



Teaching “Reading” for Specific Purposes in Academic Areas of Specialisation to University Students: A Case of University Teaching of Foreign Language Reading

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ARTICLE INFO

Article No.: 110913834

Type: Research

DOI: 10.15580/GJER.2013.10.110913834

Submitted: 09/11/2013

Accepted: 15/12/2013

Published: 22/12/2013

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Keywords:

foreign language EL, TAVO, TAVI,
ESP: English for Specific Purposes,
English for Academic Purposes

ABSTRACT

Reading can be defined as “Understand, interpret meaning sense, decode, decipher identify or articulate speak or pronounce...” reading is partly about identifying and pronouncing words properly. Reading can be undertaken for various reasons. It can be for authentic reasons, or for entertainment. Foreign Language (FL) is supposed to be read because it is basically the language for business and for academic purposes. English is the lingual Franco for trade. Getting a message from a text is the kind of reading that suits the university learners. University students are supposed to read and discern meaning from an array of sources raging from hard copies, soft copies, e-journals and others sources. Students are supposed to be able to evaluate information that they need to use for their identified gaps. Information might be needed for assignment writing, presentations or thesis writing. This paper is centred on the concept of reading and how best students can utilise reading in order to enhance their understanding of matters in areas of specialisation. Thus, the focus of this paper is reading for specific area not reading for academic purposes as per say. This is so because university students concern themselves not with the general English for the institutions for higher learning offer the kind of training designed to meet specific needs for specific field.

INTRODUCTION

Reading can be undertaken for various purposes. University education demands that student be versatile with reading strategies. This discussion aims at making an analysis of the reading skills most valuable to university student. Dudley Evans and St Johns (1998:96), says three stages in reading involve the selection of texts, the extracting and recording of information, and the use of the information that has been gathered. Thus, university students should be in a position to select information that is relevant to the task at hand and specific to their area of study. They can rely on search engines to try to address their information needs. Students can use for example, Google, Ask.com or Yahoo! Search or any other search engines. According to Vidal 2011 volume 61.1 pages 219-258, retrieved 6/06/ 2013 DOI:10.1111/J.1467-9922.2010.00593.X reading enhances incidental acquisition and retention of vocabulary. This might be a blending approach to reading which takes cognisance of the traditional forms of reading and the modern approach to reading. In this vein, reading emphasises upon the competence in linguistic terms as one becomes capable of articulating words and these words becoming part and parcel of the vocabulary of the reader.

One of the most important contributions to the approach to reading in English For Specific Purposes, was the shift from Text As a Linguistic Object (TALO) to Text As a Vehicle of information (TAVI) (John's and Davies, 1983). John's and Davies encapsulated the key principle that, for ESP/University learners, extracting information accurately and quickly is more significant than language details, that understanding the macro structure comes before the language study: and that application of the information in the text is of paramount importance. The reader first processes the language and then links the ideas to what is already known of the subject area. It is thus, incumbent for university students to acquaint themselves with the terminology of their respective areas. The knowledge of the subject would help the students in manoeuvring through the text to get the meaning that has been in tendered by the writer. These approaches to reading for specific purposes have their roots in the reading theories in general.

The cognitive approach takes cognisance of modelling questions as one reads. According to Dr. Postman (2009), "All our knowledge results from questions". Thus, question asking is an intellectual tool that can be used in the comprehension of a read text. There are several questions that a reader should focus on; remembering: testing understanding: application or solving: invite synthesis or creating: and evaluation and judging. Readers should model these questions through "think- aloud" before, during and after reading a text. These questions are better explained by Bloom et al summarise by Huitt, (2011) <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/cogsys/bloom.html>

Statement of the problem

The research aims at making an enquire into the challenges that befall university student in as far as reading for information search is concerned and provide possible solutions to reading for specific purposes in an academic set up.

Objectives

- To compare and contrast TALO and TAVO as reading modes.
- To establish advantages of using the cognitive or TAVO approach to reading.
- To recommend appropriate modes to reading at university level.

