3.09324	-.77343
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.414	27.157	.002	-1.93333	.56625	-3.09486	-.77181

Accordingly, it can strongly be consummated that the results affirmed the significant impact of implementing ESA elements on tasks in mastering reading performance of learners. As a result, the findings confirm that the treatment group has performed better compared to the control group.

## 5. Discussions and Conclusions

### 5.1. Discussions

While the present study indicates that there are various restraints in terms of existent materials utilized to teach learners to read, the present study has attempted to present a best course of action about effective instruction that transcends the use of a specific set of instructional materials. Regarding this study, a lot of efforts have been made to provide insight from current research that tracks ways in which readers, text, and context interact and affect learner's comprehension of text. What seems evident is the fact that whereas there are quite significant information about the reading comprehension process and essential instructional characteristics associated with comprehension instruction, there still exist broad mismatch between our present knowledge and developmental practice. Additionally, what is evident is that teachers and teacher trainers have the knowledge accessible to make large-scale alteration in terms of both materials and instructional programs. Teachers who are familiar with the research presented in this study can make significant contributions in the nature of reading comprehension instruction. Likewise, heightened knowledge and familiarity can also provide significant pedagogical contribution for those in leading positions such as curriculum adoption committees who are willing to see better materials and instructional objectives accessible for use in classrooms. In the long run, teacher trainers have the potency and the resources to empower both teachers and students, to become autonomous readers and critical thinkers as they get involved in the process

of reading various materials, in a variety of contexts, and for a variety of purposes.

In a study related to instruction through ESA elements, Khoshsiman and Shokri (2016, 2017) found out that this type of instruction is quite utilitarian in promoting oral abilities of EFL learners. Taking into account the fact that effective instruction in reading comprehension promotes learners' comprehension; a study by Aidinlou (2012) revealed that instruction through Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) had a great effect on the reading comprehension of Iranian TEFL students. Additionally, in a review paper about factors affecting EFL learners' reading comprehension skill and the strategies for improvement, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) contended that appropriate reading strategies play a vital role in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension skill.

### 5.2. Conclusions

There are many considerations in teaching reading. What we have presented in the preceding sections is a set of what is believed to be the most effective principles. On this account, each of these principles needs to be adjusted for a specific context, for a specific language, and for students of differing abilities.

Teaching reading and writing is a difficult task. Correspondingly, teachers must be monitoring the progress that learners are making and adapt instruction to the constantly changing abilities of learners. It is also important to know that the purpose of reading is to understand the texts and to be able to learn from them. Learning reading skill empowers everyone who learns it. Those who learn reading skill will be able to benefit from the store of knowledge in printed materials and, eventually, to promote that knowledge.

Good teaching empowers learners to learn to read and read to learn. The present study was an attempt to investigate the probable impact of applying Harmer's ESA elements on tasks in improving reading comprehension of intermediate EFL learners. Although numerous studies in relation to tasks have been carried out, it seems a few of the studies have noticed the importance of student engagement in presenting tasks through ESA elements. Based on the theoretical and applied background of the study, it is made clear that this study confirms the positive role of the Harmer's ESA elements applied on tasks in mastering reading comprehension of the learners. Likewise, the results of the



study show that this technique is quite influential in the development of reading comprehension of EFL learners. This study also supports findings on engagement: students who are actively engaged in their learning have better reading outcomes than do passive learners

The findings of the current contribution suggest some courses of action for EFL teachers, material producers and methodologists that enable them to choose the best method of dealing with the reality of EFL reader's problems. The study encourages EFL teachers to address reading ability via employing ESA elements involved in teaching of reading through tasks.

One of the most conspicuous privileges of this approach seems to be that subjects in the experimental group showed a marked tendency toward task engagement and had more opportunities in expressing their ideas, emotions and desires more willfully compared to subjects of the control group who favored to use memorized bits of fixed phrases.

Further studies; however, is required to make sure whether this approach is effective in teaching other skills like: writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary knowledge.

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## Appendix A: ESA Lesson Plan

Name: Hadi Shokri

Date: July 22th, 2016

Time: 10:30-11:30 |

Level: Intermediate

Length of lesson: 60 mins

Main focus of lesson: Why someone might become an imposter?

Main Aims:

1. Boosting Reading Comprehension of EFL Learners
  - 1. Practicing Engagement, Study and Activate Elements
  - 2. Increasing their cognitive abilities to become reflected and autonomous learners

Subsidiary

aims /focus:

My subsidiary aims are:

- 1. Reinforcing students' comprehension skills through Engagement, Study and Activate.
- 2. Adapting an interesting text, out of the students' reading books and implementing it in the classroom.

