

SOME METHODS FOR TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN GENERAL ENGLISH MODULES FOR FIRST-YEAR NON-LANGUAGE MAJOR STUDENTS AT HAI PHONG UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: *In teaching language skills, reading is one of the basic skills that is very emphasized. Reading is an effective way for students to master and consolidate language knowledge, richen vocabulary as well as deepen their understanding of the style and the use of the language they are learning. Reading plays a very important role in developing language skills in general and reading comprehensipon in particular. First-year students in general and non-language students in particular need to become familiar with effective reading comprehension skills to serve their studies, research and career applications. In fact, first-year non-language major students at Hai Phong University have very little knowledge and skills in reading and understanding English texts. Most of them have just left high school, and their English reading and comprehension skills are practiced through simple reading passages in textbooks. Furthermore, the time to practice English reading comprehension skills of high school students is very little. It normally takes up one-eighth of the total time for a unit. Hopefully, with some methods of teaching reading comprehension skills mentioned in this article, it will help first-year non-language major students master reading comprehension skills, on that basis they can improve their own learning efficiency.*

Key words: *Methods of teaching, reading comprehension skills, scanning skill, skimming skill, the first year non-language students.*

Nhận bài ngày 12.12.2024; gửi phản biện, chỉnh sửa, duyệt đăng ngày 20.02.2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

As we know English is very important in updating international knowledge. It is one of the ways for us to have the culture, knowledge and scientific progress in the world.

Reality shows that in terms of reading skills and doing exercises after reading, students often make some mistakes. Students' vocabulary is too small, they do not know how to read a text, they cannot remember information in the text, they do not understand basic grammatical structures, and most students do not know how to ask questions about the passage and answer them. To overcome this situation, teachers must first make students love and care about learning reading more effectively. The teachers' lectures should be suitable for all students in class, teachers should have appropriate methods, and attract students into learning.

In fact, research on English teaching for first-year students at Hai Phong University shows that the majority still can not meet the requirements of reading comprehension skills. This fact is first and foremost related to the lecturers' teaching method. Therefore, as a university English lecturer, the writer soon realized the need to be proactive and pay more attention to helping students read better through new, effective teaching methods

As we know, studies have shown that good readers are those who know how to use reading comprehension methods effectively. There are many famous authors who have classified and analyzed reading comprehension teaching methods in the world, including Kalin [1]. The author has classified reading comprehension skills into 5 very clear types. And we also have very specific instructions on reading comprehension teaching methods of the authors in the book "Methods and strategies in teaching" [2]. In Viet Nam, the study on using activities to teach English reading comprehension skills for university students has author Chu Thi Bich Lien [3], the author has methods to combine websites to teach reading very usefully. In the current stage of technological development, the importance of developing reading skills and using online teaching methods has been emphasized. Understanding reading skills and incorporating them into teaching activities is very important to improve the comprehension of readers in general and university students in particular.

2. CONTENT

2.1. Characteristics of reading comprehension skills of first-year non- language major students

Knowing that reading is a receptive, psycholinguistic process. It starts with linguistic representation encoded by a writer, and ends with reader constructed meaning. Reading is a process where the writer encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought.

Reading comprehension: There are two-models, “the text model and the situation model”. The text model calls for understanding what the text itself is trying to communicate and the situation model calls for the reader to integrate background knowledge with text information to interpret the text.

Reading comprehension skills of first-year non- language major students: For the first-year non-language major students, reading comprehension skills are practiced in both The text model and the situation model, but the level is not required to be high. However, through practical teaching, it has been shown that the English reading comprehension ability of the first-year students is still limited, not actively grasping the primary information of the text, not understanding all the implications of the reading, leading to the birth of students. Students learn reading comprehension skills that are not effective.

2.2. Reading comprehension in the basic English curriculum of Hai Phong University

Currently, Hai Phong University's general English program has 2 modules, carried out in the first 2 semesters of the university program. The program has two versions applicable to two types of subjects, the general English program and the specialized English program.

In the 2024-2025 school year, Hai Phong University has divided classes according to the level of first-year students, with levels ranked by A, B, C and D. 20 A level classes with 1088 students; 21 B level classes with 1204 students; 12 level C classes with 670 students; 7 level D classes with 217 students. The reality shows that the number of students studying levels A and B is much higher than levels C and D. From this reality, we see that the English knowledge of first-year students at Hai Phong University is not good. Among language skills, reading comprehension is one of the basic and important skills. Students mainly practise this skill in class, or with teachers' instruction online. For reading comprehension skills, testing and assessment are carried out both at the midterm tests and at the end of the term. It shows that reading comprehension skills are a key teaching focus of Hai Phong University. With that reality, I would like to offer some methods for teaching reading comprehension skills in the general English module for first-year students at Hai Phong University.

