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## The Effect of Strategy-Based Methods vs. Translation-Based Method on General English and ESP Reading Comprehension of Iranian University Students

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### Abstract

This study investigated the effect of strategy-based methods vs. translation-based methods on General English and ESP reading comprehension of Iranian university students. 120 homogenous General English and ESP students were selected based on a Quick Placement Test. They were assigned into four groups. One experimental and one comparison group for General English and ESP students. A pretest of General English and ESP reading comprehension was administered to assess their General English and ESP reading comprehension ability. In both experimental groups, the strategy-based method, and in comparison groups, the translation-based method was used for teaching General English and ESP reading comprehension. After the post-test, the result of independent t-tests indicated that the comparison group outperformed the experimental group in the ESP course. However no statistically significant difference was observed between the two groups in General reading comprehension, it can be concluded that in ESP reading comprehension, the based-translation strategy is more effective than the strategy-based method however in General English reading comprehension, students can understand the text via both strategies. So, the strategy-based method was preferred in General English reading comprehension. These findings encourage English teachers to choose a proper strategy for teaching different materials in different contexts.

**Keywords:** strategy-based method, translation-based method, English for a specific purpose, English as a foreign language, general English

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## 1. Introduction

Because of the changes worldwide, learning and teaching foreign languages has developed in many aspects. The mastery of the four fundamental skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing is needed to learn the English language. Reading an academic text involves the process of working with the text. It is not just finding information in the text. When reading an academic text, the reader recreates the meaning of the text, together with the author. Readers communicate the meaning with the author by applying their prior knowledge of it. The reader uses a series of divisions of analysis specific to each academic discipline. Thus, by working with a text, specific discipline and specific strategies recreate the meaning of a text. The expert reader has incorporated these categories and uses them almost together (Hermida, 2009).

Kazemi et al. (2013) stated that unfortunately, reading is not practiced often properly in Iranian classrooms. In the language learning setting of Iran where English is treated as a foreign language, reading skill gets a very low amount of importance. Because the students' vocabulary is usually limited. In general reading comprehension translation and using the mother tongue are used a lot. The method of teaching English syllabi for ESP courses that are taught at universities is traditional. Learning to read in English is one of the main purposes for many EFL students according to the results of some empirical studies (e.g., Kaivanpanah & Khazaei Feizabad, 2017; Malmir & Bagheri, 2019). So, students need to learn proper reading strategies to be able to comprehend text information. Thus, reading instruction should help students become strategic readers. Although strategic reading instruction and its effect on students' comprehension and metacognitive ability have received a lot of attention recently, there is not a clear picture of strategic reading instruction in EFL situations.

Ahmed (2016) expressed that reading comprehension could be a fundamental skill to handle the needs of the twenty-first century, and it is the most crucial ability of the four skills within the learning process of English as a foreign language. Reading is recognizing letters, symbols, words, and sentences and therefore the comprehension of their meaning visually.

Ntereke and Ramoroka (2017) stated that the ability to read and interpret textbooks and other assigned texts is a crucial component of success at the university level. Reading skills as a basis for learning is an important element for gaining knowledge in academic learning in all subject areas. However, research on both L1 (first language speakers) and L2 (second language speakers) reading revealed that proficient reading is a complex process that includes an integration of different abilities and strategies simultaneously compensating for each other in processing a text. For example, a proficient reader should have linguistic, cognitive, and metacognitive knowledge, and be considered central in reading a variety of texts of the curriculum critically; creating active meaning, monitoring understanding, analyzing, and synthesizing the text. Studies indicated that proficient L2 readers can utilize a wider range and combination of these abilities and strategies to help them understand and interpret a text. So reading proficiently is a complex process that involves a

combination of different strategies and abilities. It includes linguistic, cognitive, and metacognitive knowledge at the same time in processing a text to compensate for each other.

English for general purposes is a foundation course in the university curriculum which is the prerequisite course for English for specific purposes (ESP). Although most university students studied the English language for many years, they are unable to read and understand their specialist texts very well, and there are some shortcomings in the General English course. Most students who study grammar as a requirement to pass the university entrance exam before entering university cannot apply their structural knowledge practically and communicatively. English is a must for every student at the university level. All students usually study 3-credit General English before they study English for a specific purpose at university. English for a Specific Purpose is crucial because, it prepares the students for the later stages of their language education (Zohrabi, 2015).

