



Innovative Methods of Teaching Reading Comprehension Skills for English Language Students – Current Situation and Some Suggestions

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ABSTRACT:

Numerous Hanoi universities have started implementing new training programs that restrict student output standards based on the European Reference Framework, which serves as the foundation for the Vietnamese Foreign Language Competency Framework. The English Language major program offers students a thorough understanding of language, language and culture, and English and American literature. This ensures that graduates can use general English fluently (minimum level 5/6 according to the Vietnamese foreign language competency framework). To enhance the quality of teaching and learning for English language majors, this shift necessitates rebuilding language practice subjects in new ways and introducing innovative teaching strategies. This study examined the practices of teaching and acquiring reading comprehension abilities with a sample of 180 English majors at a university in Hanoi. It also offered some recommendations for novel approaches. English language majors receive instruction and learning in reading comprehension. The findings of the research point to issues that students have when it comes to their reading comprehension abilities, including poor vocabulary, a lack of prior knowledge, and a lack of study drive.

Keywords: English major, teaching methods, reading comprehension skills, websites for reading skills

1. Introduction

Professors have been concerned about how English majors can actively study the language and use it fluently. In actuality, learning English involves more than just picking up a language; it also involves using that language to gain knowledge of various nations, people, and cultures. Learners need to practise four fundamental language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Because the ability to read comprehension is crucial and inextricably linked to the other three skills. The development of reading comprehension skills is crucial to the process of learning a language, since it has a favourable impact on pupils' vocabulary and writing abilities. Because of this, it's essential to develop new approaches for teaching and learning reading comprehension skills to English majors. In this research, the author will conduct a survey on the practice of teaching and learning reading comprehension skills and make some proposals to innovate methods of teaching and learning reading comprehension skills for students majoring in English Language..

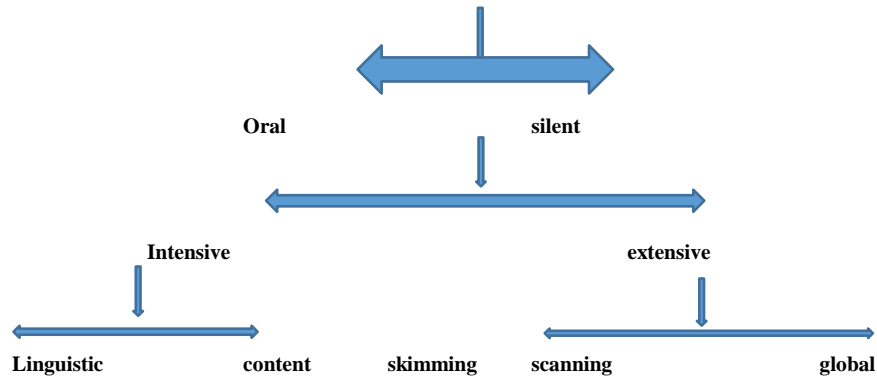
2. Literature review

2.1. Teaching English reading comprehension skills

Reading for pleasure is a fantastic way to learn the language, despite the common misconception among learners that you have to be proficient in the language to read English novels. We learn vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar in context most naturally when we read books. The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching reported on study by Krashen, Mason, et al. that shows volunteer reading can boost vocabulary by as much as 30% in just two to three months. Furthermore, because reading extensively is a prerequisite for both excellent writing and learning about the people, cultures, and societies of English-speaking nations, developing reading comprehension abilities also helps students become better writers.

Brown (2001) divided reading comprehension skills teaching activities in English class according to the following diagram:

Classroom reading performance



2.1.1. Silent reading

According to Brown (2001), silent reading is divided into two types: intensive reading and extensive reading.

Intensive reading focuses on details related to linguistics and semantics to understand the content of the reading. Meanwhile, extensive reading applies quick reading (skimming) to get the main idea of the reading, or get detailed information about the content of the reading (scanning).

2.1.2. Oral reading

Lecturers can ask students to read a passage aloud to help students practice pronunciation as well as help students focus on a certain excerpt in the reading.

