Abstract

In English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context providing readers with knowledge about function of some cohesive devices making coherence in the text such as discourse markers may enhance comprehension of English for the Students of Medicine (ESM) texts. Therefore it is hypothesized that teaching these elements in ESP classes is a need. This study aimed at identifying the most frequent discourse markers in one genre, i.e. medical research articles and the possible impact of the explicit instruction of them on medical students’ reading comprehension performance. To this end, in the first phase, forty research articles were randomly selected from the prestigious medical journals and the discourse markers in the different section were extracted and classified into fourteen categories. Then their frequencies were put in percentage test; based on the obtained finding, it was revealed that there is a difference between discourse markers with respect to their frequencies in different sections of medical articles. In the second phase of the study, a lesson plan was prepared based on the information and function of these discourse markers in order to be taught to the experimental group of medicine students during the treatment course. For the second phase, two homogenous groups of medicine students each consisting of 34 students, were chosen to take part in the instructional procedures for this study. They were divided into two groups as an experimental and a control group. The former was given explicit instruction of the functional discoursal of discourse markers in the medical texts plus the conventional ESP reading instruction, more specifically, they were taught their textbooks and medical texts focusing on discourse markers function, while the latter was just exposed to conventional ESP reading instruction. Having run twelve sessions of instructions, the performances of the two groups were compared with each other by administering the ESP reading comprehension test serving as the post-test. The findings were indicative of the significant role of explicit instruction of discourse markers function as
coherence devices in ESM texts on students' reading comprehension and accordingly a significant relationship between the knowledge of these elements and reading comprehension of ESP texts. Since, success in reading ESM texts is related to the level of proficiency in English language: the higher the level, the better the chances that a reader will successfully comprehend a text.