

THE USE OF GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS FOR TEACHING READING IN ESP CLASSES

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Annotation. This article explores the use of graphic organizers in teaching reading within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes. The article emphasizes the importance of integrating these tools purposefully to foster deeper engagement and understanding of discipline-specific materials.

Keywords: graphic organizers, vocabulary acquisition, teaching strategies, visual aids, educational tools, student engagement

Teaching reading in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes often requires approaches that are both focused and adaptable. One such approach is the use of graphic organizers, which provide visual frameworks for students to organize information, enhance comprehension, and support critical thinking. Graphic organizers can play a pivotal role in helping students in ESP classes navigate complex texts specific to their fields, whether it's in law, business, engineering, or medicine.

Graphic organizers are tools that can transform the reading process into a more structured and interactive experience. They serve as visual aids that help students break down complex texts, making the information easier to process and remember. According to Widdowson (1978), the interaction between language and communication is crucial in ESP, where students need to not only understand vocabulary but also grasp complex ideas and relationships.

Irvin (1998) highlights that graphic organizers help learners visualize the relationships between key concepts in a text, which is essential in ESP, where students must comprehend discipline-specific texts that are often dense with technical terms and abstract ideas.

Different types of graphic organizers can be tailored to various reading tasks in ESP classes. Here are some examples of graphic organizers that are particularly effective in teaching reading in ESP:

- **Web Graphic Organizer:** Useful for brainstorming and categorizing vocabulary or concepts related to the student's field of study. This is ideal for exploring technical terms and their interconnections in ESP reading.
- **Venn Diagram:** Helpful in comparing and contrasting two or more concepts. This can be used in ESP classes to help students differentiate between similar technical terms or processes in their field, as shown by Gajria & Salvia (1992).
- **K-W-L-M Chart:** This organizer is particularly beneficial in ESP because it helps students chart their learning progress. It stands for what the student *Knows*, *Wants to know*, *Learned*, and *Wants to learn more*. As Ogle (1986) suggests, this method engages students by connecting their prior knowledge to the new information they are acquiring, particularly useful for field-specific texts.

- **Flow Chart:** This organizer illustrates sequences or processes. In fields like business or science, students can outline processes, such as the steps in a project management plan or the phases of a scientific experiment.
- **Cause-and-Effect Organizer** is used to analyze relationships between events or concepts. This organizer can help students in fields like health sciences understand the relationships between symptoms and diagnoses or between actions and their outcomes.
- **Story Map** can be implemented to outline the main elements of a narrative or case study. Particularly in fields like law or social sciences, students can map out key details of a case, identifying characters, settings, problems, and resolutions.
- **Hierarchical Organizer** is mostly used to categorize information by levels of importance or generality. Useful for organizing topics within a field, such as structuring the components of a research paper in academic writing or the layers of an organizational structure in business.
- **T-Chart** is used to list pros and cons or different viewpoints. In fields like business or ethics, students can use T-charts to evaluate different perspectives on a topic, helping them analyze texts more critically.

The structured use of graphic organizers supports students in identifying and organizing critical information from the reading material. In ESP classes, where comprehension of technical terms and specialized information is essential, graphic organizers provide a scaffold for understanding these complex materials. According to Vacca & Vacca (1999), when students use graphic organizers, they actively engage with the text, which leads to better comprehension and retention of information.

Furthermore, Fisher and Frey (2004) explain that the use of graphic organizers in reading lessons promotes deeper interaction with the text, allowing learners to recognize patterns, relationships, and hierarchies within the content—skills particularly crucial in ESP, where students are required to read and interpret materials specific to their disciplines.

Practical Application in ESP Reading Classes

The integration of graphic organizers into ESP reading lessons should be purposeful and aligned with the learning objectives. For example, when teaching a reading text in business English, a teacher might use a *flow chart* to map out a process described in the text, such as the steps involved in a marketing strategy. Similarly, in a medical ESP class, a *cause-and-effect organizer* could be used to help students understand the relationships between symptoms and diagnoses.

Moreover, as pointed out by Shohamy (1996), teachers should guide students on how to use these tools to independently tackle ESP readings, empowering them to become more self-sufficient learners in their specific domains.

Graphic organizers are invaluable tools in teaching reading skills, particularly in ESP classes where students need to navigate specialized content. These tools help students organize information visually, facilitating better understanding and

retention of technical material. When implemented thoughtfully, graphic organizers can transform reading lessons, making them more interactive and student-centered, while also equipping learners with strategies they can apply independently. The use of graphic organizers not only enhances reading comprehension but also aligns with the goals of ESP by providing students with structured pathways to approach complex texts. By incorporating tools such as the K-W-L-M chart, Venn diagrams, and Web organizers, teachers can create engaging, effective reading lessons that are tailored to the needs of ESP students.

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