

DETERMINANTS TO THE READING COMPREHENSION PERFORMANCE LEVEL OF THE SECOND- YEAR STUDENTS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

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SUMMARY

The present study aimed to work on determinants to the reading comprehension performance level of second-year students. This descriptive correlation study attempts to establish relationship between the profile of students in relation to their competence, needs and motivation in reading English. The respondents of this study were 60 second-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, academic year 2017-2018. This study utilized experimental research where set of reading questions was used as a measuring tool in the study. The test consisted of items that measured the effects of using reading syllabus in comparison with the traditional method in enhancing the reading skills of the respondents.

Keywords: *Reading comprehension; second-year students; Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry; determinants; performance.*

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language widely used in the world today. English is used in international meetings and conferences. Books, magazines, and newspapers written in English are available in many countries around the world. Vietnam used to be a highly centralized and uniform system, tightly managed by the Ministry of Education and Training. The choice of English in particular and foreign languages in general, to be taught at schools is affected directly by the political, economic and social policies of the society.

In recent years, communicative approach which considers the development of all four skills: listening, writing, speaking and reading, has been applied in teaching English. As a result, the process of teaching and learning foreign languages especially English has had new achievements. However, for several reasons, there still exist many challenges and difficulties for both teachers and learners of English. Teaching reading is a huge complicated task. Reading is the cornerstone of an effective education. Without this skill, people are limited in so many important life activities. People cannot access the newspaper, read the directions of a

new recipe, enjoy a favorite novel, or read a prescription on a bottle of medication. The list goes on and on.

Mentioning to the importance of reading, Stephen Krashen (2004) [1] shows that reading is good for every learner and reading is good for kids. In every study he has conducted, all over the world, with different ages, genders etc. the results have been consistent allowing people to read what they want, at their reading level, increases their reading ability, their vocabulary, grammar, and self- esteem. Nowadays, the world is changing day by day and a lot of new things, or surprising things, significant news over the world can be appeared on the internet or any other media, and without reading whether we can access any of these issues. Therefore, no one can deny the importance of reading. As an English proverb says “If you read only one book in your life, I highly recommend you keep your mouth because the more we read, the more knowledge we gain”. Hence, one of the most important roles of reading in daily life is the satisfaction of knowledge.

Similarly, reading is tied to all other academic areas. Without reading, writing, spelling, and the content areas such as science and social studies would be difficult, if not impossible, to participate in or complete at an adequate

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level. College study becomes out of the question and many jobs are simply out of reach because they require some basic levels of reading or other skills that hinges on reading. Thus, the researcher would like to develop a reading program which can help the students to become more interested in reading and can encourage them to read.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adrian, D. (1998) [2] cited that providing vocabulary instruction is one of the most significant ways in which teachers can improve students' reading and listening comprehension. Although growth in vocabulary knowledge occurs rapidly, the rate at which word meanings are acquired can vary greatly.

According to Harmer, J. (1998) [3], comprehension requires the reader to be an active constructor of meaning. Researches in learner reading ability has demonstrated that readers do not simply "perceive" the meaning that is in a text. In fact, expert readers co-construct meaning with a text. The research base shows that reading is a "transaction" in which the reader brings purposes and life experiences to bear to converse with the text. This meeting of the reader and the text resulting in the meaning makes

comprehension. Comprehension does not only attend to what is coded or written in the text, but it also depends upon the reader's background experiences, purposes, feelings, and needs for interpretation.

According to Penny, Ur.(2000) [4] the ways to improve reading skills, getting the learners to understand a simple text, is only the beginning. Reading skills need to be fostered so that learners can cope with more and more sophisticated texts and tasks, and deal with them efficiently: quickly, appropriately, and skillfully.

SUBJECT AND METHODOLOGY

The populations of this study were sixty of second-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry. Sixty sample students who have the same mental abilities were selected as the subjects of the study.

A researcher-made questionnaire was prepared and organized by the writer as her major tool for some specific question. From the data gathered the needs and motivational factors of the students in reading were determined.