Theories of Reading in academic situations

According to <https://plus.google.com/u/0/?gpsrc=ogpy0&tab=wX> so far, there are three main theories which explain the nature of learning to read. These are, the traditional theory, or *bottom up processing*, which focuses on the printed form of a text. (2) The cognitive view or *top-down processing* enhanced the role of background knowledge in addition to what appeared on the printed page. Third, the meta cognitive view, which is based on the control and manipulation that a reader can have on the act of comprehending a text, and thus, emphasizes the involvement of the reader's thinking about what he is doing while reading.

The traditional bottom-up view

The traditional bottom-up approach to reading was influenced by behaviourist psychology of the 1950s, which claimed learning was based on "habit formation, brought about by the repeated association of a stimulus with a response" and language learning was characterized as a "response system that humans acquire through automatic conditioning processes," where "some patterns of language are reinforced (rewarded) and others are not," and "only those patterns reinforced by the community of language users will persist" (Omaggio 1993, 45-46). Behaviourism became the basis of the audio-lingual method, which sought to form second language "habits" through drilling, repetition, and error correction.

Today, the main method associated with the bottom-up approach to reading is known as *phonics*, which requires the learner to match letters with sounds in a defined sequence. According to this view, reading is a linear process by which readers decode a text word by word, linking the words into phrases and then sentences (Gray and Rogers, cited in Kucer 1987). According to Samuels and Kamil (1988: 25), the emphasis on behaviourism treated reading as a word-recognition response to the stimuli of the printed words, where "little attempt was made to explain what went on within the recesses of the mind that allowed the human to make sense of the printed page". In other words, textual comprehension involves adding the meanings of words to get the meanings of clauses (Anderson 1994).

These lower level skills are connected to the visual stimulus, or print, and are consequently concerned with recognizing and recalling.

Like the audio-lingual teaching method, phonics emphasizes on repetition and on drills using the sounds that make up words. Information is received and processed beginning with the smallest sound units, and proceeded to letter blends, words, phrases, and sentences. Thus, novice readers acquire a set of hierarchically ordered sub-skills that sequentially build toward comprehension ability. Having mastered these skills, readers are viewed as experts who comprehend what they read.

The bottom-up model describes information flow as a series of stages that transforms the input and passes it to the next stage without any feedback or possibility of later stages of the process influencing earlier stages (Stanovich, 1980). In other words, language is viewed as a code and the reader's main task is to identify graphemes and convert them into phonemes. Consequently, readers are regarded as passive recipients of information in the text. Meaning resides in the text and the reader has to reproduce it.

The ESL and EFL textbooks influenced by this perspective include exercises that focus on literal comprehension and give little or no importance to the reader's knowledge or experience with the subject matter, and the only interaction is with the basic building blocks of sounds and words. Most activities are based on recognition and recall of lexical and grammatical forms with an emphasis on the perceptual and decoding dimension.

This model of reading has usually been under attack as being insufficient and defective for the main reason that it relies on the formal features of the language, mainly words and structure. Although it is possible to accept this rejection for the fact that there is over-reliance on structure in this view, it must be confessed that knowledge of linguistic features is also necessary for comprehension to take place. To counteract over-reliance on form in the traditional view of reading, the cognitive view was introduced.

The Cognitive View (top-down processing)

In the 1960s, a paradigm shift occurred in the cognitive sciences. Behaviourism became somewhat discredited as the new cognitive theory represented the mind's innate capacity for learning, which gave new explanatory power to how humans acquired their first language; this also had a tremendous impact on the field of ESL/EFL as psycholinguists explained "how such internal representations of the foreign language develop within the learner's mind" (Omaggio, 1993: 57).

Ausubel (cited in Omaggio, 1993: 58), made an important distinction between *meaningful learning* and *rote learning*. An example of rote learning is simply memorizing lists of isolated words or rules in a new language, where the information becomes temporary and subject to loss. Meaningful learning, on the other hand, occurs when new information is presented in a relevant context and is related to what the learner already knows, so that it can be easily integrated into one's existing cognitive structure. A learning that is not

meaningful will not become permanent. This emphasis on meaning eventually informed the top-down approach to L2 learning, and in the 1960s and 1970s there was an explosion of teaching methods and activities that strongly considered the experience and knowledge of the learner.

