

FACTORS AFFECTING THE READING COMPREHENSION OF THE FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT LUONG NGOC QUYEN HIGH SCHOOL, THAI NGUYEN CITY

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SUMMARY

Reading is considered one of the most important skills for the learner (Dublin and Sycina, 1991). Reading comprehension is also the most challenging and difficult task for the learner in studying English. Reading comprehension is a complex process for many students, it is even more complicated to read in a foreign language. This correlational descriptive study focused on Factors affecting the Reading Comprehension of high school students at Luong Ngoc Quyen High School, Thai Nguyen City, academic year 2014-2015.

Keywords: *reading comprehension, activities, factors, high school students, Luong Ngoc Quyen High School*

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that English as a means of communication has become increasingly important in ever-changing world of communication. English is used as the effective medium of international communication. It is the language of trade, science technology, tourism, sports, music, and many other fields in life. Teaching and learning English in Vietnam has received special attention since the country implemented the "open-door" policy. That is the reason why learning English is not only interesting but is also a great and practical demand for many people, especially for those who want to advance in their careers and to achieve their long-term study goals.

The increasing importance of English is also acknowledged in high school level education in Vietnam. English is now compulsory in high school. To be proficient learner of English, students need to have access to a wide range of materials and to be good at integrating the four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This seems to be a reasonable long-term goal. It is difficult to reach this goal as high school students receive virtually almost no training in such skills.

Among the four skills in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading is considered one of the most important skills for the learner (Dublin and Sycina, 1991). Reading comprehension is also the most challenging and difficult task for the learner in studying English. Reading comprehension is a complex process for many students, it is even more complicated to read in a foreign language. Many studies indicate that EFL students find it difficult to comprehend the texts and achieve their goals in reading comprehension (Baker and Brown, 1984; Gritow, 1985; Clark, 1978; Ellis, Deshler, Lenz, Clark, 1993).

In this fast changing world, reading is one of the means by which one gets information to be in tune with the rapid changes in education, life styles, economy, and science and technology, among others. And it is the reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary that are tested on high school examinations, not speaking, listening or writing. Vietnamese teachers and learners of English in high schools are facing many difficulties in teaching and learning reading. For the learners, it is sometimes very difficult to understand a text or a passage in English because of their limited vocabulary, grammar, reading skills and poor background knowledge.

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This study is done with the aim of suggesting some factors affecting the reading comprehension skills of the students which may be applied to improving teaching and learning reading comprehension in high schools in Vietnam

SUBJECT AND METHODOLOGY

The descriptive correlational method of research was used in this study. The respondents in this study were the 400 first year high school students from the 10 class forms at Luong Ngoc Quyen High School, Thai Nguyen City during the Academic Year 2014-2015. The elements of the sample were determined using the stratified random sampling. The students were first stratified according to their section and then the individual respondents were selected from each section by random. Employing the Slovin formula with 10 percent margin of error a total of at least 100 students were determined to be included in the sample.

To gather data, a questionnaire on reading comprehension was developed, it consisted of the following parts: To gather data, a questionnaire on reading comprehension was developed, it consisted of the following parts: The first part of the reading material is intended to get the vocabulary abilities of the students. The second part includes the comprehension abilities with the reading materials of the respondents.

The statistical treatment was used to interpret the data to be collected. They are frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, weighted mean and Pearson's r Correlation.

FINDINGS:

Based on the results of data treatment and the levels showed in the questionnaires, the researcher noted the following:

The study was conducted to determine the variables affecting reading comprehension skills of the high school students in Luong Ngoc Quyen High School, Thai Nguyen City for the academic year 2014-2015.

Table 1. Level Reading Comprehension Abilities of Students

Reading Comprehension Abilities	-X	SD	Remarks
Vocabulary Skills	81.8	10.58	Satisfactory
Comprehension Skills	80.3	11.32	Satisfactory

The average mean of table 1 further indicates that the level of reading Comprehension Abilities of students is satisfactory.

Table 2. Relationship between English Vocabulary Skills of the Students and the Students – and Family Factors

Variables tested for relationship	Statistical test	Statistical value	P-value	Decision	VI	Type of relationship if significant
English Vocabulary abilities and Score in reading comprehension	r	0.518	0.000	Reject H_0	S	positive
2 Gender	r	0.085	0.403	Accept H_0	NS	
3 Reading interest	r	-0.179	0.075	Accept H_0	NS	
4 Mother educational attainment	r	0.010	0.918	Accept H_0	NS	
5 Father educational attainment	r	-0.719	0.028	Reject H_0	S	negative
6 Family income	r	-0.117	0.746	Accept H_0	NS	

The findings revealed that significant correlation existed between English Vocabulary Skills and score in reading comprehension:

English Vocabulary Ability of the students are significantly related to father educational attainment the P-value of 0.028 being less than the threshold P-value of 0.05. The statistical value - 0.719 signifies that relationship is negative whose fathers have higher educational attainment have better vocabulary ability.