- Analytical reading and synthetic reading

Hammer (2007) divided reading comprehension skills into three categories:

+ Read to get necessary information (scanning)

With this skill, students do not need to learn every word or line, but just scan through the reading to quickly find the necessary information to serve their purposes.

+ Reading to get the main idea (skimming)

With this skill, students quickly read through the text and find the main idea of the text.

+ Analytical reading to get detailed content or research (Reading for detailed comprehension)

Unlike the two skills above, this skill helps students focus more on every small detail of the reading to understand the reading more deeply.

2.2. Some methods for teaching reading comprehension skills

When teaching second language reading comprehension skills to students, instructors can apply some of the following methods:

+ Extended reading

This method focuses on students' interest to make the reading comprehension process more interesting. With that, students' reading skills will develop through familiarity and students will be able to take tests based on their reading ability.

+ Test- preparation

This method is intended to help students prepare for tests by reviewing previous tests and teaching appropriate test-taking skills. Therefore, the purpose of this method is to equip students with the best test-taking skills.

+ Comprehension skills

This method aims to help students develop reading comprehension skills through the following skills: reasoning, summarizing, problem solving, and critical thinking.

2.3. The process of teaching reading comprehension skills

The process of teaching reading comprehension skills usually includes the following three steps: Before reading (pre - reading), while reading (while - reading), and after reading (post-reading).

2.3.1. Pre-reading activities

During this stage, the lecturer can ask some leading questions to create curiosity and attract students to participate in understanding the reading. Sometimes lecturers can also include some games to create excitement for students before going into the reading. Along with that, lecturers need to generalize about the topic that students are about to read, using their own life experiences to predict the content of the reading. In addition, instructors can also link previous lessons with the current lesson to reinforce old lessons and introduce new lessons. It is important for teachers to give the purpose and reason for reading, helping students pay more attention to the reading. Lecturers should also introduce necessary new words, difficult vocabulary, and directly affect the content of the reading so that students cannot guess the meaning of the words.

Activities in this stage may change depending on the actual situation of the classroom and the level of the students.

2.3.2. While- reading activities

During this stage, instructors can practice students' reading comprehension skills by suggesting some tips or reading comprehension skills to apply when doing exercises. Lecturers can ask some questions to guide students in reading and understanding the content of the article. Instructors can also have students work in pairs or groups to discuss answers. Some common question types include Answer the Questions, Gap Filling, True/False Statements, Multiple Choice Questions.).

2.3.3. Post- reading activities

During this stage, instructors can ask students to recall the sequence of the reading by asking them to rearrange the sequence of the reading content based on jumbled data. Another form is to summarize the reading or organize discussions on issues related to daily practice based on the lesson content.

3. Overview of reading comprehension modules applied to students majoring in English at the University

For reading comprehension skills, students majoring in English Language at our university study 3 modules with a total of 8 credits. In which, students will study 2 credits in Reading Comprehension 1 and Reading Comprehension 2 and 3 will take 3 credits each.

Reading comprehension skills 1

Reading Comprehension 1 module is one of the English practice modules for English major students. The module provides students with reading comprehension skills and strategies at the intermediate level, while also providing basic social understanding and cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries, creating a general knowledge base. for students to develop their ability to practice English.

At the end of the program, students can understand texts of about 400-550 words in length on popular cultural and social topics expressed with diverse vocabulary and structures at the intermediate level. ; Use skills and strategies well for reading comprehension such as inferring, predicting, reading for main ideas, reading quickly to find detailed information, and summarizing. Along with that, students can improve their grammar knowledge and grasp more diverse structures through reading comprehension as well as expand their vocabulary on socio-cultural topics to apply in real-life skills. other English practice.

Reading comprehension skills 2

Reading Comprehension 2 is one of the mandatory English practice courses for English major students. The module continues to perfect and consolidate reading comprehension skills and strategies at the intermediate level, while continuing to provide students with social understanding and general cultural knowledge, creating a common knowledge base. for students to develop their ability to practice English.

