Effect of Using a “Top-down” Strategy on Chinese University Students’ Comprehension of English Readings

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This article reports on how English teachers in China used a “top-down” strategy of teaching reading comprehension in their English reading classroom. Based on the schema theory model in the teaching of reading comprehension, the researcher argues that the “top-down” strategy should be introduced into the traditional English classroom in China. By comparing the effect of using the traditional “bottom-up” strategy with that of using the “top-down” strategy in the reading course for English majors of a Chinese university, the researcher found that some reading strategies popular in English-speaking countries did work well in the Chinese setting as long as the teachers could take into account their students’ learning environment and learning styles.

Introduction

Reading ability is one of the most important language skills in the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and research on it has drawn considerable attention in the field of EFL teaching. Yet, most of these studies have been carried out either in English-speaking countries or in non-English speaking countries where English is used as an official language. Therefore, not much is known about whether they are applicable in Mainland China, where English is neither a mother tongue nor an official language, and how the Chinese EFL teachers can apply certain effective reading strategies from English-speaking countries to the teaching of English reading comprehension in the Chinese context.