Evidence of achievement:

- Students get engaged in the topic of the reading task and discuss why someone might become an imposter. They also predict what the content of the reading task might be.
- 2. Students answer the questions raised by the teacher and Check understanding by paraphrasing or restating important and/or difficult sentences and paragraphs.
- 3. Students Evaluate and discuss the ideas encountered in the text.

Personal Aims:

Making an ongoing assessment in order to receive feedback and find out how much students have learned of the reading task. they might need more remedial work

Materials / Aids:

FCE Result Student's book

Timetable Fit:

Engagement

- As a warm up activity, ss background knowledge is activated through a Smalltalk about why someone might pretend to be someone else.
- Motivate ss through relating the topic of the discussion to their life: Imagine that you could live someone else's life for one week. Whose life would you choose?
- Then, they are asked to survey the title and the illustrations to make predictions about the topic and content of the text.

Study

- Let them skim and scan the text for general idea and details.
- Focus attention on parts in a text that require students to make inferences.
- Call on students to summarize key sections or events.
- Encourage students to return to any predictions they have made before reading to see if they are confirmed by the text.

Activate

- Guide discussion of the reading. In pairs, give them paragraphs and let them discuss about the main ideas of the paragraphs.
- Direct their attention to the book and do the multiple matching tasks.
- In groups let them check their answers and give reasons for their choices.
- Ask them to make a summary of the reading task.

Assumptions:

I assume that;

- 1. Students will find the lesson interesting because the text, which is about imposter, is directly related to their lives so that they will easily personalize it.
- 2. Students will find the lesson beneficial since they get engaged in the lesson and discuss with their pairs and groups about the reading text which will help them comprehend the lesson easily.

Evaluations:

The teacher monitors students while they are doing the activity so that he can see whether they understand the text and are able to the tasks.

## Appendix B: A Sample of TOEFL general proficiency test (PBT)

COMPLETE TEST (Paper) 

SECTION I  
LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Time—approximately 35 minutes  
(including the reading of the directions for each part)

In this section of the test, you will have an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to understand conversations and talks in English. There are three parts to this section. Answer all the questions on the basis of what is stated or implied by the speakers you hear. Do not take notes or write in your test book at any time. Do not turn the pages until you are told to do so.



Part A

**Directions:** In Part A you will hear short conversations between two people. After each conversation, you will hear a question about the conversation. The conversations and questions will not be repeated. After you hear a question, read the four possible answers in your test book and choose the best answer. Then, on your answer sheet, find the number of the question and fill in the space that corresponds to the letter of the answer you have chosen.

Listen to an example.

On the recording, you hear:

- (man) That exam was just awful.
- (woman) Oh, it could have been worse.
- (narrator) What does the woman mean?

- In your test book, you read:
- (A) The exam was really awful.
  - (B) It was the worst exam she had ever seen.
  - (C) It couldn't have been more difficult.
  - (D) It wasn't that hard.

You learn from the conversation that the man thought the exam was very difficult and that the woman disagreed with the man. The best answer to the question, "What does the woman mean?" is (D), "It wasn't that hard." Therefore, the correct choice is (D).

**Appendix C: A sample of FCE reading proficiency test**

You are going to read a newspaper article about a novelist. For questions 13–19, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text. Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

**The opera-lover turned crime novelist**

Through her series of crime novels, Donna Leon has been solving murders in Venice with great panache – mostly to the soundtrack of grand opera.

Donna Leon first launched herself as a crime writer in 1991 with *Death at La Fenice*, which saw a conductor poisoned in mid-performance at the Venice opera house. "It was an idea that kind of grew," she says. "I had a friend at the opera house. One day we were backstage, complaining about the tyrannical conductor – and we thought it would be a laugh to make him the victim in a crime novel, which I duly went off and wrote. But that's all it was meant to be. I was lucky to be born without ambition, and I had none for this book. Then I sent it off to a competition, and six months later they wrote back to say I'd won. I got a contract, and suddenly I had a purpose in life, a mission."

To hear her talk, you'd think that until *Death at La Fenice* she'd been living in obscurity. Not so. She was a well-known academic teaching English literature at universities in the USA and Europe. But she found that she wasn't really out for university life, and finally decided to walk out on it. "I'm a former academic," she says now through slightly gritted teeth. "And it's interesting that her literary reputation has been made through a medium so remote from the one she used to teach. "You'd be surprised how many academics do read murder mystery though," she adds. "It makes no intellectual demands, and it's what you want after a day of literary demands. That said, she's a big business. She sells in bulk, her books are translated into nineteen languages and she's a household name in German-speaking countries. A lot of which is gratifying for me personally, and I don't mean to rubbish my own work, but murder mystery is a craft, not an art. Some people go to crime conventions and deliver learned papers on the way Agatha Christie presents her characters, but they're out of their minds. I stay away from such events."

