

# The Concept of Building an Experimental ESP Study Guide for Undergraduate University Students Majoring in International Relations Studies

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The current research outlines the concept of building an experimental ESP study guide which manifests integration of traditional and innovative approaches to teach YouTube-based video consumption to B2+-C1 level undergraduate university students majoring in International Relations studies during 2022-2025. The research delineates the methodological and psychological principles which lay the foundation for the ESP study guide and elaborate on the psychological definition of viewing comprehension and correlation between the key viewing comprehension strategies and VC activities developing them at the pre-, while-, and after-viewing stages of presenting videos. Special attention is paid to the selection of the subject matter for the study guide and five principles of opting for videos: the thematic and contemporaneity principle, the principle of relevance, and information content, and that of political correctness, and the principle of lexical and grammatical adequacy. Combined statistical data obtained in the process of experimental learning based on testing VC activities of the study guide with 215 undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies during 2022-2025 have been submitted.

*Keywords:* experimental ESP study guide, the concept of its building, principles of selecting videos, viewing comprehension (VC) strategies, before-, while- and after-VC activities, bridging strategies and competences, statistical data of students' accomplishments

## Introduction

The current research outlines the concept of building an experimental ESP study guide to teach YouTube-based video consumption to B2+-C1 level undergraduate university students majoring in International Relations (IR) studies in the period from 2022 to 2025. The analysis clarifies the methodological and psychological principles which lay the foundation for the experimental ESP study guide and elaborate on the correlation between the key viewing comprehension (VC) strategies and activities developing them at the pre-, while-, and after-viewing stages of presenting video fragments. Thus, the research gives an insight into how effectively online videos can be implemented in an ESP study guide to boost VC indexes in undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies during the designated period.

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The goals of the research are: (1) to present the concept of building an ESP study guide; (2) to focus on the methodological and psychological principles the study guide was made up on; (3) to specify viewing comprehension strategies and activities implemented in the study guide to boost viewing comprehension levels in B2+-C1 undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies; (4) to illustrate how developed VC strategies and comprehension levels are consistent with general professional and specific professional competences in undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies.

### **The Concept of Building an Experimental ESP Study Guide**

The concept of building the experimental study guide was based on the number of methodological and psychological principles including (1) the selection of the topics to be consistent with the syllabus for undergraduate university students seeking a bachelor's degree and majoring in IR studies, foreign policy, and international security; (2) principles of selecting videos for the study guide; (3) correlation between VC strategies and stages of their usage, transition to speaking, writing skills, and replenishing vocabulary; (4) portraying VC activities; (5) bridging strategies and competences; (6) students' attainments after testing the activities of the experimental study guide.

### **Choosing the Subject-Matter for the Study Guide**

The goal of the study guide is to raise the awareness of contemporary international issues and develop students' viewing comprehension strategies to perceive and process the video content offered by the authentic YouTube-based videos constituting the core of the study guide and headlined "Modern Issues of International Relations Studies".

The choice of key topics of the experimental study guide was conditioned by the syllabus for experts in IR studies, Foreign Politics, and International Security as well as the contents of some coursebooks for experts in IR studies (Kudachkina & Kubyas, 2011; 2015; Alieva, Kuzmicheva, Yablokova, & Tymbay, 2021; Minina, 2022).

The printed materials of the experimental study guide encompass 16 workshops with varied activities, scripts of video fragments, and answer keys to the exercises.

They expand and supplement the basic topics of the ESP coursebooks for experts in IR studies due to its more diverse subject matter and mobile approach to world events, and implemented to optimize the ESP classes. Moreover, their contents comply with the basic topics of the syllabus for experts in IR studies and include such themes as Foreign Service career, Multilateral Diplomat, the Language of Diplomacy, Interpreting World Politics and Global Issues, Pervasive Mass Media and Politics, Challenges of the Modern World, re-Globalization in a Chinese Way, etc.

### **Principles of Selecting Videos for the Experimental Study Guide**

The authors of the study guide conducted a search and selection of videos with the appropriate subject-matter, mainly, from YouTube-based sites and then analyzed the content of the video script in terms of text linguistics-controlling idea and key fragments of the text, topic and main idea of the text, and its smaller units: groups of paragraphs and single paragraphs, as well as the higher and lower-rank information, cause and effect relationship, directly-stated and inferred information.