These new cognitive and top-down processing approaches revolutionized the conception of the way students learn to read (Smith, 1994). In this view, reading is not just extracting meaning from a text but a process of connecting information in the text with the knowledge the reader brings to the act of reading. In this sense, reading is a dialogue between the reader and the text which involves an active cognitive process in which the reader's background knowledge plays a key role in the creation of meaning (Tierney and Pearson, 1994). Reading is not a passive mechanical activity but purposeful and rational, dependent on the prior knowledge and expectations of the reader. It is not merely a matter of decoding print to sound but also a matter of making sense of written language (Smith, 1994: 2). In short, reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game, a process in which readers sample the text, make hypotheses, confirm or reject them, make new hypotheses, and so forth.

Schema Theory

Another theory closely related to top-down processing called *schema theory* also had a major impact on reading instruction. It describes in detail how the background knowledge of the learner interacts with the reading task and illustrates how a student's knowledge and previous experience with the world is crucial to deciphering a text. The ability to use this schemata, or background knowledge, plays a fundamental role in one's trial to comprehend a text.

Schema theory is based on the notion that past experiences leads to the creation of mental frameworks that help a reader make sense of new experiences. Smith (1994: 14) calls *schemes* the "extensive representations of more general patterns or regularities that occur in our experience". For instance, one's generic scheme of an airplane will allow him to make sense of airplane he has not previously filed with. This means that past experiences will be related to new experiences, which may include the knowledge of "objects, situations, and events as well as knowledge of procedures for retrieving, organizing and interpreting information" (Kucer, 1987: 31). Anderson (1994: 469) presents research showing that recall of information in a text is affected by the reader's schemata and explains that "a reader comprehends a message when he is able to bring to mind a schema that gives account of the objects and events described in the message". Comprehension is the process of "activating or constructing a schema that provides a coherent explanation of objects and events mentioned in a discourse" (Anderson, 1994: 473). For Anderson and Pearson (1988: 38), comprehension is the interaction between old and new information. They emphasize: "To say that one has comprehended a text is to say that she has found a mental 'home' for the information in the text, or else that she has modified an existing mental home

in order to accommodate that new information". Therefore, a learner's schemata will restructure it to accommodate new information as that information is added to the system (Omaggio, 1993).

Content and formal schemata

Schema theorists differentiate *formal schemata* (knowledge about the structure of a text) from *content schemata* (knowledge about the subject matter of a text), and a reader's prior knowledge of both schemata enables him to predict events and meaning as well as to infer meaning from a wider context.

METHODOLOGY

Needs Analysis is the major method that is going to be instituted so as to identify the needs of the university students who sort to scout for information to meet their academic demands in their various areas of specialisation. Needs are the discrepancy between what is there as the present situation and what should be there as the ideal situation. This gap is what is supposed to be addressed by the suggested reading strategies to be put to use by the university students. The identification of needs of the university student is going to be achieved part by observation in the standard of work of the assignment submitted for marking by the students if they show evidence of wide research through in text referencing and end of text referencing. The lecturer is supposed to enter into informal discussions with the student in line with how best students are supposed to institute intensive and extensive reading strategies. Information in terms of assessment of the achievement of the communication skills reading course to university students embedded in the course English for Academic Purposes to be done in terms of assessing the percentage pass rate of the first year first semester student in the specified areas. Findings are going to be presented in narratives since the research is purely qualitative in nature.

Getting a message from a text:

University students are always supposed to endeavour to get the meaning of the text. In the case of a text, the way it is interpreted can be likened to the communication process, where the writer assumes the role of an encoder who aims at encoding a message. This encoder has a message in his mind it may be an idea, a fact, a feeling, or an argument Nuttall (1988). Which he wants someone else to share? To make this possible the decoder must put this in words that are the message has to be encoded. Once it is encoded in either spoken or written form, it is available outside his mind as a text. The text is accessible to the mind of another person who hears or reads it, who decodes the message it contains. Once it is decoded, it enters the mind of the decoder and communication is achieved. From the given explanation, it can be concluded that reading means getting out of the text as nearly as possible the message that the writer put into it.