ESP in Iran is a novel area, and still, teachers and students use traditional methods for teaching and learning ESP courses (Derakhshan & Malmir, 2017; Nezakatgoo & Behzadpoor, 2017). ESP students in Iran encounter many challenges in comprehending specific texts that prevent them from fulfilling academic careers; a lack of knowledge in utilizing proper strategies may produce failure in comprehending scientific concepts. Applying proper strategies can help readers to have a better understanding of the text. Chirobocea (2018) stated that in scientific and ESP contexts in which communication is through text, need analysis is very important. Students require a clear and accurate understanding of the scientific text, to connect with other researchers via written correspondence or verbal communication. The translation may not satisfy all learners, but it is very effective in the ESP context where exact equivalence is needed in authentic texts. The learners' level of general English, scientific knowledge, and learning motivation are some factors that need to be considered. For elementary levels, translation can be used to strengthen grammar, for intermediate and advanced levels, translation may be used to correct inaccuracies and show interference and negative transfer. The more the students understand their field of study, the easier it is for them to know and learn specific phrases, and formulations of English phraseology about the scientific text.

The rationale for investigating strategy-based method and translation-based methods was the problems General English and ESP teachers and students encounter. They learn to accompany using different reading strategies and translation in a different context so recognizing which one is more effective in general and ESP context is very essential (Sarani & Farokhipour, 2017).

The independent variables were strategy-based and Translation-based methods of teaching. The dependent variables were the reading comprehension achievement of Iranian Undergraduate EFL and ESP Learners. Considering the impact of strategy-based method and Translation-based methods of teaching will take a forward step in General English and ESP reading comprehension pedagogy. To this aim, the following research question has been proposed:

Q: Is there any statistically significant difference between the effect of the strategy-based method and translation-based method of teaching on General English and ESP reading comprehension ability?

H0: There is not any statistically significant difference between the effect of strategy-based method and translation-based methods of teaching on General English and ESP reading comprehension ability.

## 2. Literature Review

Reading is the most crucial skill and has an essential role among the four language skills. It can improve general language proficiency (Krashen & Brown, 2007). Students with reading difficulties in their first language also have problems with reading materials in the second language, including accuracy, comprehension, and speed associated with the nature of the language, pragmatic linguistic, and socio-cultural aspects (Alsamadani, 2008). Reading is not just decoding words from print: the essential point is understanding. In other words, reading does not mean when there is no comprehension (Mohammadi et al., 2016). A good reader needs to learn how to combine his/her background knowledge with what she/he is reading, understanding, and interpreting, establish a relationship between the pieces of the text, and evaluate the text by looking at it with a critical eye (Akyel & ErÇetin, 2009).

Reading is one of the most vital skills that can be acquired. Teachers should apply phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, guided oral reading practice with feedback, vocabulary instruction, and comprehension strategy instruction in teaching to read or helping to develop their reading skills. Reading comprehension needs to know and understand what they are reading. Reading comprehension is not only a single step or an easily acquired skill. It is a very intricate process that teachers find hard to teach. Comprehension is a process that includes thinking, teaching, knowledge, and, past experiences. Interaction among word identification, decoding, knowing, understanding prior knowledge, comprehension strategies, and engagement is critical in reading comprehension which helps readers read and gain actual meanings of the words. Without these skills, comprehension cannot happen properly. A reader requires to understand and know the reading material. Decoding skills without word identification in reading comprehension do not lead to understanding the text. Reading comprehension is a complicated process that involves thinking, teaching, word identification, past experiences, prior knowledge, comprehension strategies, and engagement (Prado & Plourde, 2011). Teaching reading strategies to students is vital in all grades or levels (Ness, 2011, Jitendra & Gajria, 2011). Harvey (2012) introduced PLAN (predict, locate, add. note) which contains some information about the selection of reading materials for students to use.

Ellis and Shintani (2013) asserted that integrating strategy training and awareness-raising is often the favored approach to learner training. The readers must use background knowledge to

comprehend the text, and they also apply knowledge about the text itself, so reading is a meaningful activity. Readers must look for and find structure in whatever they read (Budiharso, 2014). Fatemipour and Hashemi (2016) conducted a study to find the effect of cooperative strategies versus visualization on Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) students' reading comprehension. The results showed that cooperative learning strategies (e.g., Jigsaw, Student Team Learning) have a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' comprehension ability. Students in the visualization group enhanced little in terms of reading comprehension ability. The participants in the cooperative learning strategies group performed significantly better than students who received the visualization strategy. Therefore, they should quit traditional teaching techniques (e.g., reading aloud and translation to L1) that have proved to be ineffective, and instead, they should use a variety of cooperative learning strategies in language classes. Students should not ignore translation as an instrument to enhance their reading comprehension ability. They should accommodate their learning orientation with a combination of reading comprehension strategies that provide them more with opportunities to comprehend the text better. When students process a text by translation, they fail to get the most out of the text.