The study failed to show any significant correlation between English Vocabulary Ability with the gender, reading interest, mother educational attainment, father educational attainment, and family income of the respondents, which indicates that there is no significant relationship between English Vocabulary Ability with the gender, reading interest, mother educational attainment, father educational attainment, and family income

Table 3. *Relationships between the English Vocabulary Skills of the Student and the Perceived Professional Qualities of the Teachers*

Variables tested for relationship	Statistical test	Statistical value	P-value	Decision	VI	Type of relationship if significant
English Vocabulary Skills and						
1 Presents the subject matter accurately and systematically	r	-0.013	0.894	Accept Ho	NS	
2 Relates subject matter with other areas of knowledge and community affair	r	-0.071	0.484	Accept Ho	NS	
3 Exhibits thorough and broad knowledge of the subject matter	r	-0.230	0.021	Reject Ho	S	negative
4 Sets and explains course objectives and expectations	r	0.208	0.038	Accept Ho	NS	
5 Shows awareness of current issues concerns in her his field	r	-0.132	0.189	Accept Ho	NS	
6 Organizes subject matter according to the given learning competencies and follow it systematic	r	0.158	0.116	Accept Ho	NS	
7 Adjusts teaching strategies according to student level of understanding	r	-0.095	0.346	Accept Ho	NS	
8 Gives comprehensive explanation and teaches in an interesting way		-0.120	0.223	Accept Ho	NS	
9 Stresses important points or aspects of the subject matter by repeating or underlining them more than less importance	r	0.024	0.890	Accept Ho	NS	
10 Accepts students comment for further analysis even when the point of views is different	r	0.083	0.413	Accept Ho	NS	
11 Relates to student in a friendly yet professional manner	r	-0.160	0.112	Accept Ho	NS	
12 Establishes psychological climate in a group which is positive and learning oriented	r	0.184	0.064	Accept Ho	NS	
13 Entertains questions to the best of his/her ability	r	-0.002	0.989	Accept Ho	NS	
14 Treats students, peers or superiors with respect	r	-0.021	0.837	Accept Ho	NS	
15 Is conscientious or careful of details but flexible and considerate	r	-0.166	0.100	Accept Ho	NS	

The findings revealed that significant negative correlation existed between English Vocabulary Skills of the study and the ability of the teachers to exhibit thorough and broad knowledge of the subject matter

Table 4. Relationship between English Vocabulary Skills of the students and the Perceived Personal Qualities of Teacher

Variables tested for relationship	Statistical test	Statistical value	P-value	Decision	VI
English Vocabulary Skills and					
1 Stimulates students through interesting and original materials and techniques	r	0.346	0.515	Accept Ho	NS
2 Classroom procedures are flexible within the overall plan	r	-0.095	0.346	Accept Ho	NS
3 Anticipates individual needs	r	0.100	0.321	Accept Ho	NS
4 Foresees and attempts to resolve potentials	r	0.089	0.334	Accept Ho	NS
5 Stimulates students' interests in the lessons by using teaching aids and devices appropriate for the class discussions/activity	r	-0.018	0.862	Accept Ho	NS
6 Alert and enthusiastic	r	0.063	0.533	Accept Ho	NS
7 Recognize and admits own mistakes	r	0.197	0.050	Accept Ho	NS
8 Like fun, has sense of humor	r	-0.081	0.422	Accept Ho	NS
9 Cheerful and optimistic	r	-0.034	0.741	Accept Ho	NS
10 Appears interested in students and classroom activities	r	-0.156	0.122	Accept Ho	NS
11 Possess kindness and patience	r	0.038	0.710	Accept Ho	NS
12 Helps students with personal as well as educational problems	r	0.023	0.819	Accept Ho	NS
13 Shows understanding and sympathy in working with students	r	0.137	0.175	Accept Ho	NS
14 Is friendly and courteous in relation with students	r	0.052	0.606	Accept Ho	NS
15 Sociable and cooperative	r	0.061	0.549	Accept Ho	NS

It can be discerned in the table that no significant relationship existed between the English Vocabulary Skills and the perceived Personal Qualities of Teacher. This means that there is no significant between English Vocabulary Skills and Personal Qualities

Table 5. Relating between English Comprehension Skills and the Students and Family Factors

Variables tested for relationship	Statistical test	Statistical value	P-value	Decision	VI	Type of relationship if significant
English Comprehension abilities and						
1 Score in English vocabulary skills and		0.518	0.000	Reject Ho	N	positive
2 Gender	r	0.167	0.098	Accept Ho	NS	
3 Reading interest	r	-0.169	0.094	Accept Ho	NS	
4 Mother educational attainment	r	0.033	0.094	Accept Ho	NS	
5 Father educational attainment	r	-0.305	0.002	Reject Ho	S	negative
6 Family income	r	-0.076	0.455	Accept Ho	NS	

The study failed to show any significant correlation between English Comprehension Ability with respect to gender, reading interest, mother educational attainment, father educational attainment, and family income, the obtained P-value of 0.098, 0.094, 0.094, 0.455, being higher

than the threshold P- value of 0.05 which indicates that there is no significant relationship between English Comprehension Ability with respects to gender, reading interest, mother educational attainment, father educational attainment, and family income.