2.3. Some theoretical problems about reading comprehension

Reading comprehension skill as a concept and a theoretical framework has a connotation with specific skills. In this regard, Karlin [1] has classified 5 groups of reading skills as follows:

Word recognition skills group: includes the use of context, structural analysis and dictionary use.

Word meaning skills group: includes using context, analyzing structure, identifying polysemous words and quantity words.

Comprehensive skills group: created by recognizing the literal meaning of words, conjectural meanings (figurative meanings), evaluating and confirming documents.

Study skills group: is the identification of information, selection of information, use of graphic support, ability to predict and execute flexibly.

Appreciation skills group: is the identification of language and types of literature.

As for reading skill, comprehension techniques, there are two main techniques: scanning and skimming.

Skimming and scanning are techniques in reading that use rapid eye movements and keywords to move quickly through text for the different purposes. Skimming is reading quickly to get a general overview of the material. Scanning is reading quickly to find specific events. While skimming tells you what general information is contained in a section, scanning helps you locate a specific event.

When doing Skimming, students need to combine the following techniques:

+ Word grouping technique: Words in a sentence should be grouped into clusters according to their function and sentence components such as subject, verb phrase, object. This not only helps improve reading comprehension skills but also helps learners skim faster.

+ Sentence linking technique in a paragraph: each paragraph usually contains a topic sentence: stating the main content of the paragraph; sub-topic sentence: giving a smaller idea than the main content; supporting sentence: adding meaning to the topic sentence or sub-topic sentence.

When doing Scanning, students need to combine the eye movement technique. This is a very necessary technique for Scanning because it helps readers focus only on finding words without trying to understand the content of the reading, thereby saving reading time.

The steps to combine both Skimming and Scanning techniques are as follows:

Step 1: Skim the text to grasp the main information of the whole text and each paragraph

Step 2: Read the questions, identify keywords to narrow down the information

Step 3: Scan the keywords to find in the identified information area

Step 4: Read in detail, analyze and choose the correct answer

An example of how to do the above steps is the following passage, taken from Cambridge Practice Test 8, reading Passage 1.

Striking Back at Lightning With Lasers

Seldom is the weather more dramatic than when thunderstorms strike. Their electrical fury inflicts death or serious injury on around 500 people each year in the United States alone. As the clouds roll in, a leisurely round of golf can become a terrifying dice with death – out in the open, a lone golfer may be a lightning bolt's most inviting target. And there is damage to property too. Lightning damage costs American power companies more than \$100 million a year.

But researchers in the United States and Japan are planning to hit back. Already in laboratory trials they have tested strategies for neutralising the power of thunderstorms, and this winter they will brave real storms, equipped with an armoury of lasers that they will be pointing towards the heavens to discharge thunderclouds before lightning can strike.

According to the text, every year lightning

A does considerable damage to buildings during thunderstorms.

B kills or injures mainly golfers in the United States.

C kills or injures around 500 people throughout the world.

D damages more than 100 American power companies.

Step 1: Based on the Skimming method, students pay attention to the following parts:

Main title: Striking Back at Lightning With Lasers

The first paragraph: combine with word grouping techniques and sentence linking in the paragraph as follows. It is possible to infer the main content of paragraph 1: the damage caused by lightning in the US.

The Paragraph 2: the reader does the same to find the main content, by finding the main sentence: “But researchers in the United States and Japan are planning to hit back”

Step 2: Analyze the question, find the main keywords.

“According to the text, every year lightning” => key word: lightening

Step 3: Scan the keywords you need to find in the information area circled in paragraph 1 using eye movement techniques from bottom to top and from right to left.

Step 4: Read the details and analyze the answer choices.

Sentence A: “Every year lightning does considerable damage to buildings during thunderstorms”. And the nearly last sentence: “And there is damage to property too”. 2 phrases “damage to buildings” “damage to property” can help readers choose the correct answer is A

Sentence B: “Every year lightning kills or injures mainly golfers in the United States” and the third sentence in the first one “lone golfer may be a lightning bolt’s most inviting target.” therefore B not correct.

Sentence C: “Every year lightening kills or injures around 500 people throughout the world.” And the second sentence in the first “....500 people each year in the United States alone”, so sentence C is wrong

Sentence D: “Every year lightening damages more than 100 American power companies” and the last sentence in the first “Lightning damage costs American power companies more than \$100 million a year”, so sentence D is not correct.