The following principles for selecting videos for the study guide were implemented:

(1) The thematic principle according to which the selection of videos for the study guide was constrained by the contents and subject matter of the study guide;

(2) The contemporaneity principle of video fragments, according to which videos recorded within the last 10 years were chosen ranging from 2016 till 2024;

(3) The principle of relevance and information content, in accordance with which those video fragments were selected whose content could invoke an active emotional response in the video recipients, or contain little-known but significant information for students;

(4) The principle of political correctness, according to which the video text should reject harsh statements that affect the honor, dignity, persuasiveness of conviction, and national identity of representatives of different countries;

(5) The principle of lexical and grammatical adequacy was applied, according to which the lexical and grammatical content of the video text was supposed to comply with the complexity level corresponding to B2+-C1.

Video fragments uploaded from YouTube are both expository and narrative; they present a wider array of specific subjects related to IR studies and issues of international politics. In addition, they can be implemented for the long-term education program and are characterized by emotional and intellectual impact they produce on learners (Carmichael, Reid, Karpicke; URL). Moreover, they result in students' greater involvement in the learning process and new professional, political, and cultural information videos are brought into the classroom.

Online videos are consistent with ESP goals in several ways: tutors should elaborate but not simplify the educational stuff; video class recipients should be trained to handle complicated texts; however, they are not expected to understand every idea or word from it and there should be massive exposure to extracting meaningful information, not language points.

From the viewpoint of methodology videos optimize the ESP classes, motivate the ESP students, foster listening and viewing comprehension skills, apply innovative video projects, and achieve high results in viewing comprehension.

### **Viewing Comprehension, Correlation Between VC Strategies and Stages of Their Usage**

The course of video consumption is closely associated with viewing comprehension (VC), which is a psychophysical process where individuals focus on selected aspects of aural or visual input, construct meaning from visual chunks, and relate what they see to their background knowledge. The students go through the same phases of mental processes in viewing comprehension accepted by the linguists as they do in listening comprehension: "perceptual processing, parsing, and utilization" (O'Malley, Chamot, & Kupper, 1989, p. 421).

However, sometimes viewing comprehension is not delineated as the separate activity due to its close characteristics to listening comprehension; it is called video-based English listening comprehension. We stick to the opinion that "viewing comprehension" can be implemented as an independent term since unlike listening comprehension with an aural input, viewing comprehension has a visual input of data entry which has a greater psychological and learning impact on students.

VC strategies were also applied by the authors to work out the concept of the study guide and its activities, to arrange VC strategies in before-, while-, and after-viewing comprehension patterns and adequately develop activities belonging to every pattern, as well as to define students' VC levels after accomplishing exercises from the experimental study guide.

The goals of before-, while-, and after-viewing stages are diversified and fulfill varied objectives: before-viewing or prediction activities forecast the content of the video fragment based on key words, quizzes, questions,

agree/disagree statements, or a short introductory text, and identify topical vocabulary by means of contextual guessing; the while-viewing stage abounds in activities which are supposed to stop, clarify, question, and elicit the information from the video fragment. The goals of the after-viewing stage are to summarize, analyze, create, and socialize. They help students sum up key supporting details, make them recall their own thinking, and assess the information objectively (Heick, 2015).

Categorizing VC strategies, it should be marked out that the purpose of prediction strategy improved at the before-viewing stage is to preview, predict, and identify connections of the video fragment (Heick, 2015). On the one hand, prediction activities were to forecast the video contents based on key words, quizzes, questions, or a short introductory text. On the other hand, they helped students identify new active vocabulary by means of contextual guessing, matching the words with their synonyms or definitions. The video fragments were not displayed at the “before-viewing stage” yet.

The while-viewing stage, at which the video fragment is displayed three times, is abundant in activities which are supposed to stop, clarify, question, or infer the information from the video. These strategies focus students’ attention on what they are to learn; help them think actively as they view; encourage recipients to monitor their viewing comprehension; review and rearrange content in the “mind” maps; and relate what they have learned to what they already know (KWL chart). Clarification strategies uncover major and minor supporting details, clarify bias, “fact versus opinion” statements, or/and “author’s” position, etc.

Similarly, graphic organizers are quite instrumental in developing viewing comprehension skills and being applied at a before-, while-, and after-viewing stages since they help students introduce the focus of narration and define the degree of probability/improbability of the statements, decode and rearrange the information of the video fragment, optimize learners’ critical viewing skills, and detect contrast-comparison, part-whole, or cause-and-effect relationship of the ideas. Their application generally raises students’ degrees of viewing comprehension awareness, highlights key information, facilitates main idea detection and retention, and directs students’ attention to explicit and inferred text cues (Korotkova, 2018, pp. 298-299).