The reader's role is however, not a passive one. The reader should have common or shared assumptions if communication between them is to take place. The minimum requirement is that they should share the same language. They should have also roughly the same command of that language in the case of the university students they should be in a position to share the same linguistic demands of the area of specialisation. Thus, the language should be specific to the area of specialisation. For example texts meant for law students should definitely be coded in a different code with that meant for say accountant students, engineering or medical students to mention but a few. Thus, the reader and the writer should share certain assumptions about the world and the way it works. Problems in understanding of the text arise when there is a mismatch between the presuppositions of the writer and those of the reader. Naturally, there is always a mismatch of some kind; no two people have identical experience of life, so the writer is always likely to leave unsaid something that he takes for granted, but that the reader does not. Thus, it can be concluded that to widen an area of understanding it can be possible by having the same background. It is also clear that the greater the size of the shared area, the easier communication will be. If the writer and the reader are closely similar in background, training, attitude and so on, the reader is likely to interpret the text with no conscious effort. There are still dangers of misunderstanding, however: a careless reader may read into the text meaning that are not there, simply because his senses of having much in common with the writer is so strong. (Nuttall 1988) Such a reader is assuming that the extent of the shared area – the common ground – is greater than it is. When the writer makes a similar false assumption about the extent to which the reader is likely to share his knowledge, beliefs, the reader may be conscious of having to struggle to understand and sometimes he may fail.

However, the reason for wanting to read is that we want to understand other people's ideas: if we were all identical, there would be no point in most communication. Fortunately, for most purposes, the understanding need not be total: but the fact that we can get inside the writer's mind is no excuse for not doing our best to understand what he wants to say. If we are in conversation with someone, we can stop him and ask for explanations and examples, when we need them. In the same way, when one encounters difficulty in a text they are reading they are supposed to interrogate the text for answers. Reading can be referred to as "active interrogation of a text."

Active involvement of the reader involves means the reader is not merely getting meaning from the text that is lying on the surface of the text, but is actively involved and has to work to get the meaning of the text. The reader is supposed to approach the meaning of the text more actively. thus the reader might encounter little difficulty in interpreting the meaning for the possible assumption is that, the reader shares much more with the writer and would have little problems with language. For someone who does not share much with the writer, texts most possibly are very difficult in terms of both the content and the language used by the writer. The concept of the Text as a vehicle of information fails

to make sense in this vain for both the language and the content of the text is new to the reader. The traditional inscription of the text as a linguistic object gets to take shape for what would be experienced by the reader is a mere collection of linguistic terms and phrases which would lack both meaning and cognisance to the reader. Thus, for the later reader, to get the meaning of the text is an uphill task and the reader would not be sure of the way out. Thus, the reader would bring to the text so little that the writer has taken for granted and the way forward would be blocked by seemingly unfamiliar vocabulary, ignorance of facts or intellectual limitations. Implications for the university student are that one is supposed to familiarise oneself best with both basic knowledge of their area of specialisation and the basic vocabulary of their field.

However, it is prudent for one to realise that they are lacking in a given text in both vocabulary and linguistic aspects so as to establish the way to approach amends in the area of specialisation. This is a benchmark to defining a competent reader. Thus, the ability to recognise that in a specific text about difficulties is the first step in what can be termed as competency in reading. Thus, 'co-operative principle' as it applies to reading according to Nuttall (1988:10) involves:

- (a) The reader assuming that he and the writer are using the same code/language.
- (b) That the writer has a message.
- (c) That the writer wants the reader to understand the message.

Thus with in mind, reading can be approached systematically especially by university students. For texts in areas of specialisation would largely have the basis of level of difficult being dealt with in accordance with the expectation of that department. Thus, notion of communities of discourse comes to the fore. This approach takes cognisance of the fact that just like reading reality is compartmentalised and is handled according a specific areas of specialisation. Rules of the areas of specialisation help people in different areas of specialisation in handling reality. Just like reading trading in familiar ground would easy level of difficult. This would lead us to the notion that reading is interactional.