At the end of the program, students can understand texts of about 1,000 words in length on socio-cultural topics expressed in intermediate-level academic vocabulary; Use skills and strategies well for reading comprehension such as inferring, predicting, reading for main ideas, reading quickly to find detailed information, and summarizing. In addition, students can also improve their grammar knowledge and grasp more diverse structures through reading comprehension and sentence writing as well as expanding their vocabulary on socio-cultural topics to apply in different situations. other English practice skills, perfecting writing skills associated with vocabulary content and reading topics.

Reading comprehension skills 3

Reading Module 3 is one of the English practice subjects for the regular university training program, majoring in English Language. The course provides students with reading comprehension skills and strategies at an advanced level, focusing on training skills and strategies to do reading exercises in the IELTS format. At the same time, it provides basic social understanding and cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries, through readings from reliable sources, creating a general knowledge base for students to develop the ability to practice English. .

At the end of the program, students can read and understand texts of about 700-800 words in length on familiar socio-cultural topics expressed with diverse vocabulary and structures at a high level. grant; Use well strategies for reading comprehension such as inferring, predicting, reading and identifying main ideas, reading for detailed and specific information, finding contradictory ideas, summarizing, and determining opinions in test format.

IELTS. In addition, students can also improve their grammar knowledge and grasp more diverse structures through reading comprehension, while expanding their vocabulary on socio-cultural topics to apply to new skills. other English practice skills.

4. Methodology

Research objects

The research subjects are 180 English major students.

Methodology

This is a research method that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods, whereby a survey was built and conducted on 180 English major students. The questionnaire is designed in 2 main parts. Part 1 aims to collect general information about the survey subjects. Part 2 includes questions to survey the reality of teaching and learning reading comprehension skills for English major students as well as propose some solutions to innovate methods of teaching and learning reading comprehension skills for English major students.

5. Data analysis and discussion

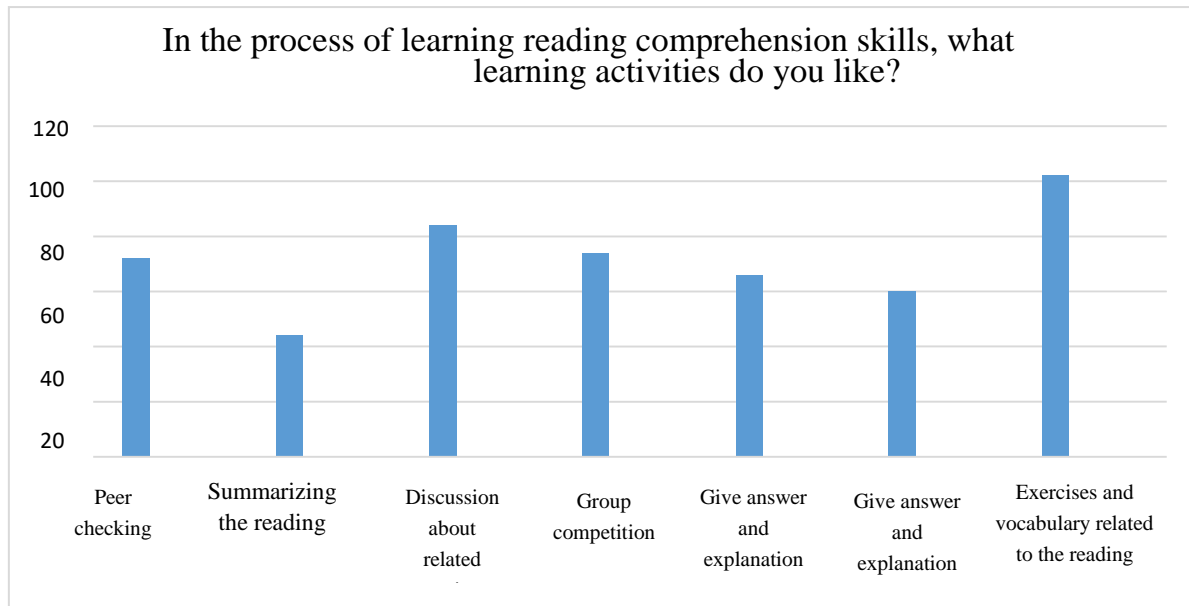
5.1. The reality of teaching and learning reading comprehension skills for students majoring in English Language

English language majors receive training in language theory, language-culture, and English-American literature in addition to practical language skills, guaranteeing that graduates are at least proficient in the language. Minimum level 5/6 in accordance with the Framework for Foreign Language Competencies in Vietnam. When asked which practical language skills they found most challenging, the majority of students (47.8%) indicated that writing in English was the most challenging. The one that kids find the simplest to use is reading comprehension. Merely 3.3% of students believe that reading comprehension is the most challenging skill.