Leon also stays away from most of the other expected haunts of crime writers, like courtyards and police stations – "I've only known two policemen, neither of them well," – which accounts for the absence of technical legal detail in the books. What's more, the few points of police procedure that appear are usually invented – as, she admits, they're bound to be when you set a murder series in a place where murders never happen. "Venice is small, compact, protected by its geography – there's really not much crime." Clearly

the key thing about her murder stories isn't credibility. Predictability comes closer to the mark, setting a series in a fixed location that the reader finds attractive, with a constant cast of characters. And that's what Donna Leon does. Her unique selling point is Venice which, as the reviewers always say, comes through with such vitality and forcefulness in Leon's writing that you can smell it. There's a set cast of characters, led by a middle-aged detective, Commissario Brunetti, and his wife (a disillusioned academic). Then there are her standard jokes – often to do with food. Indeed, Leon lingers so ecstatically over the details of lunch, the pursuit of justice frequently gets diverted. The setting is a literary device – part of the pattern of each novel, into which she slots the plot. That's how you hook your readers, who like a kind of certainty. And the most attractive certainty of crime fiction is that it gives them what real life doesn't. The bed guy gets it in the end."

Indeed, when the conversation switches to Donna Leon's other life, *Il Complesso Barocco*, the opera company she helps run, she talks about baroque opera as though it were murder-mystery, fuelled by 'power, jealousy and rage, despair, menace' which are her own words for the sleeve notes of a new CD of Handel arias by the company, packaged under the title *The Abandoned Successor*. Designed to tour near you in concert format, *Il Complesso* was set up in 2001 in collaboration with another US exile in Italy, the musicologist Alan Curtis. "It started as a one-off. There was a rare Handel opera, *Armida*, that Alan thought should be performed, and it became an obsession for him until eventually I said, "Do you want to talk about this or do you want to do it?" So we did it. I rang a friend who runs a Swiss opera festival. We offered him a production. Then had eight months to get it together."

Somewhere it came together, and *Il Complesso* is now an ongoing venture. Curtis does the hands-on artistic and administrative work. Leon lends her name which 'opens doors in all those German-speaking places' and, crucially, underwrites the costs. In addition, her publishing commitments take her all over Europe – where she keeps a lookout for potential singers, and sometimes even features in the productions herself, not singing ("I don't") but reading the odd snatch from her books.

- 13 What is suggested about the novel *Death at La Fenice* in the first paragraph?
  - A Donna based the plot on a real-life event she had witnessed.
  - B Donna didn't envisage the work ever being taken very seriously.
  - C Donna had to be persuaded that it was good enough to win a prize.
  - D Donna embarked upon it as a way of bringing about a change in her life.
- 14 The second paragraph paints a picture of Donna as someone who
  - A has little respect for her fellow academics.
  - B regrets having given up her job in a university.
  - C was unsuited to being a university teacher.
  - D failed to make a success of her academic career.
- 15 From Donna's comments in the third paragraph, we understand that
  - A she feels crime fiction should be considered alongside other types of literature.
  - B she is pleased with the level of recognition that her own novels have received.
  - C she regards her own novels as inferior to those of Agatha Christie.
  - D she finds the popularity of crime novels amongst academics very satisfying.
- 16 Donna is described as an untypical crime writer because
  - A she is able to imagine crimes being committed by unlikely characters.
  - B she is unconcerned whether or not her stories appear realistic.
  - C she has little interest in the ways criminals think and operate.
  - D she manages to come up with imaginative new ideas for her plots.
- 17 Donna's greatest strength as a crime writer is seen as
  - A her avoidance of a fixed approach.
  - B her injection of humour into her stories.
  - C the clear moral message she puts across.
  - D the strong evocation of place she achieves.
- 18 When Donna helped set up *Il Complesso Barocco*,
  - A she didn't expect it to be a long-term project.
  - B she saw it as more interesting than her writing work.
  - C she had a fundamental disagreement with her main collaborator.
  - D she was attracted by the challenge of the first deadline.
- 19 In what way is Donna important to *Il Complesso Barocco*?
  - A She provides essential financial support.
  - B She oversees its day-to-day organisation.
  - C She helps as a translator.
  - D She organises the recruitment of performers.