Both of these reading skills do not go into the details of the content, so reading speed is accelerated. However, the first and biggest difference between these two reading skills is the purpose of gathering information after reading.

Matching heading, summary completion and diagram labeling for skimming reading skill; Note/ sentence completion, true/ false/ not given or yes/ no/ not given, matching feature for scanning reading skill. And multiple choice. Needs a combination of both Skimming and Scanning skills. In fact, learners can always combine both skills at the same time when reading to get an overview of the reading content, helping to localize information faster, saving more time for Scanning.

Mastering the content and format of the English program, the lecturers of Hai Phong University proactively implemented it according to the general regulations of professional and teaching management aspects, along with each person's unique teaching experience.

However, when it comes to reading comprehension skills, students are facing many difficulties. That is:

Firstly, students have difficulty with vocabulary. If they read a lesson with up to 70% new words, they will lose interest, have a feeling of inadequacy and feel tired because they spend time using a dictionary to look up the meaning of each new word and may still not understand the content of the lesson.

Research results from an entrance test to level 280 first-year non-English major students in Mechanical Engineering major, department of technology and engineering, Hai Phong University in October 2024. The vocabulary tests were based on topics in the 12th grade textbook Global Success and assessed vocabulary knowledge at the levels of knowledge, understanding and application. The results of 280 tests through computer scoring were as

follows: 193 tests passed, accounting for 68.8%, 87 tests failed, accounting for 31.2%. Of the 193 tests passed, they were classified by level as follows:

level	knowing	understanding	applying
Number of test	145	30	18
Percentage	51,7	10,7	6,4

From this result, it can be seen that vocabulary is the first difficulty of non-major language students in reading comprehension skills.

Second, students have difficulty with grammar. Poor grammar will become a barrier to reading comprehension.

Third, students have difficulty working independently - self-study. Many students still have not determined the necessary reading techniques for each type of reading text.

3. Some methods of teaching reading comprehension skills

3.1. Traditional methods of teaching reading comprehension

Teachers often apply common methods of instructing students to read reading comprehension passages from the bottom up (bottom - up) and reading from the top down (top - down). Using this method, lecturers often attach importance to clauses to varying degrees. For many people, reading from the top down is more important than reading from the bottom up. However, other teachers find that the most effective way is to combine both reading methods, top-down and bottom-up, because only then will the method not be garbled, and at the same time, students' understanding of the reading will be accurate and quick.

Applying the above method, lecturers also used it in combination with general teaching methods. These are: problem-based teaching method, discovery method, small group instruction, and system approach, thanks to which students' reading comprehension skills are improved and progress is clearer.

However, many students in general have not yet created a self-study routine, which is reflected in the fact that, on the one hand, they have many difficulties in completing reading comprehension exercises at home, and on the other hand, they are slow to find effective self-study methods and skills. Not to mention, many children do not know how to arrange their lives when they have to live away from home, without relatives around to support, give suggestions, or urge them, so they are easily discouraged.

3.2. Popular methods of teaching reading comprehension today

Activities to practice and develop reading comprehension skills are usually conducted in 3 steps as follows: Pre-reading activities, While - reading activities and Post-reading activities.

-Pre-reading activities: Introducing the reading: Is a very important activity to provide students with information about the reading.

A good introduction is usually brief; arouse interest and make students want to read the text more; Help students make connections between the reading and the knowledge they have learned.

Skills to help introduce a reading: The teacher starts the reading with an introduction that helps students realize what they will read, then the teacher lets them guess the word.

a) Use visual aids:

Teachers can use videos or pictures to guide students to the main topic of the lessons and make an exciting atmosphere for the classroom

b) Explain new words:

Explaining new words to students before reading the comprehension lesson is very necessary. That will make it easier for students to access the lessons. It is unnecessary to teach all the new words in the reading. Students can continue to guess new words by continuing to read the text.

c) Introduce grammatical structures into the reading: Before asking students to read the reading, teachers should review the grammatical structures appearing in the lesson.

d) Give guiding questions: You can organize pre-reading activities to direct students' attention to the reading, give a reason to encourage students to think about the reading and guess what they will read. It is best to come up with 2 or 3 questions and write them on the board before reading.

-Activities while reading

Reading practice activities are exercises that are done right while students are reading the text. Students can read and re-read (read silently) to do the exercises. The form of practice in this step is to learn and exploit the content of the lesson and depending on the content of each lesson, there will be different types of questions and exploitation requirements.