“Inferencing” strategies presented most challenges for students as they make meaningful and personalized implications and infer underlying assumptions of videos. Recipients of video tutorials based on the experimental study guide were also instructed to develop their insight into context-bound information such as ambiguity, connotations, and implied meaning, and distinguish between implicit and directly stated content. Students upgraded their skills to conceive different types of implied meaning which was analyzed in terms of comprehension accuracy through several activities based on project units in the course of 2022-2025 (Korotkova, 2021, p. 77). Here are some illustrations of inferencing activity with answer keys where students should find out what was implied by the words or phrases in bold type:

- Unit I. Workshop A: Multilateral Diplomat. Can anyone become an ambassador? Interpret the phrases in bold type making use of active vocabulary ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)):

(1) The ambassador’s duties are twofold. Answer key: Firstly, they act as the public face of their home country who represent the policies and opinions of their country’s leader. Secondly, they must also navigate all situations in their assigned country.

(2) It can potentially start an international incident. Answer key: Making a mistake, or being disrespectful reflects on the entire country not just the diplomat themselves, and it can potentially start an international incident.

- Unit III. Workshop A: The Language of Diplomacy. What is implied by the phrases in bold type?

(1) You must say why the speakers are speaking; this is called simultaneous interpretation. Answer key: Something that is translated or changed to a different language, or the process of translating something, at the same time with the speaker or immediately after it is spoken.

(2) You must have a certain disposition before you can do it well. Answer key: You must have a natural tendency to do something.

(3) You must keep you cool. Answer key: Keep cool!/Simmer down!/ Don't get so worked up!/Don't get so hot under the collar!/Don't blow your top!

(4) The interpreter should report back this information first. Answer key: Bring information to someone in authority.

Some of the goals of summarization strategies developed at the after-viewing stage are to generalize, analyze, create, and socialize. They help sum up key supporting details, paraphrase “standout” ideas, split directly stated and implied information, unite the central ideas of the video clip, and eliminate unnecessary details. Similarly, they make students recall their own thinking and emotions and assess the information objectively. These activities are instrumental in a more complete retrieval of information and its rearrangement.

Viewing the video fragments naturally transitions to text production and text-based assessment. Such online video activities as speaking and writing boil down to monologues and dialogues, discussing high order questions, as well as conducting debates and role games, coming up with online presentations and summaries, the discussion of which demands both the video content retention, and background knowledge of the subject matter.

The ESP study guide manifests integration of traditional and innovative approaches applying activities and innovative techniques of clarifying, analyzing, and redefining the problem or question to uncover new ways of looking at it; asking thoughtful questions; noticing connections between seemingly unrelated subject matter of the video fragment; recognizing alternative possibilities; and looking at issues from different perspectives.

And finally, building the new approach to online video our study guide also pays attention to the competency awareness and correlation among the general professional competences and professional ones which builds the launch pad for future professional activities in university students seeking bachelor's degree.

### **Bridging Strategies and Competences**

One of the issues developing the video project was to follow up what competences were developed in the experimental study guide. Federal Educational Standard (FGOSVO, 2016, pp. 8-12) offers the number of general and specific professional competences for would-be experts in IR studies.

The experimental ESP study guide is made up of activities that develop the key general professional competences that represent the ability to perform the duties of one's profession generally. For example, such activities as the high order questions demand the background knowledge of the discussed issues: “How does the Foreign Service officer differ from an ambassador?”; or: “Who nominates and confirms the high-ranking positions of the career ambassador in Russian Federation versus the US?” (www.youtube.com, 2017); activities like “Report on the One Belt, One Road initiative in People's Democratic Republic of China” (www.youtube.com, 2017) or: “Come up with a 5-min. presentation on one of the following topics”: (1) Crucial challenges of the contemporary bilateral and multilateral diplomacy; (2) Functions, types, and forms of multilateral diplomacy; (3) International conferences are the framework of multilateral diplomacy (www.youtube.com, 2017) develop the general professional competences (GPCs) of thinking systematically, setting the goals, and opting for the ways

of their solution (GPC-1), as well as the competence of building oral speech in the professional area clearly, logically, and reasonably (GPC-2) (FGOSVO, 2016, pp. 8-12).

Such general professional competences as the ability to find no typical interpretation of world news and perform their analysis to solve professional issues (GPC-4), to perceive and interpret the video information, to correlate it with the contemporary information society (GPC-8); the ability to apply foreign languages to solve professional issues including those of holding negotiation with foreign partners (GPC-12) are also enhanced by means of the video project activities: (1) “Compare the necessary skills for the interpreter’s job in your own country and in the UNO”; (2) “Compare the necessary qualifications for the foreign language interpreter and translator in the UNO and private companies” (GPC-4, 12); “What is implied by the phrases in bold type?” or: “Paraphrase the highlighted definitions with the proper words and collocations they denote” (GPC-8); “Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”: (1) China says the Silk Road initiative is a way to boost industrialization in developing nations sandwiched between East and West, North and South; (2) The Silk Road project is supposed to boost development and deepen economic ties across Europe and Central Asia; (3) But critics see it as a way for China to spread its influence further west (GPC-12) (www.youtube.com, 2017).