Also, in the study conducted by Intasuk (2022) the focus was on the effects of using 30-hour strategy-based instruction on EFL reading comprehension. The results clearly indicate that explicit strategy-based instruction enhances the students' reading ability and students' awareness of reading strategy techniques. The students' posttest reading scores were significantly higher than the pretest scores at the statistical level of .05. The researcher intended to help teachers and students in developing reading comprehension ability.

The translation is the fifth language skill besides the other skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing improve communication and understanding between strangers (Ross, 2000). Shiyab and Abdullateef (2001) confirmed that translation is a crucial technique in learning or teaching a foreign language and can develop language skills at an advanced level by using translation teachers can overcome interference, they stated that translation is like medicine, which, should be used in the right dose and way, to have a proper effect, otherwise, it can be harmful.

Carreras (2006) summarized some objections and arguments against translation into L2 as a language teaching method. The translation is considered artificial, and it restricts language practice to just two skills reading and writing, and has no place in a communicative methodology. Translation as counterproductive and a purposeless exercise with no application in the real world causes interferences into the second or foreign language. It forces learners to observe the foreign language through their mother tongue. The translation is a de-motivating and frustrating and generally satisfactory field for the average learner because it works with literary-oriented learners who enjoy investigating the difficulties of grammar and lexis. For a long time, translation was an essential part of English language teaching, but since the appearance of communicative methodologies, it has been abandoned due to some objections (Cook, 2007).

Long ago Nunan & Nunan, (1988) stated that learners are the subject of any instruction, not the object. Their needs will determine the specification of syllabus content including language skills, structures, functions, notions, topics, themes, situations, and interlocutors. Of course, there are likely to be some variations from learner group to learner group. Need analysis is a set of procedures usually conducted before or at the very beginning of a course to specify the parameters of the course of the study. Widdowson (1990) defined needs analysis as a procedure to collect information about learners' needs. There are two definitions for 'needs' in 'needs analysis', goal-oriented that described as objectives at the end of the course, and process-oriented which relates to transitional behavior of needs that learners need to do to acquire the language.

Ziyaeemehr (2012) investigated how to improve the reading comprehension of ESP learners through reading comprehension strategies CSR (collaborative strategic reading). The participants were forty students majoring in electronics from Iran, who were divided into two experimental and control groups randomly. The participants in the experimental group were taught collaborative strategic reading via reading strategies previewing, getting the gist, clicking and clunking, and wrapping up collaboratively; the control group received teaching through translation, and the results revealed the practical function of collaborative strategic reading on the reading comprehension of EFL learners. The results revealed a significant difference between the control group that used the grammar-translation method and the experimental group that received a collaborative strategic reading in reading a text. Therefore, students need to be taught reading strategies to enhance their reading comprehension.

Malekan & Hajimohammadi (2017) investigated the relationship between Iranian ESP Learners' translation capability and ESP reading comprehension ability. To conduct the research 120 female adult sophomores majoring at Iran University of Medical Sciences were chosen through a homogeneity test. The participants' translation and reading comprehension abilities were measured. The result of data analyses revealed that there was a statistically significant relationship between Iranian ESP learners' translation ability and their ESP reading comprehension. Mažeikienė, (2018) stated that using translation in ESP teaching and learning is crucial though it has not been researched a lot because of the negative connotations with the grammar-translation method. Recently the interest in the usage of translation and L1 in foreign language teaching has been observable.

In sum, this study represented the claims of previous studies on using strategies-based methods and the translation-based method to confirm that both of them are valuable in different contexts. The important point here is to choose the proper method to increase the positive effects and remove the negative effects of each method.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

This research aimed at investigating the effect of the strategy-based vs. translation-based method on EFL and ESP reading comprehension in Iranian university students. Participants of this study were 120 university students (60 ESP learners and 60 EFL learners). The students are in the first and fourth semesters of the Islamic Azad University Astaneh-ye Ashrafiyeh branch. They were chosen as the participants of the research because in the first semester, students have general English courses and in the fourth semester they have ESP courses. An experimental research design was carried out for all the participants.