The writer makes assumptions that he is in essence communicating when writing. The writer among his assumptions is that the reader is willing to make some effort to get the meaning of the text. If either of the two the writer and the reader lets the other down, communication fails. If the writer is careless his message may be impossible to recover, if the writer makes demands that the reader cannot fulfil, the message will not be received. If the reader on his side is idle or careless, an incomplete interpretation or a distorted one would be the result. On both sides lack of shared assumptions is likely to be the worst problem, because it is not always recognised (Nuttall 1988). The reader is mostly likely to make sense of the text according to his own preoccupations, and it would be a long time before he realised that they differ from that of the writer.

Thus, from the fore gone discussion it can thus, be concluded that, reading is not just an active process but an interactive one. It is common to associate interaction with speaking for what one says as a speaker would invariable influence the contributions of the respondent. The interaction in reading is a bit problematic for the writer normally would not be there when the reader wishes to interrogates the text. Thus, this makes the task of both the reader and the writer a bit awkward. The fact that the writer does not get immediate feedback means he would not know which parts of the text would cause misunderstanding. He has to guess where the problem lies and possible shape his text accordingly, for text books and academic writing the task is less tedious for the writer would in essence aim the target reader or rather to address the assumed needs of the targeted reader. However, with general texts, the reader gets to guess areas of difficult and assumes possible remedies but all the same would not possibly resolve all the problems. For he does not know exactly who his readers would be, thus, he would never succeed completely.

In terms of the text making sense, is an easy issue in as far as writers are concerned. That is the writer has an advantage which the speaker has not: he has time to structure his text effectively, to help the reader by making it as straight forward as possible. The reader also has time at his disposal: he can stop and think, go back to check an earlier reference, reread the most difficult passages. Unless the text takes for granted for granted a body of knowledge that he simply does not have, a careful reader should be able to reconstruct the assumptions on which the writing is based. He had to read with enough skill and cares to make the right inferences about what the writer means, he has to remain objective enough skill and care to make the right inferences about what the writer means, and he has to remain objective enough to recognise differences in viewpoints between himself and the writer. To do this, he must assess all the evidence – choice of words, selection of facts, and organisation of material and so on- so that he gets the message intended rather than the message he might have preferred to receive.

This concept might suggest that the text is a do it yourself construct kit. The reader as an active participant should put everything into the interpretation of the text. The message in the writer's mind is the perfect piece of furniture planned by the designer. The process of breaking this down into its component parts and packing them all into with instructions for assembly is a little like the process of putting thoughts into words and organising them into a coherent text. A reader tackling a text resembles the amateur furniture maker unpacking his do-it yourself kit and trying to work out how the pieces fit together. This is not as it might be on the ground but rather a simplified version of the roles which might be taken up by both the student as readers and the text at hand taking the position of the writer. The reader does have to make sense of the text in the same manner the amateur makes sense of possibly to assemble his furniture. The crux of the issue is that in both cases the basic knowledge of the undertakings of the procedure at hand. The success of the endeavour

is basically determined by the fact that the instructions with which the undertakings are to be performed are adhered to expeditiously.

The issue of prediction or guessing would help in the making of the final product. For example, a man who knows a bit about carpentry will make his table quickly with resources provided as compared to one who is blank of what the making of the table involves. Thus, the reader's sense and experience helps him to predict what the writer is likely to say next: that they must be going to say this rather than that. A reader who can think along with the writer in this way will find the text relatively easy: clearly, he shares many of the writer's presuppositions.

The point is that, as one reads, one is supposed to make a hypothesis about what the writer intends to say; these are immediately modified by what he actually does say, and are replaced by new hypotheses what will follow. In the journey of reading a text, one would get a feel of the text and assume that they are getting the gist of the text until when one encounters difficulty in the text. The variance in the linguistic pattern of the words of the text, would entail a barrier in the reading process thus, would require extra effort in the form of a re-take or reread and readjustment of the line of thought. Such occurrences lend support to the notion of reading as a constant making and remaking of hypothesis – a "psycholinguistic guessing game"

A text is the core of the reading process, the means by which the message is transmitted from writer to reader. Besides presumption, some other features which make a text difficult or easy to follow. The lack of relationship between the sentences can in a way, present problems in terms of making the text difficult. Lack of coherence and cohesion lead to a collection of sentence not in any way a text. Sentences which lack coherence are difficult to image the context in which the words core - exist. Where there is coherence, words have relationships and do exist in the same context. Where there is a collection of words which readers cannot work out their value, such is not a text.