Activities of the experimental study guide are also instrumental in developing professional competences. What is a professional competence (PC)? It is the capability to perform a particular professional task with the skill of an acceptable quality (Images & Illustrations of Professional Competence, URL). The majority of professional competences such as building rapport with colleagues and developing professional interaction in foreign languages (PC-3); reading and interpreting mass media information, making a press review on specific issues, summing up factual material, and making a valid conclusion (PC-10); making public speeches in front of the Russian or foreign audiences; “knowing the ropes” of international political, economic, and migration processes (PC-14); being aware of the foreign policy of other countries, the specific features of their diplomacy and relationship with Russian Federation (PC-21) as well as of the contemporary key integration processes (PC-22) and basic mechanism of multilateral and integration diplomacy (PC-24) were mainly developed by such activities as guided/unguided discussions, debate project tasks, and role games, which integrated the methodology efforts to foster those competences. For example, debating the issues in the role game “Is it necessary to disband the ASEAN discussing the points ‘for’ and ‘against’ dismissing this intergovernmental organization?” contributed to upgrading all above-mentioned professional competences: PC-3, PC-10, PC-21, PC-22, and PC-24.

### **Students’ Accomplishments During the Experimental Learning**

Students participating in the series of experiments gave high assessment of the ESP study guide activities performed in the period from 2022 till 2025 and noted that experimental learning had been quite effective and facilitated upgrading their VC skills and resulted in optimizing VC strategies in most participants.

Statistical analysis of the anticipated effects of VC strategies and VC activities on comprehension levels points to the raised viewing comprehension levels and improved communication skills in 215 undergraduate students participating in the series of experiments during 2022-2025, which testifies to the efficiency of the activities of the experimental study guide.

Indexes denoting the efficiency of summarization and prediction strategies proved to be the most developed ones in students and accounted for 95.7% and 95% respectively; they were followed by the VC strategies responsible for clarification, listening for gist, and answering questions which amounted to 92.6%, 92.3%, and

91.4% correspondingly. The indexes of self-monitoring and inferencing strategies accounted for 86.5% and 73.5% respectively and turned out to be the least developed in students participating in the experiments.

Combined statistical data obtained during the indicated period confirmed the increased viewing comprehension levels in 12 groups of 215 undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies during 2022-2025 and testified to the efficiency of the experimental study guide.

Overall, the pilot video program contributed to a successful development of receptive viewing comprehension strategies while learning from YouTube-based online videos and resulted in raised viewing comprehension levels displayed by students majoring in International Relations Studies.

The current research carried out in 2022-2025 gives an insight into how successfully the online videos organized as a pilot video project can be implemented for university students majoring in International Relations studies to develop their general and specific professional competencies.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, the current research gives an insight into how effectively online videos can be implemented in an ESP study guide to boost VC indexes in 215 undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies from 2022 till 2025.

The experimental study guide manifests integration of traditional and innovative approaches applying VC activities and innovative techniques to develop viewing comprehension strategies of clarifying, analyzing, and redefining the problem; asking thoughtful questions; noticing connections between seemingly unrelated subject matter of the video fragment, recognizing alternative possibilities, and looking at issues from different perspectives.

To accomplish the main goal of the research the concept of building an ESP study guide based on methodological and psychological principles was presented, basic viewing comprehension strategies and main VC activities developing them in the experimental study guide headlined “Modern issues of International Relations studies” to boost VC levels in B2+-C1 undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies were specified and VC strategies were correlated to both general and specific professional competences in 215 undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies during the designated period.

Special attention was paid to the selection of the topics for the study guide to be consistent with the syllabus for undergraduate university students seeking a bachelor’s degree and majoring in IR studies, Foreign Policy, and International Security and five principles of selecting videos for the study guide: the thematic principle, the contemporaneity principle, the principle of relevance and information content, the principle of political correctness, and the principle of lexical and grammatical adequacy.

All things considered, the experimental ESP study guide headlined “Modern issues of International Relations studies” can serve as informational, educational, and methodological tool. As an informational tool it promotes learners’ awareness of contemporary global issues, as an educational tool it changes learning in the classroom and motivates students to consume video information at a higher level, as a methodological tool it promotes basic VC strategies via resourceful pre-, while-, and post-viewing VC activities to boost VC levels.

Combined statistical data obtained during the indicated period confirmed the increased viewing comprehension levels in 12 groups of 215 undergraduate university students majoring in IR studies during 2022-2025 and testified to the efficiency of the experimental study guide.

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