To assess the homogeneity of the participants, the Quick Placement Test of Oxford University Press and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (2001) was used. The result of the test was analyzed to make sure about the homogeneity of EFL students and also the homogeneity of ESP students. They were assigned into four groups. One experimental and one comparison group for EFL students that their score in these two groups was close together, and one experimental and one comparison group for ESP students that their score in these two groups was close together either. All the subjects participated in both the pretest and posttest. There were all native speakers of Persian, ranging from the ages of 17 to 25.

**Table 1**

*The Design of the Participants' Groups*

Group A	EFL	Experimental group
Group B	EFL	Comparison group
Group C	ESP	Experimental group
Group D	ESP	Comparison group

#### 3.2. Materials and Instruments

The pretest consisted of two EFL reading comprehension for EFL students and two ESP reading comprehension passages for ESP students, each with 10 true false items. The post-test was the same as the pre-test, including two ESP reading comprehension passages of accounting for ESP students and two EFL reading comprehension for EFL students each with 10 true false items. The ESP test was adopted from the first and second chapters of the book, "English for the students of accounting" by Talane (2012) and Aghvami (2019), and the general reading comprehension test was adopted from general English books for university students. The tests were adopted from the books pertaining to ESP and General English courses. Additionally, the validity of the test of the present study has been checked through content validity. The researcher has given copies of the tests to the two accountant professions' to review.

For the reliability, the Kr-21 reliability test was used to test the consistency of the data, where it was as high as 0.73 for ESP tests and 0.81 for EFL tests which were acceptable. The materials of

this study for teaching ESP were adopted from the ESP reading comprehension books about the course for the students of accounting, and for teaching EFL were adopted from general English books for university students. General English and ESP accounting course was taught in 2 ways strategy-based which the focus was on visualization and information synthesization, and making inferences, and translation-based which the focus was on translating sentences to Persian.

### 3.3. Procedure

This study investigated the effect of strategy-based vs. translation-based Strategies on EFL and ESP reading comprehension in Iranian university students. The design of the study was a pretest, treatment, and posttest for both EFL and ESP students. The design can be seen as follows:

**Table 2**

*The Design of the Research for EFL Students*

EFL students		Treatment	
Experimental group	pretest	Strategy-based	Post-test
Comparison group	pretest	Translation-based	Post-test

**Table 3**

*The Design of the Research for ESP Students*

ESP students		treatment	
Experimental group	pretest	Strategy-based	Post-test
Comparison group	pretest	Translation-based	Post-test

The independent variables were a strategy-based and translation-based method of teaching reading comprehension of EFL and ESP text. The dependent variables were the reading comprehension achievement of Iranian undergraduate EFL and ESP Learners. The participants were 60 homogenous EFL students and 60 ESP homogenous students. Quick Placement Test of Oxford University Press and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (2001) was administered. There were four groups. One experimental and one comparison group for EFL students that their score in these two groups was close together, and one experimental and one comparison group for ESP students that their score in these two groups was close together either.

A pretest of General English reading comprehension was administered in EFL groups and a pretest of ESP reading comprehension was administered in ESP groups to assess their General English and ESP reading comprehension ability. For the treatment, in the experimental groups, general English reading comprehension and ESP reading comprehension passages were taught by focusing on information synthesization, visualization, and making inferences (Zimmerman & Hutchins, 2003). To utilize the strategy-based method as the treatment the teacher, by developing questions about the key concepts, the topic, and the main ideas asked the students to summarize the material and helped them to gain and recognize the most important ideas of the text for information synthesization strategy. Also, the teacher used PowerPoint software slides, films, and

pictures, to clarify the text for visualization strategy. For making an inference strategy the teacher indicated some experiences and some clues to help the students figure out and gain the main ideas. students' background knowledge, helped them to recognize the relevant information. In the comparison groups, general reading comprehension and ESP reading comprehension passages were taught by focusing on the translation-based method. The teacher translated all the passages into Persian. Furthermore, a post-test was given to the groups to assess the effect of the treatment on General English and ESP reading comprehension.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

After the post-test to answer the research questions Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed, and the data were analyzed by utilizing an Independent sample t-test.