A text should not only have words or sentences which relate to the same situation but, rather, sentences should be set out in a way that shows that the sentences are telling a story. A writer should make use of cohesion to achieve coherence. Connections are made by linguistic means. The following can be examples of linguistic aspects that can be used to tie the loose ends:

- (a) Instead of repeating nouns, pronouns are used.
- (b) We use the instead of "a" for any subsequent mention of something already referred to.
- (c) Words that would be redundant are omitted.
- (d) Connectives are inserted in a text to show how connected parts are, and also as an indication of value to be assigned to them.
- (e) Lexical choice may also contribute to coherence of the text. (Nuttall 1988)

Coherence depends on the value of the utterances that compose the discourse: not on the use of cohesive devices, although these are customarily used to make things easier for the reader. In theory, therefore, it is possible to have a coherent discourse that is expressed

by a text without cohesion, such examples can be found in conversations:

"I'd love a cup of tea" "it's half past two already."

On the surface, these sentences seem totally disjointed, there are certainly no observable linguistic; there are certainly no observable linguistic connections between them. Yet, such exchanges frequently take place and are understood in the context of the situation in which they are uttered. In most instances, cohesion is read into such situations, because there is a possibility of sharing the prepositions about the issue in discussion.

Here are some of the examples where coherence can be lacking but would be supplied by the reader:

- (a) It is possible to walk across the seabed of 400 million years ago. In the flat desert land of cattle station in North Western Australia, close to a place called Gogo by the aborigines, rises a line of strange steep-sided rocky bluff, 300 metres high.
- (b) When the male meets the female in the mating season, intertwine. The process looks rather laborious but at least it is not dangerous. Millipedes are entirely vegetarians.
- (c) An external is a UN expandable prison. The insect's solution is moulting.

(Extracts from D. Attenborough, Life on Earth Collins/BBC, 1979)

The connections that are not explicitly made in the texts are supplied by the reader. For example, one can discern that a seabed is generally flattish, thus, can identify "the flat desert land" and the sea bed example (a) (b) is more complex: you will assume that the male and the female must be millipedes, what has being vegetarian to do with it? To see the connection, you need to know that mating in some species is followed by one mate eating the other: so it can be a dangerous process non-vegetarian species. (c) One needs to grasp that a solution implies a problem, and look at the first sentences to locate one: if something is described as "un expandable", this implies that expansion would be desirable, while "prison" speaks for itself.

To make these connections, one had to make use of presuppositions as has been mentioned before. An unskilled reader may be unable to cope with such texts. Thus, the text from this perspective cease to be regarded as a linguistic object but as a vehicle for information Dudley Evans and St John's (1998). However, to an incompetent reader, such text might appear incoherent. Apparent incoherent out, therefore, to be tested for possible mistaken interpretation of the value of some of the utterances. Even if the signification has been correctly understood, the message of the text will be incomplete or obscure if the reader does not give each utterance its intended value.

The coherence of the text depends on many things, including the sequence in which sentences are arranged. In addition to cohesive devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and lexical relationships, most cases, writers use explicit discourse markers such as *thus*, *and*, *however*, although which point out the intended value of the utterance in which they occur. For example, if one reads the word *"thus"* one expects to find a result; if *however*, occurs we look for a contrast.

Markers like this are often not needed if the text is straightforward enough for the value of its utterance to be fairly obvious; the reader can be trusted to identify the value without their help. Where the text is complicated or deals with unfamiliar field, markers are likely to be frequent. Whether the writer uses them frequently will depend he has in mind.

Even if the reader has explicit discourse markers to guide he also has to make assumption of the intention of the writer and also has to assign the speech value of the text if at all the reader has to land himself with the right meaning. Not all relationships can be unambiguously signalled by markers of discourse: the reader will always have to draw on his interpretive skills to reconstruct the reader's prepositions inferences. A reader cannot assign oneself to absorbing meaning effortlessly *thus*, reading to find something or to get to the meaning of the text will always require the reader to put effort as to sort the meaning hidden inside the text.