Popular exercises and methods at this stage often take the following forms:

a) Silent reading: Helps students express their pronunciation, self-expression and if they do not understand a sentence in the lesson, they can read it over and over again.

b) Check students' understanding by asking students to answer the questions provided on the board: Students can work in pairs or groups (Question and Answer).

c) Check students' understanding by using questions: Questions are used as a classroom skill in teaching and learning English. There are 3 types of questions commonly used: yes/no questions, Alternative questions and WH questions

d) Use some exercises to develop reading comprehension skills: After checking students' reading comprehension levels by asking questions, we need to give some other exercises to help students practice what they have learned in the reading.

- Post reading Activities

a) Ask students to recall the order of the reading: Students can be asked to do the exercises. Let the data be shuffled and rearranged in the same order as the reading content.

b) Summary of the reading

c) Organize discussion: Sometimes some readings are related to our daily reality so it is necessary to organize discussion for students.

3.3. Experienced Lessons

Reading comprehension skills are certain measures, tricks, methods, and operations to guide students' cognitive process to positively, proactively, and effectively create the meaning of the text.

In this article, I would like to give some of my experienced lessons about reading comprehension skill which have helped students improve their skills.

- Apply appropriate methods: Innovating methods of teaching English reading comprehension skills does not mean overlooking or abandoning traditional teaching methods. On the contrary, traditional methods are still used in combination with modern teaching methods at the right time and right place.

In reality, students learning reading comprehension skills depend a lot (methods) on curriculum materials, information technology media, micro-groups and learning environments outside of school,... but they have difficulty in drawing out the regularity, the nature of each phenomenon, the form, as well as the content of specific and general skills. Therefore, this again requires the role of lecturers, how they must use presentation, generalization, induction and deduction methods in a timely and sufficient manner.

- Make it a game: It is good to teach students skills to make the skill fun. Give creative ways you can engage students with their reading the texts and make them excited to understand the texts.

Within the framework of an article, I would like to present my experience in teaching reading comprehension skills to first-year non-language major students through the activity

“Make it a game”. One of the interesting and effective activities to do this is the **Reading Puzzle** game.

Benefits of Reading Puzzle: This activity not only helps students practice reading skills but also creates a lively and positive learning atmosphere. In the teaching process, finding interesting and effective activities to improve students' reading comprehension skills is very important. **Reading Puzzle** is an ideal solution for this. This activity not only brings a fun learning experience, but also helps students develop many necessary skills. Besides **Reading Puzzle** increases interest in reading time, it also improves teamwork skills. When participating in the **Reading Puzzle** game, students will have to read and understand the content of their paragraph. This not only trains their reading comprehension skills but also develops their logical thinking. From there, they will need to analyze the paragraph to find the appropriate remaining half, thereby improving their ability to process information. The **Reading Puzzle** game is also a great way to improve students' teamwork skills. Students have to move, communicate non-verbally and cooperate with each other to find the remaining half. This not only helps students develop communication skills but also creates a strong bond between members of the class.

How to play **Reading Puzzle** game

Preparation

To organize the Reading Puzzle game effectively, teachers need to prepare some basic things. First, the participants of this game are all students without any level limit. This allows all students to participate and enjoy this interesting activity. The size of the game is very important; it is suitable for groups of students, about 20-25 people. With this number, students can easily interact and find companions.

Finally, the materials needed for the **Reading Puzzle** game are a short story or a passage, divided into sections, or sentences. Teachers should choose content that is appropriate to the level of their students to ensure that all can participate effectively and enjoyably.

When having preparation, teachers can begin organizing the **Reading Puzzle** game by following these steps:

Distribute the Reading: First, the teacher needs to divide the passage or story into several parts. Each student will receive a separate part. This is an important step to create interest for students in the Reading Puzzle game.

Find and Match Activity: After receiving the passage, students will move around the classroom. They will read each other's passages to find the partner who has the other half of their passage. This activity not only encourages interaction but also helps students practice reading comprehension in a real-world context.

During the search, students are not allowed to talk. This has the positive effect of increasing their concentration and reducing noise in the classroom. It also makes the Reading Puzzle game more challenging, as students must rely entirely on their reading and comprehension skills to find their match.

To make the Reading Puzzle game more engaging, teachers can put the big story together. Instead of just putting together individual paragraphs, the whole class can take on a common challenge. It is putting all the small paragraphs together to form a complete story. This variation not only enhances reading ability but also encourages collaboration among students.

- Let students read something that interests them: When students like a topic, they can find the way to connect with it. It's important for students to learn reading comprehension skills even for lessons that challenge them.

- Ask students to write about what they read: After finishing a reading assignment, ask students to spend a few minutes journaling about what they read. Ask them to write their questions. Give students some structure, but also allow them the freedom to create what they

want. After having time to process the text, the teachers may invite them to share their reflections. The teachers and the other students can offer feedback on their shares.