## 4. Results

This section of the research provides the results which show the descriptive and inferential statistics of the independent sample t-test of the scores in the pretest and post-test of EFL and ESP groups. The descriptive statistics of the pretest scores of EFL and ESP reading comprehension ability obtained at the beginning of the study are as follows: Table 3. represents the descriptive statistics of the pre-test of the EFL groups.

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive Statistics of the Pretest of EFL Students*

Pretest	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	EFL Experimental group	30	6.7667	1.73570	.31689
	EEFL Comparison group	30	6.0333	1.65015	.30127

According to table 4, the mean score for both groups was very close together. The mean score for the experimental group was 6.7667. Then, the mean score for the comparison group was 6.0333. Based on the two means, it can be considered that both of the groups were not significantly different. But, this was not enough to claim that the two groups were homogeneous. The inferential and independent-sample t-test was used to know the significant differences between both groups.

**Table 5**  
*Independent Sample T-Test and the Inferential Statistics of Pre-Test of the EFL Groups*

		Independent Samples Test								
		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	
pre	Equal variances assumed	.134	.716	1.677	58	.099	.73333	.43725	-.14192	1.60858
	Equal variances not assumed			1.677	57.852	.099	.73333	.43725	-.14197	1.60863

Table 5 represents the independent sample t-test and inferential statistics of the pretest of the EFL group to see whether the two groups are homogeneous. The results of the sig. of Lavene's test for equality of variances indicate that it exceeds the level of p. value of .05. The sig. is .716, which means that there was no significant difference between the two groups, therefore, table 5 shows the homogeneity of the two groups. After making sure that the two EFL groups were homogeneous the treatments were given to both groups. The experimental group was treated by using the strategy-based method and the comparison group was treated by using the translation-based method. Table 6. represents the descriptive statistics of the post-test of the EFL groups.

**Table 6***Descriptive Statistics of Post-test of the EFL Groups*

Group	treatment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
post EFL Experimental group	strategy based	30	18.9667	1.09807	.20048
EFL Comparison group	translation based	30	19.0333	1.12903	.20613

Based on table 6, it can be seen that the mean score for the group which is treated by using the strategy-based method is 18.9667, and the mean score for the group which is treated by using the translation-based method is 19.0333. Based on the score, it can be considered that the mean scores for both of the groups were different but they were not significantly different. The inferential and independent sample t-test was used to make sure to indicate that the two groups were significantly different. Table 7 represents the inferential statistics and independent sample t-test of the post-test of the EFL group.

**Table 7***Independent Sample T-Test and the Inferential Statistics of Post-Test of the EFL 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
post	Equal variances assumed	.103	.749	-.232	58	.817	-.06667	.28754	-.64225	.50892
	Equal variances not assumed			-.232	57.9	.817	-.06667	.28754	-.64226	.50893

Table 7 shows the analysis was done on the post-test score of the EFL students by using an independent sample t-test. The result shows a significant value is .749. This means that there is no significant difference between the two groups and HO cannot be rejected. For the ESP students also the descriptive and inferential statistics of the independent sample t-test of the scores in the pretest and post-test were correlated. The descriptive statistics of the pretest scores of ESP reading comprehension ability obtained at the beginning of the study were as follows:

**Table 8***Descriptive Statistics of the Pretest Scores for ESP Students*

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre ESP Experimental group	30	6.0000	2.06782	.37753
ESP Comparison group	30	6.5000	2.16158	.39465

According to the table8, the mean score for both groups was very close to each other. The mean score for the experimental group was 6.0000. Then, the mean score for the comparison group was 6.5000. Based on the two means, it can be considered that both groups are not significantly different. The inferential and independent-sample t-test was used to know the significant differences between both groups to claim that the two groups are homogeneous.

**Table 9***Independent Sample T-Test and the Inferential Statistics of Post-Test of the ESP Group*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	MD	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
pre	Equal variances assumed	.013	.910	-.916	58	.364	-.50000	.54615	-1.59323	.59323
	Equal variances not assumed			-.916	57.886	.364	-.50000	.54615	-1.59328	.59328

Table 9. represents the independent sample t-test and inferential statistics of the pretest of the ESP group to see whether the two groups are homogeneous. The sig. results of Lavene's test for equality of variances shows that it exceeds the level of p. value of .05. The sig. was .910 which means that there was no significant difference between the two groups, therefore, table 11 shows the homogeneity of the two groups. After making sure that the two EFL groups are homogeneous the treatments were given to both ESP groups. The experimental group was treated by using the strategy-based method and the comparison group was treated by using the translation-based method. Table 10. represents the descriptive statistics analysis of the post-test of the ESP groups.