On the contrary, when asked which skills students are most interested in among language practice skills, the majority of students said that speaking skills (40%) and reading comprehension skills (32.3%) are interesting. the most flavorful.

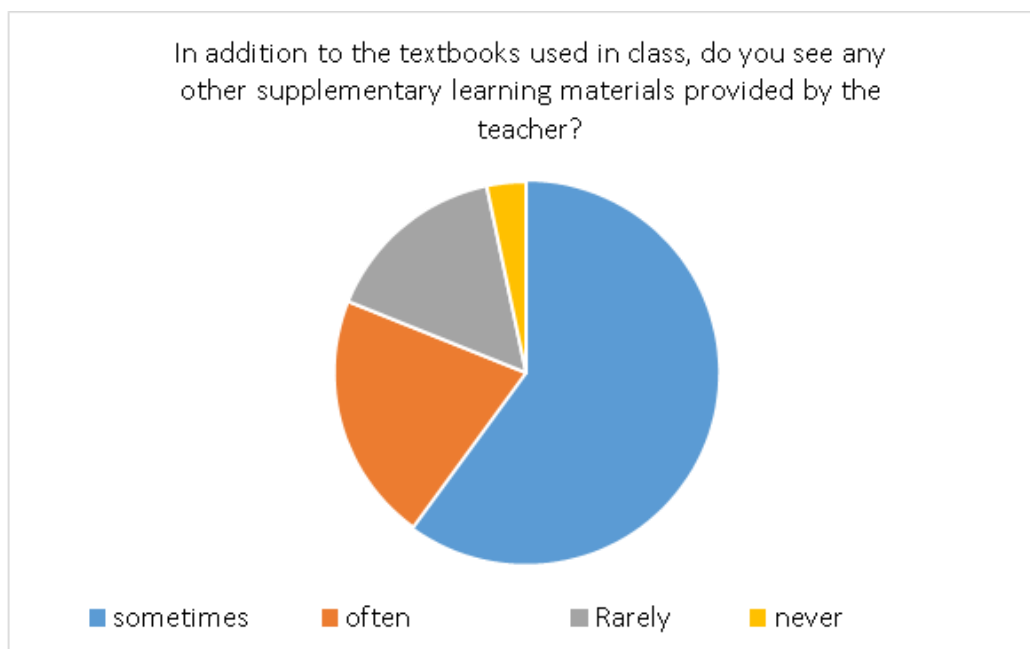
Students face a variety of challenges when learning reading comprehension abilities, including lengthy or tedious reading material, a deficiency in vocabulary, or trouble understanding how the reading comprehension techniques are implemented in the lesson. The majority of students who responded to the survey (146 students, or 81.1%) stated that one of the biggest challenges they have when learning reading comprehension abilities is a lack of vocabulary. Furthermore, as many as 37.8% of students who responded to the poll felt that there was not enough time to finish the test and that the reading was too lengthy. Additionally, 4.4% of the students surveyed said they had no problems at all.

When asked about the curriculum being applied to teach reading comprehension skills to English students, the majority of students (87.8%) thought that the curriculum being applied was appropriate and 124 students (82.7%) think that the curriculum has a connection between levels from reading comprehension skill 1 to reading comprehension skill 2 and 3. When surveyed about what activities students find interesting while learning reading comprehension skills, many students (52.2%) are interested in discussion activities related to the reading content. Up to 102 surveyed students (57.8%) felt like doing vocabulary exercises related to the reading. Students are also quite excited about activities such as competing to do homework in groups, cross-marking with friends or preparing reading comprehension exercises in groups and assigning them to classmates to do.