Mean, standard deviation, percentage, frequency, Pearson R, description, and explanation were used to interpret the data collected.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	43	71.7
Female	17	28.3
Total	60	100.0
Age		
<19	4	6.7
19-20	40	66.7
>20	16	26.6
Total	60	100.0
Size of family		
<=3 person	12	20.0
4-5 person	36	60.0
>=6 person	12	20.0
Total	60	100.0

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Monthly family income		
<=1 million	13	21.7
1.1-2.9 million	31	51.7
3.0-5.0 million	8	13.3
>=5 million	8	13.3
Total	60	100.0
Time spend in one reading session		
30 minute or less	25	41.7
31 minutes to 60 minutes	30	50.0
61 minutes to 120 minutes	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0
Types of school graduated		
Specialized government high school	5	8.3
General government high school	55	91.7
Total	60	100.0

It could be seen in the table, 71.7 percent are male and 28.3 percent are female; 66.7 percent are 19 to 20 years old, 26.6 percent are over 20 years old and 6.7 percent are under 19 years old; 60.0 percent are living in family having four to five members, 20.0 percent are living in big family with more than six members and 20.0 percent are members of nuclear families with three or less than three members; 51.7 percent had a monthly family income of 1.1 million to 2.9 million VND and 21.7 percent earned one million VND and below and 13.3 percent earned three million VND and above; 91.7 percent graduated from general government high school and 8.3 percent graduated from specialized government high school.

Table 2. *The parent's profession and Type of reading materials*

Parent Profession	Father		Mother	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Professional	10	16.7	12	20.0
Businessman	5	8.3	3	5.0
Skillful	45	75.0	45	75.0
Total	60	100.0	60	100.0
Reading Material	at home		during the lesson	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Book	55	54.5	61	76.2
Magazine	31	30.7	7	8.8
Newspaper	15	14.9	12	15.0
Total	101	100.0	80	100.0

Table 2 shows that the most popular jobs of the respondents' parents were skillful works such as: farmer, worker, driver, carpenter. The result shows that book was the most popular reading materials used at home as well as during reading lessons. Most of them spent 31 minutes to 60 minutes on English reading. It further implies that students were quite hardworking and interested in reading.

Table 3. Attitude of students towards reading

Attitude	Frequency	Percent
I don't like to read anything	3	2.5
I always like to read any topics	12	10.1
I like to read only when the topic is interesting for me	55	46.2
I like to read only when I relax	42	35.3
I read only when I have to do exercise	7	5.9
Total	119	100.0

Table 3 shows the attitudes of students towards reading. Among the five items, the ideas that "I like to read only when the topic is interesting for me " was ranked first with the frequency of 55. The following was item "I like to read only when I relax" with the frequency of 42. The findings imply that topics play a very important role in reading. It contributes much to the success of reading. Moreover, the mood of the readers also affects the reading process.

Table 4. Topics of interest of students in reading

Topics	Frequency	Percentage
Love story	52	28.4
Science fiction	30	16.4
Adventure	25	13.7
Comedy	36	19.7
Detective story	40	21.9
Total	183	100.0

As can be seen from table 4, love story is the topic most students were interested in with the frequency of 52 (28.4 percent). This was followed by Detective story, Comedy, Science fiction and the last is "Adventure" topic. Their preference in reading topics seemed to follow the current trend of the youth. They are curious about love, fond of enjoyment and fun.

Table 5. Level of competence of the students in reading comprehension

	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
Score3	1	1.7	Poor
Score4	2	3.3	Poor
Score5	7	11.7	Fair
Score6	18	30.0	Fair
Score7	20	33.3	Good
Score8	12	20.0	Good
Total	60	100.0	
Mean	7.000		
Standard deviation	1.14240		

Table 6. Level of competence of the students in vocabulary comprehension

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
9	3	5.0	Excellent
8	12	20.0	Good
7	18	30.0	Good
6	17	28.3	Fair
5	7	11.7	Fair
4	2	3.3	Poor
3	1	1.7	Poor
Total	60	100.0	
Mean	7.0		
Standard deviation	1.26		

Legend: 9-10: Excellent, 7-8: Good, 5-6: Fair, 0-4: Poor

It could be seen from table 5 and table 6 that level of competence of the students in reading comprehension and vocabulary skills are quite high with the mean of 7.0 reading comprehension with score ranged from 3 to 8 and 7.0 vocabulary skills with grade ranged from 3 to 9. The most popular grade in reading comprehension skills was 7 with the frequency of 20 and vocabulary skills were 7 and 6 with the frequency of 18 and 17.