**Table 10***Descriptive Statistics of the Post-Test of the ESP Groups*

group	treatment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post ESP Experimental group	strategy based	30	12.8000	1.90100	.34707
ESP Comparison group	translation based	30	19.3667	.71840	.13116

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the mean scores for both of the ESP groups were different. The mean score for the experimental group which is treated by using the strategy-

based method was 12.8000 and the score of the comparison group treated by using the translation-based method was 19.3667. Based on the score, it can be considered that both groups are significantly different. But, this is not enough to state that the two groups are significantly different. The inferential and independent-sample t-test was used to know the significance different both of groups.

**Table 11**

*The Inferential Statistics and Independent Sample T-Test of the Post-Test of the ESP 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	
post	Equal variances assumed	17.802	.000	-17.699	58	.000	-6.56667	.37103	-7.30936	-5.82397
	Equal variances not assumed			-17.699	37.118	.000	-6.56667	.37103	-7.31836	-5.81497

Table 11 above shows the analysis of the post-test for both of the groups; the experimental group which was treated by using the strategy-based method and the comparison group which was treated by using the translation-based. The analysis was done by using an independent sample t-test. The result of the inferential and independent-sample t-tests shows significant differences can be seen from the sig. 000 in the t-test for equality of means. This result is lower than the p-value of .005 of significance tolerance. The two groups are significantly different. The students who are treated by using the translation-based have better ESP reading comprehension performance than the students who are treated by using the strategy-based method. It can be stated that it was significantly different from the two groups of equality of means. This means that  $H_0$  can be rejected.

Therefore according to the results of the pre-test of General English groups, the mean scores of the two groups are not significantly different. The results of Lavene's test for equality of variances indicate that it exceeds the level of p. value of .05. It means that the two groups are homogeneous. The results of the post-test of General English groups are also close to each other. The mean scores of the two groups are not significantly different. It means that both using strategy-based and translation-based methods can help the students have high reading comprehension in EFL text.

The results of the pre-test of the ESP groups in the experimental and control group are very close to each other. The results of the significance of Lavene's test for equality of variances indicate that it exceeds the level of p. value of .05. The result of sig. is .910. The mean scores of the two groups are not significantly different. It means that the two groups are homogeneous. For the posttest, the result of the sig. of Lavene's test for equality of variances is 000. This result is lower

than the p-value of .05 of significance. So, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the two groups. Using the translation-based method can help the student have better ESP reading comprehension performance than using the strategy-based method.

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the role of the strategy-based method vs. the translation-based method concerning General English and ESP reading comprehension in Iranian university students. Since the students encounter problems in reading General English and ESP texts in a foreign language, not being capable of understanding a phrase or a sentence, not being capable of establishing a connection between the beginning and end of a long sentence, not being capable of connecting background knowledge with the information in the text, not being capable of making connections between the paragraphs, to overcome these problems, studies on reading comprehension (Moore & Lo, 2008; Hagaman et al., 2010; Ridge & Skinner, 2011; McCallum et al., 2011; Jitendra & Gajria, 2011; Lopera Medina, 2012; Abdelhalim, 2017; Li et al., & An, 2022; Alharbi, 2022) emphasized reading strategies and also the finding of this study corresponds with these research findings.

According to the result of this study, although the translation-based method increased the reading comprehension of General English texts, this method is not beneficial for General English. Dujmović (2014) supports the conclusion of this study and indicated that using the mother tongue in General English classes should play only a facilitating and supportive role. English should be a chief medium of communication in the class. The use of the mother tongue is only a means of improving foreign language proficiency. Mahmutoğlu & Kicir (2013) indicated that the use of the mother tongue in teaching a foreign language is a controversial topic. Some researchers believe that the mother tongue should not be used in foreign language classrooms, and others claim that it can be a valuable contribution to the learning process. Mother tongue is a mediating part of language teaching and learning and it should be used in emergencies, it can be effective in the right situations at the right time. Reading comprehension strategies help improve and enhance a student's reading comprehension. Teaching reading strategies help students be more successful in school and also understand text in the general context. There are many strategies available to use in reading comprehension for different types of students and contents. Teachers should try to select the proper strategies, teach them explicitly through models, demonstration, guided practice, prompts, and independent practice with feedback, and check the student use them correctly. Students should learn to distinguish the appropriate time to use strategy and not be confused (Harvey, 2012).