The majority of students questioned (64.4%) indicated that teachers routinely guide applicable skills during reading comprehension activities when asked about the success of reading comprehension sessions. According to 62.2% of students polled, the lecturer frequently addressed the text's substance and posed leading questions prior to the students reading it. The majority of students (74.4%) believe that lecturers frequently encourage, push, and help students while they complete their homework. Students are frequently invited to discuss their responses in groups or pairs at the same time. Following reading comprehension tasks, students are frequently requested to summarise the reading material, write articles about it, or have discussions about it (50%) or 44.4%). Notably, the majority of surveyed students (80%) think that reading comprehension skills and English writing skills should be combined. In addition, the majority of surveyed students (74%) think that lecturers apply technology in teaching reading comprehension skills, but not often..

When asked about the textbooks and supplementary materials provided by lecturers, only 21% of surveyed students said that lecturers regularly provide supplementary materials to students. 60% of students surveyed were occasionally provided with supplementary materials.



In addition to studying in class, students also regularly do reading comprehension exercises at home. Only 10% of students surveyed rarely or never do additional reading comprehension exercises at home.

Many students suggested that lecturers should offer more reading comprehension classes on a variety of themes when asked to recommend ways to improve the teaching and learning of reading comprehension skills more engaging and effective. enhance the content related to reading comprehension. When teachers correct reading comprehension activities, some students want to see recommendations on how to do them better. Alternatively, students

propose that teachers should just oversee their coursework, allowing students to work through discussions and exercises in groups before offering corrections and explanations to one another. Some students recommended that professors occasionally plan games to boost students' interest in learning or that they view movies that are relevant to the reading material. Teachers can also incorporate comics, asking students to summarize and retell the story. In addition, there are also many students who want to combine reading comprehension and English writing content because they believe that these two skills complement each other. In particular, the majority of surveyed students want to apply information technology in learning reading comprehension skills. They think that applying information technology will make lessons more interesting and students will have the opportunity to practice reading comprehension skills and expand their vocabulary.

6. Propose some solutions to innovate methods of teaching and learning reading comprehension skills for English Language students

The programme and content of teaching reading comprehension skills to English language majors are extremely adequate, as the author has confirmed by a poll of 180 students majoring in the subject. The majority of pupils are content and adore the subject. However, lecturers also need to regularly modify and innovate their teaching strategies in order to make reading comprehension instruction more engaging and effective.

First of all, lecturers should provide students with more diverse and rich reading comprehension materials. In addition to the main teaching material of Reading module 1, Strategic Reading 2 by authors Jack C. Richards and Samuela Eckstut-Didier, published for the second time by Cambridge Publishing House, Reading module 2 is the book Inside Reading 2 – The Academic. Word List in Context by author Lawrence J. Zwier, 2nd edition by Oxford publisher, Reading module 3 is the book IELTS Express- Intermediate & Upper- Intermediate by authors Rirchard Hallows, Martin Lisboa, Mark Unwi, lecturer can provide students with additional reference materials such as the Unlock reading and writing skills set by Cambridge University Press, which includes 5 books that can be applied to students specializing in languages equivalent to different levels from elementary level. to advanced (from level 1/6 to level 5/6 according to the Vietnamese foreign language competency framework), or the skillful reading and writing set published by Macmillan includes 5 books from beginner to advanced. Along with that, lecturers should also apply many learning activities such as group discussions, pair discussions, and playing games to make lectures more interesting. For example, instructors can divide the class into small groups, ask students to do reading comprehension exercises or discuss topics related to the reading in groups. Or you can ask students to do the exercise and then exchange answers in pairs. Lecturers also need to help students develop and expand vocabulary through vocabulary exercises related to lesson content. In addition, lecturers should also support students to develop other language practice skills such as writing skills and speaking skills through discussing topics related to the content of the reading or relating to practice and experience. in student life.

Lecturers should also use information technology applications into their lessons on reading comprehension. It might be argued that if pupils just rely on classroom instruction, their reading comprehension skills will not be increased and improved. In actuality, lecturers want to use information technology application techniques to assign and supervise student assignments. In particular, professors can distribute assignments to students by combining the following applications.