(Widdowson 1978), is of the opinion that, it is discourse that has coherence while the text has cohesion: coherence can be seen as a quality of the underlying thoughts and the way they are organized into a message. The way the message is expressed will reflect the coherence by means of the linguistic devices of cohesion.

The kind of reading that university students should concern themselves with involves *thus*, a concern with meaning, and with the reader's responsibility for getting meaning out of the text. The skills of interpretation, which are the basics for every reader, are in essence, the skills that should come to hand for sensitive appreciation of every text. Thus, a prerequisite for university students who are required not only to read texts, but to also analyse and interpret the texts in their various areas of specialisation.

For university students to scan texts for their relevance to meet their information needs is one of the important attribute of a good reader. Scanning involves glancing rapidly through a text either to search for a specific piece of information or to get an initial impression of whether the text is suitable for a given purpose or not. Skimming on the other hand, involves determining the gist of the text or involves glancing rapidly through a text to determine its gist, for example, in order to decide whether a research paper is relevant to ones work- not to determine its field which can fairly be done by scanning.

In both cases, the reader is forcing his eyes over the print at a rate which permits him to take in only, perhaps the beginnings and ends of the paragraphs (where information is often summarized), chapter headings, subtitles, and so on.

The reading components of university students however, require a balance between skills and language development. Some of the key skills to be transferred into the new language are:

- selecting what is relevant for the current purpose;
- using all the features of the text such as headings, layout, typeface;
- skimming for content and meaning;
- scanning for specifics;
- identifying organisational patterns;
- understanding relationships within a sentence and between sentences;
- using cohesive and discourse markers;
- Predicting, inferring, and guessing;
- Identifying main ideas and examples;
- processing and evaluating the information during reading;
- transferring the information while or after reading.

Source Dudley Evans and st Jonh's (1998:99).

Dudley Evans and st Jonh's (1998) believe that there have been a misconception of late were scanning and skimming were regarded as the central tenancy for reading. Yet, these two are useful during the first stages, for determining either to read a document or which part to read carefully. This observation seems to concur with what Nuttall (1988:34) contends. Once one identifies a text as relevant to the information gap, one need to read the text carefully, extract meaning and consider the authors attitude. Author's attitude is very important; it is a misconception that scientific discourse is attitude free.

In order to develop text- attack skills one needs some idea of the kind of the meaning a text embodies which a reader ought to understand. There are four kinds of meaning s or levels among many which in this paper we are going to discuss. There is what is termed conceptual meaning, this is the meaning a word can have on its own. Concepts or notions can be found at any level, from the whole text down to the single word or morpheme. Every lexical item embodies a concept, sometimes simple (*eat*) sometimes (complex) probability. Whole books can be written on complex concepts like probability or truth. Other concepts might be expressed by the smallest meaning units of all such as the concept of plurality, expressed in English by the suffix */s/* among other ways. Making a text involves putting concepts together to form propositions, which carry the next kind of meaning. This then entails the need for university students to acquaint themselves with kind of technical words and concepts for them to get to reach at the collective meaning of a text that is the propositions of the text.

Propositional meaning is the second level. This is the meaning a sentence can have on its own. This is the same as signification or plain sense. It is the meaning a sentence has even if it is not used in a context, but just standing on its own. One cannot affirm it, deny it, question or doubt it. As it is put into a proposition, these operations become possible. For

example, "University education is not difficult" it is possible to deny the truth of this proposition, to doubt it, or to agree to it. In short, it has a truth-value. The signification of a sentence that is its propositional meaning is the only kind of meaning it can have when it is cited. However, the few exceptions to this are where the form of the sentence itself gives it a kind of value. For example, the above sentence cited as example can be said to be a generalisation, while this sentence is clearly a definition, even though it is not in context. The following is another example citing the importance of context:

A thermometer is an instrument for measuring thermometer.