**Appendix D: A sample of the reading task from FCE result course book**

**Reading**

Part 3 Multiple matching

- 1 In pairs, discuss the meanings of a–h and match words with similar meanings.
  - a a con
  - b a fraud
  - c generator
  - d an impostor
  - e pose as
  - f legitimate
  - g pretend to be
  - h a trick
- 2 You are going to read a text about four impostors. Before you do, think of as many reasons as you can why someone might become an impostor.
- 3 Read the text opposite to find out if any of the people become impostors for the reasons you thought of in 1.
- 4 Read the text again carefully and for questions 1–15, choose from the people (A–F). The people may be chosen more than once.
  - 1 deceived people for financial gain?
  - 2 had to act younger than his real age?
  - 3 met a member of a royal family?
  - 4 tried to make people's lives better?
  - 5 spent some time in prison?
  - 6 invented a story about an accident?
  - 7 was not an easy person to get on with?
  - 8 did not want to stop working?
  - 9 changed his name several times?
  - 10 made many public appearances in Europe?
  - 11 has a role in a film about his life?
  - 12 was born over 200 years ago?
  - 13 went to university?
  - 14 gave advice to businessmen on stopping fraud?
  - 15 was an early environmentalist?
- 5 Imagine that you could lead somebody else's life for one week. Whose life would you choose and why? What would you do in that week?



Unit 5

**A Doctor James Barry**

James Barry was a surgeon in the British Army. Having graduated from Edinburgh University in 1812, he served in India, South Africa and the West Indies. Although he was a difficult and argumentative person who was always getting into trouble with his superiors, Barry worked hard to improve conditions for the troops and for ordinary people wherever he was staying. For example, when he was stationed in Cape Town, South Africa, he developed ways of improving the town's supply of clean water. Barry retired in 1864 – apparently against his wishes – and returned to England. After his death in 1865, the post-mortem examination revealed that James Barry was in fact a woman. It is not clear why Barry chose to live as a man. Nobody is even sure what Barry's real name was. But one thing is certain: at that time, a woman could not have had a career as an army doctor, being an impostor allowed Barry to help thousands of people around the world.

**C Frank Abagnale**

In 1964, at the age of 16 Frank Abagnale ran away from home in New York City. He used various names to get money from banks, changing his identity when they discovered his tricks. For two years he lived as Frank Williams and pretended to be an airline pilot with Pan Am. Wearing a pilot's uniform which he had stolen from Pan Am he had often been giving tours, he used his forged ID card to travel around the world free on Pan Am planes. Later, he changed his name to Frank Conners, moved to Georgia, and posed as a doctor, even though he had no qualifications. When his friends realised that he was an impostor, they called the police and Frank had to disappear. But he soon re-emerged with a forged Law Diploma from Harvard University and got a job working for the Attorney General in Louisiana. Over a period of five years, Abagnale used eight different identities and committed fraud in 26 different countries. His luck finally ran out in 1970, when he was arrested in France. After spending several years in jail, Abagnale was released and began a new, legitimate, and very successful career as a consultant to banks on how to prevent fraud. He also wrote a best-selling autobiography which was made into a Catch Me If You Can – starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks. Abagnale himself appears briefly in it but, of course, he does not play himself!

**B Frédéric Bourdin**

The pupils at Jean Mermoz College in Paris, south-west France, believed everything that their new 15-year-old classmate, Frédéric, told them. He claimed that he had just arrived in France from Spain. He said that he had been an orphan since 2000, when his parents had died in a car crash, and that he had spent three months in a coma after the accident. But it was all a lie. Frédéric was in fact a 32-year-old Frenchman called Frédéric Bourdin. The school only realised the truth when one of the teachers saw Bourdin on TV, in a documentary about impostors. The school principal, Claire Charbonnier, said that the pupil had appeared a bit older than his classmates but she also said that Bourdin had played the part of a 15-year-old brilliantly. He told her he had awful scars which he wanted to hide. I gave him special permission to wear a cap. That is how he concealed his true age," she said. Bourdin has confessed that he loved the attention he could get by pretending to be a youngster. "In Paris, I got what I wanted. I loved the kids and the people who took care of them. They treated me like one of them."

**D Grey Owl**

In 1935, Londoners looked to see a man called Grey Owl give lectures about the natural world. This unusual character would stand in front of his audience in full North American Indian dress and begin with these words: "You are tired with years of civilization. I come to offer you – what? A single green leaf!" Grey Owl was so popular in England that he gave over 200 lectures in four months and addressed 250,000 people about the beauty and significance of the wild. His second lecture tour, in 1937, was an even bigger success – he even gave a private talk to the king of England at Buckingham Palace. What his audiences did not know, however, was that Grey Owl was not a genuine North American Indian at all. In fact, he was not even from North America, but rather from Hastings on the south coast of England, and his real name was Archibald Belaney. As a boy, young Archie had been fascinated by stories of the Canadian wilderness and the life of the people who lived there. So at the age of 18, he left England and went to live and work in Northern Ontario, Canada, where he pretended to be the child of a Scottish father and an Apache mother. It was only after his death that his true identity became public and his reputation suffered badly as a result. But although Grey Owl was a fraud, he did a lot to educate and inspire people about the natural world.

Unit 5