**** Newsela reading practice website***

Instructors log in to Newsela.com and register for a free account, from which they can create classes by selecting the Set up tab, selecting Classes. Instructors click the Create a Class button, enter the class name in the Classroom Name dialog box, select the level in the Grade section, and finally click the Create Class button to finish this.

Newsela helps students improve their reading skills by providing the same reading text with 5 different levels of difficulty. Accordingly, instructors can assign the same reading to the whole class and students can choose the level that is right for them. Instructors can also assign any readings by topic to students by selecting the Create Assignment button, then selecting the class to assign the assignment in the Select Class dialog box and pressing the Assign Assignment button. Now (Assign Now) is done.

Newsela will base on students' test results to choose the reading level appropriate to their level. If you have an upgraded Newsela Pro account, lecturers can track student progress, the date students took the test, the time they took to complete the test, the difficulty of the reading and annotations. Teachers create their own readings and assign them to students, by going to the Text Set section, entering the reading title in the Title box, entering the reading in the Description box and clicking Save to save the reading.

As for students, they follow the link and class code to register, log in to their account and will see the assignments assigned by the teacher. In addition to the assigned exercises, students can choose readings based on their favorite topics. They do all those exercises and the Newsela system, based on the results of the exercises, will automatically choose the difficulty of the reading suitable to the student's level.

This website also has a series of choice questions to test students' reading comprehension levels.

**** Dreamreader website***

Dreamreader is a free website, with over 500 audio readings. This website provides 5 reading categories to help improve reading comprehension, the most attractive of which are Fun English and Academic English. The final category is full of lessons and questions for beginners, low intermediate, intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced students. advanced.

**** GCFLearnFree website***

This is a website to improve reading skills with a variety of topics displayed at the top of the page. Students choose the topic they want to read and then choose the type of assignment they want to do. If students want to practice reading comprehension, students select "Text" and then select "Reading Comprehension".

*** Easy reading website**

This site is owned by the British Council. Easy reading provides articles and stories written at three levels, which are A2 (elementary), B1 (intermediate) and B2 (upper-intermediate).

After the reading, learners can take online quizzes to test comprehension and text-based grammar exercises. The site also allows learners to download texts and other activities.

In addition, instructors can also use the synthesis method with the website Quizlet.com. This is a vocabulary teaching and learning site designed for both learners and teachers. Quizlet.com has the ability to create vocabulary chains by topic or lesson with new words, word meanings, illustrations and sounds. To use Quizlet.com to support your teaching, instructors need to create a (free) account on the site and can reset their account, update their avatar, and choose the appropriate language on the site. suitable for Vietnamese or English.

Using Quizlet.com, instructors can create vocabulary modules by topic or lesson in class, by entering the module name in the Title section, then entering each term, its equivalent meaning, and letting Save time, can batch import terms from Word or Excel. In addition to creating common vocabulary topics, teachers can create vocabulary according to diagrams, which are very suitable for topics such as parts of the human body or a house... Teaching in class, The instructor shows the vocabulary on Quizlet, with both images and audio.

To increase the excitement during class, instructors use Quizlet.com to create online games and students use phones with an Internet connection to participate in the game, connect with classmates, and help them remember vocabulary. very fast. After the game, the website also summarizes the errors and words that students made or confused.

Using Quizlet.com, instructors can also test students' vocabulary learning by selecting the Test tab, inviting students to work and checking the results right in class. Besides, instructors can also print out paper tests for students to take.

7. Conclusion

To put it briefly, educators should incorporate both conventional and cutting-edge teaching strategies while instructing students in English reading comprehension. The level of goals, content, and methods should be carefully considered by lecturers to ensure that they align with the various learning styles and attitudes of their students as well as the space and time constraints. pellets. Furthermore, cutting-edge approaches to teaching kids English reading comprehension abilities necessitate the assistance of PCs, smartphones, and the Internet. It can be argued that lecturers' innovative teaching strategies have a major impact on students' acquisition of reading comprehension abilities in particular and English language instruction in general. As a result, pupils' reading comprehension abilities and passion for studying both increase.

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