Table 7. Correlation between the profile of students and their competence in vocabulary ability

Variable tested for relationship	R-value	P-value	Verbal International
1.1 Age	-0.598	0.001	significant
1.2 Gender	-0.191	0.143	not significant
1.3 Monthly family income	-0.011	0.932	not significant
1.4 Size of family	0.147	0.262	not significant
1.5 Topics of interest reading	47.637	0.001	significant
1.6 Type of high school graduated from	21.818	0.001	significant
1.7 Attitude of students towards reading	47.91	0.001	significant
1.8 Types of reading material used during reading lesson/at home	53.45	0.001	significant
1.9 Time/ Frequently spend reading	-0.41	0.001	significant

The table 7 presents the significant relationship between vocabulary ability and students' profile. The findings revealed that significant relation existed between vocabulary ability and age, Topics of interest reading, Type of high school graduated from, Attitude of students towards reading, Types of reading material used during reading lesson/at home, Time/ Frequently spend reading, the obtained P-values of (<0.001) respectively, being less than the threshold P-value 0.01. This means that there are strong evidences against the null hypothesis which states that there is significant relation between vocabulary ability and students' profiles with respect of age, Topics of interest reading, Topics of interest reading.

The study shows the significant correlation between vocabulary ability and students' profiles with respect to Gender, Monthly family income, Size of family, the obtained P-value of 0.143, 0.932, 0.262 respectively, being higher than the threshold P-value of 0.001 which indicates that there was very little evidence against the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between vocabulary ability and students' profiles.

Table 8. Correlation between the profile of students and their competence in reading comprehension ability

Variable tested for relationship	R-value	P-value	VI
1.1 Age	- 0.833	0.001	significant
1.2 Gender	9.31	0.097	not significant
1.3 Monthly family income	0.136	0.301	not significant
1.4 Size of family	0.140	0.288	not significant
1.5 Topics of interest reading	60	0.001	significant
1.6 Type of high school graduated from	21	0.001	significant
1.7 Attitude of students towards reading	47	0.001	significant
1.8 Types of reading material used during reading lesson/at home	41.299	0.001	significant
1.9 Time/ Frequently spend reading	-0.755	0.001	significant

The findings revealed that significant relation existed between reading comprehension ability and age, Topics of interest reading, Topics of interest reading; the obtained P-values of (<0.001), respectively, being less than the threshold P-value 0.01. This means that there are strong evidences against the null hypothesis which states that there is

significant relation between reading comprehension ability and students' profiles with respect of age, topics of interest reading.

The study shows the significant correlation between reading comprehension ability and students' profiles with respect to Gender, Monthly family income, Size of family, the obtained P-value of 0.097, 0.301, 0.288

respectively, being higher than the threshold P-value of 0.001 which indicates that there was very little evidence against the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis which state that there is no significant relationship between reading comprehension ability and students' profiles.

CONCLUSIONS

There was significant relation between reading comprehension ability and vocabulary ability, educational attainment of mother, location of high school graduated from; but none with other factors. It concluded that significant relation existed between vocabulary ability and monthly income, location of high school graduated from and profession of father. There was no significant relation between vocabulary ability and other indicators. Thus, the Hypotheses are partially accepted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There may be a comprehensive review of all the teaching methodologies at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry in particular and the other universities as well as the whole educational system in the general so

that a standardized teaching methodology applicable to all segments of students' population will be formulated.

2. The teacher may introduce the students interesting texts of different types and genres. It is importance that the materials should be of their favorite topics and organized and relevant to students' world knowledge and experience. He/she may not only try to motivate students to read but also to maintain the motivation by success and the level of challenge the tasks. Moreover, it is important that teachers exploit the advantages of visual aids and games such as pictures, movies, music... to motivate the students at any stage of the lesson to regard enthusiasm.

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TÓM TẮT

NHỮNG YẾU TỐ QUYẾT ĐỊNH ĐẾN MỨC ĐỘ ĐỌC HIỂU CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ HAI TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NÔNG LÂM – ĐẠI HỌC THÁI NGUYÊN

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Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là tìm hiểu các yếu tố quyết định đến mức độ đọc hiểu của sinh viên năm thứ hai. Nghiên cứu tương quan mô tả nhằm thiết lập mối quan hệ giữa hồ sơ của sinh viên với sự tương quan về năng lực, nhu cầu và động lực của họ trong quá trình đọc hiểu tiếng Anh. Đối tượng của nghiên cứu này là 60 sinh viên năm thứ hai tại trường Đại học Nông Lâm – Đại học Thái Nguyên, năm học 2017-2018. Nghiên cứu trong bài báo sử dụng phương thực nghiệm, bằng cách sử dụng bộ câu hỏi như một công cụ đo lường trong nghiên cứu. Bài kiểm tra bao gồm các mục đánh giá hiệu quả của việc sử dụng giáo trình đọc so với phương pháp giảng dạy truyền thống nhằm nâng cao kỹ năng đọc hiểu của đối tượng nghiên cứu.

Từ khóa: *Đọc hiểu; sinh viên năm thứ hai; Trường Đại học Nông Lâm – Đại học Thái Nguyên; yếu tố quyết định; hiệu suất.*

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