Here, the form of the sentence is no guide to its functional value, which comes from the way it is used in a context. Contextual meaning is the meaning can only have in a context. This can be termed functional value as well. As soon as a sentence is used in a given situation or context, it takes on a value derived from the writers reason for using it, and from the relationship between one sentence/utterance and others in the text. For university reading it is not enough to know the meaning of isolated words or sentences but rather to acquaint oneself with situation in which the sentence or word is immersed through lend oneself in getting the appropriate meaning of the text. For sentence assume different meanings with different context for example, he hushed his voice hearing them coming, he hushed through the whole process or there is no need to hush. In the three instances given here, the word hush has changed meaning with the change in context. In a text, words making up a context of a word or a sentence are called justification. These words have the value of an explanation or justification; writers use them to substantiate the claims they would have made. For example, in our previous example, "university education is not difficult". You should not decline my son entry because he had failed his A Levels. In any text a university student should take note of them (justifications) for, they are organised into patterns which display the writers thoughts. These patterns combine into larger patterns until the whole is reached: the writers overall message.

Pragmatic meaning is the meaning a sentence has only as part of the interaction between writer and reader. This meaning is not easily distinguished from contextual meaning, in some examples it can clearly established that a distinction exists. This is the meaning that reflects the writers feeling, attitudes and his intention that the reader/student should understand these. It therefore, includes the intended effect of the utterance upon the reader. Pragmatic meaning involves interaction and can be most clearly seen in conversation. Thus, in any conversations, the words or utterances carries what is known as the 'pragmatic force' this, is not explicit meaning of the text but an implied meaning. For example, if a lecturer comes in the lecture room and says today is 30 June and the day is supposed to be the deadline for submitting the

assignments, students will infer meaning or rather supply the missing information and respond by submitting the assignments. Thus, the meaning derived here is from the interaction. The same can be said of the readers there are supposed to negotiate the meaning of the text from the interaction they would have made with the text.

Thus, the university student has to be conscious of the four meanings that have been discussed above. It is believed that every sentence in a text has these four meanings. It is prudent thus, for university students if they are to understand the different kinds of text they encounter in their academic endeavour they are to understand each of the sentences that make up such texts in the four ways that have been discussed. In most instances however, student lack thoroughness in their understanding of the texts. In such cases, instances of misreading creeps in and at times misconceptions are brewed.

However, in some instances it is possible to understand the intention of the writer when students get bits of the text, in such instances students can make imaginative leaps from one bit to another and if they discover inconsistencies, they stop and interrogate the text closely. In making the imaginative leaps, the four kinds of meaning are a great help: each supports the others. One can understand a sentence because one would have understood the one before it and the one after it and can therefore predict more or less what the middle one means, even if it is difficult. Sometimes students can interpret the value of a sentence without being able to explain its propositional meaning. Thus, although logically students ought to understand the plain sense of the text, in practice students confronted with a difficult text will continually shift from one focus to the other, a shift from concentrating on the plain sense, and on their other kinds of meaning, would eventually lead the student in the understanding of the plain sense.

It cannot be overemphasised that the plain sense of sentence cannot be established in isolation of the other sentences. Thus, the fact that has been alluded to earlier on that the exact meaning of a word cannot be established outside the context it is used in is supposed to be always considered in the quest to achieve effective reading skills. This paper largely has looked at the concept of reading at university level of paramount importance to note is the fact that issues raised should be treated as important if one is to be a good or competent reader in their area of specialisation. Reading is the corner stone for university achievement or rather for the pursuance of academic excellence one has to be competent in reading in general but be competent reader in the area of their specialisation.

CONCLUSION

For communication lecturers it is prudent to teach reading of a specific area to university students. It is through exposing the university student to the reading materials of their specific areas that they would be in a position to relate reading in general to reading for

competence in the area of study. University students are supposed to be encouraged to be competent in the comprehension of English of their area of specialisation rather than General English. Thus, students would then be in a position to relate the concept taught in Communication Skills not as divorced from the courses they undertake in their areas of specialisation

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Cite this Article: Jongore M, Chipso C, Zivanai J and Muvindi I (2013). Teaching "Reading" for Specific Purposes in Academic Areas of Specialisation to University Students: A Case of University Teaching of Foreign Language Reading. *Greener Journal of Educational Research*, 3(10): 444-453, <http://doi.org/10.15580/GJER.2013.10.110913834>.