- Have group discussions: Their discussions in the group can be a good way to insert fresh voices and ideas into a conversation. Hearing another student's interpretation of an assignment can encourage students to think about the reading in unique ways.

- Celebrate their victories: Help students feel proud of their skills by celebrating when they comprehend story elements or text details successfully. Compliment a student on a connection they made in the story, or congratulate them on their ability to summarize what they read. Boosting students' confidence can make reading more fun and can encourage them to continue developing their skills.

- Give pop quizzes: [4] Pop quizzes can help students think about aspects of the story they might have missed. Likely, they won't score very well. You can give them an opportunity to reread the text and answer the questions again. Not only does this help them scan the reading for the answers to specific questions, it can also train them to look at seemingly unimportant details more closely. To make the quiz more fun, consider offering a prize for the student who gets the most correct answers the first time and another prize for the first one to get all the correct answers after looking at the text again.

- Ask students to draw a picture of what they have read: While writing about what they get can be a good way to have students process what they've read, you also encourage them to use other forms of expression. Helping them establish connections to the texts can teach them skills they need to get all the information from a piece of writing.

- Encourage students to develop their own strategies: Everyone has unique methods they use to learn, and one student's strategies might not work for another student. Teach unique strategies and encourage students to use the methods that is best for them. Finally, the purpose is to help them engage with what they're reading.

4. CONCLUSION

In Vietnam, where English is only a foreign language, practicing the reading comprehension skills of students is not easy, especially for Hai Phong University first year students who have little English knowledge. To train students' reading comprehension skills, teachers must be enthusiastic and dedicated to their profession, guiding students in every way possible to help them accumulate vocabulary, structure and apply that knowledge in daily communication. To have a successful reading comprehension lesson requires teachers to know how to apply appropriate skills to all students and to encourage students' efforts, combining the results of classroom learning with students' self-study.

Within the scope of an article, the writer has mentioned the current status of reading comprehension skills of non-language major first-year students of Hai Phong University, on that basis, the writer has presented traditional reading comprehension teaching methods, current reading comprehension teaching methods and the experience in teaching reading comprehension skills, especially the "make it a game" method with the Reading puzzle teaching style that brings a positive and effective learning atmosphere.

With the hope that the proposed methods will partly contribute to motivating students to learn English, we also hope that our colleagues will consult and contribute more ideas to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning reading comprehension skills for students.

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MỘT SỐ PHƯƠNG PHÁP DẠY KỸ NĂNG ĐỌC HIỂU TRONG HỌC PHẦN TIẾNG ANH CƠ SỞ CHO SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ NHẤT KHÔNG CHUYÊN NGỮ TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC HẢI PHÒNG

Tóm tắt: Trong việc dạy các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ, đọc là một trong những kỹ năng cơ bản rất được chú trọng. Đọc là phương pháp hữu hiệu để học sinh nắm vững và củng cố kiến thức ngôn ngữ, làm phong phú vốn từ vựng cũng như hiểu sâu hơn về phong cách và cách sử dụng ngôn ngữ đang học. Đọc nói chung và đọc hiểu nói riêng có vai trò rất quan trọng trong việc phát triển kỹ năng ngôn ngữ. Sinh viên năm thứ nhất nói chung và sinh viên không chuyên ngữ nói riêng cần làm quen với khả năng đọc hiểu hiệu quả để phục vụ cho việc học tập, nghiên cứu và ứng dụng nghề nghiệp. Thực tế, sinh viên năm nhất không chuyên ngữ của đại học Hải Phòng đều có rất ít kiến thức và kỹ năng đọc hiểu văn bản Tiếng Anh. Hầu hết các em đều vừa tốt nghiệp Trung học phổ thông, và các kỹ năng đọc hiểu Tiếng Anh các em được luyện qua các dạng bài đọc đơn giản trong sách giáo khoa. Hơn nữa, thời gian để luyện kỹ năng đọc hiểu Tiếng Anh của học sinh phổ thông là rất ít. Thường chiếm được một phần tám tổng số thời gian cho một đơn vị bài học. Hy vọng với một số phương pháp dạy kỹ năng đọc hiểu được đề cập đến trong bài báo này sẽ giúp các em sinh viên năm nhất không chuyên ngữ nắm vững kỹ năng đọc hiểu, trên cơ sở đó các em có thể nâng cao được hiệu quả học tập của bản thân mình.

Từ khóa: phương pháp giảng dạy, kỹ năng đọc hiểu, kỹ năng đọc lướt, kỹ năng đọc quét, sinh viên năm nhất không chuyên ngữ.