Another conclusion of this study suggested that translation-based method activities are beneficial for the ESP learner and that translation is an efficient ESP teaching and learning method if the activities are well-planned, the learner profile and needs in each specific course are well-analyzed, and the amount of translation done is well-balanced. Translation activities converge the

writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills of the ESP learners, facilitate comprehension of a specific field, cultural understanding, and communication of ESP learners extend their analytic skills, enhance their knowledge of a specific field, and engage them in cross-linguistic comparisons.

This finding supported the claim of Kavaliauskienė (2009) who stated that translation encourages applying L1 instead of L2. Translation activities are good for students who prefer verbal-linguistic or analytical learning strategies. Otherwise, translation activities as real-life, natural activities involve the practice of all language skills, reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Although teachers do not encourage it, it is a common strategy used by many learners. Calis and Dikilitas (2012) concluded that translation tasks improve productive and receptive skills. Avand (2009) found an effective and significant relationship between the role of translation and the contribution of the mother tongue to the teaching of ESP materials. Mattioli (2004) noted that limiting or excluding the native language does not seem to confirm better acquisition, nor does it support the humanistic approach that understands learners' identities. Teaching English for Specific Purposes needs a primary objective that involves engaging in specialized communication. ESP learners as active participants in their discourse communities should possess specialized terminology and know their different usage.

Rushwan (2017) Stated that extremely limited vocabulary knowledge brings about the difficulty in understanding the terminology and it was recommended that in reading comprehension, the translation should be used as an end for ESP texts. Based on the result of the current study, in the ESP context, translation plays a facilitating role in reading comprehension by grasping the specific vocabulary so they can develop their performance and enhance confidence in their abilities. This research finding illustrates that implementing strategy-based methods and translation-based methods which are tools for reading comprehension is vital. Of course, teachers should be aware of how to use these techniques in the correct place. However, students are more eager to translate the text for deep understanding and have a positive attitude toward using the translation-based method. Based on the results of this study teachers should rarely use the translation-based method in General English reading comprehension courses, but it is recommended to use it in ESP reading comprehension courses. This study revealed that the strategy-based method is a proper method for General English reading comprehension courses.

## 6. Conclusion

The current study investigated the effect of strategy-based methods vs. translation-based methods concerning General English, and ESP reading comprehension on Iranian university students. The results have bolstered the fact that the strategy-based method is the proper method to employ in teaching General English reading comprehension due to improving the students' engagement with English and reducing the interference of the mother tongue. Otherwise, in the ESP context, the translation-based method outperforms the strategy-based method. Based on the

result translation-based method should be significant for developing ESP reading comprehension because ESP students' level of English proficiency is poor so they need appropriate equivalents for the terminologies and phrases about their field of study, and learn more specialized vocabulary.

Theoretically, the outcome brings about more interest for researchers in order to consider key factors involved in successful General English and ESP reading comprehension, and the researchers can track the path to utilize strategies and methods to increase this ability. As the pedagogical implications, English teachers could use strategy-based methods of reading and its related language instruction such as information synthesis, visualization, and making inferences in their classes to facilitate learning for the learners. ESP teachers could use the translation-based method of reading comprehension to improve their abilities in ESP reading comprehension. Employing strategy-based methods in General English reading comprehension and the translation-based method in ESP reading comprehension, and providing the opportunity for the students to learn these methods reinforce their reading comprehension in academic studies and as a positive teaching tool and facilitate the learning process.

The findings obtained in this study are beneficial for different stakeholders in the field of General English and ESP language teaching and learning. ELT and ESP practitioners, Curriculum and test developers, course and syllabus designers, learners, teachers, materials writers, and teacher trainers are among those who can use the findings of this study, should take into account, the significance of strategy-based method in General English and translation-based method in ESP contexts to improve the condition and status of language teaching in the context of Iran. For further research, it is advisable to conduct research regarding other strategies of reading comprehension like using prior knowledge, previewing, and identifying the Main Idea in General English and ESP. It is also recommended to replicate the current study in other disciplines such as law, business, art, and engineering, and evaluate strategy-based methods and translation-based methods in different samples of a population with different materials.

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