Table 6. *Relationship between the English Comprehension Skills of the Students and the Perceived Professional Qualities of the Teachers*

Variables tested for relationship	Statistical test	Statistical value	P-value	Decision	VI
English Comprehension Skills					
1. Presents the subject matter accurately and systematically	r	0.077	0.447	Accept Ho	NS
2. Relates subject matter with other areas of knowledge and community affair	r	-0.112	0.269	Accept Ho	NS
3. Exhibits thorough and broad knowledge of the subject matter	r	-0.116	0.099	Accept Ho	NS
4. Sets and explains course objectives and expectations	r	0.149	0.140	Accept Ho	NS
5. Shows awareness of current issues concerns in her his field.	r	0.116	0.250	Accept Ho	NS
6. Organizes subject matter according to the given learning competencies and follow it systematic	r	-0.042	0.677	Accept Ho	NS
7. Adjusts teaching strategies according to student' level of understanding	r	0.014	0.892	Accept Ho	NS
8. Gives comprehensive explanation and teaches in an interesting way		-0.099	0.525	Accept Ho	NS
9. Stresses important points or aspects of the subject matter by repeating or underlining them more than less important	r	0.065	0.520	Accept Ho	NS
10. Accepts students comment for further analysis even when the point of views is different	r	-0.015	0.884	Accept Ho	NS
11. Relates to student in a friendly yet professional manner	r	-0.081	0.422	Accept Ho	NS
12. Establishes psychological climate in a group which is positive and learning oriented	r	0.088	0.386	Accept Ho	NS
13. Entertains questions to the best of his/her ability	r	-0.021	0.835	Accept Ho	NS
14. Treats students, peers or superiors with respect	r	-0.021	0.836	Accept Ho	NS
15. Is conscientious or careful of details but flexible and considerate	r	-0.046	0.648	Accept Ho	NS

The findings revealed that no significant relationships between the English Comprehension Skills of the students with the Professional Qualities of the Teachers

The study as can be seen in the table reveal that similarly no significant differences existed in Personal Qualities. This means that there is no significant between English Comprehension Skills and Personal Qualities

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the foregoing findings, the alternative hypothesis which indicated that most of the identified factors have no significant relationship to the reading comprehension skills of the students

Aside from the father educational attainment and the ability of the teachers to Exhibit thorough and broad knowledge of the subject matter, the other variables identified in this study were not connected with Vocabulary Skills of the students

Table 7. Relationships between the English Comprehension Skills of the Students and the Personal Qualities of the Teachers

Variables tested for relationship	Statistical test	Statistical value	P-value	Decision	VI
English Comprehension Skills and					
1 Stimulates students through interesting and original materials and techniques	r	-0.084	0.408	Accept Ho	NS
2 Classroom procedures are flexible within the overall plan	r	0.062	0.539	Accept Ho	NS
3 Anticipates individual needs	r	0.064	0.530	Accept Ho	NS
4 Foresees and attempts to resolve potentials	r	0.081	0.421	Accept Ho	NS
5 Stimulates students' interests in the lessons by using teaching aids and devices appropriate for the class discussions activity	r	0.091	0.368	Accept Ho	NS
1 Alert and enthusiastic	r	-0.114	0.260	Accept Ho	NS
2 Recognize and admits own mistakes	r	0.011	0.916	Accept Ho	NS
3 Anticipates individual needs	r	-0.027	0.793	Accept Ho	NS
4 Foresees and attempts to resolve potentials	r	-0.79	0.433	Accept Ho	NS
5 Appears interested in students and classroom activities	r	-0.039	0.699	Accept Ho	NS
1 Possess kindness and patience	r	-0.032	0.751	Accept Ho	NS
2 Helps students with personal as well as educational problems	r	0.037	0.714	Accept Ho	NS
3 Shows understanding and sympathy in working with students	r	0.145	0.151	Accept Ho	NS
4 Is friendly and courteous in relation with students	r	-0.041	0.685	Accept Ho	NS
5 Sociable and cooperative	t	0.180	0.073	Accept Ho	NS

On the other hand, only the father educational attainment is significantly related to the reading comprehension skills of the students. Reading Comprehension Skills is significantly related to Vocabulary Skills.

RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the foregoing conclusions, it is recommended that the school administrators should organize a functional reading program to enhance reading abilities of the students. The program should consider communicative activities that would enhance vocabulary skills of the students as it was revealed in this study that Reading Comprehension Skills are significantly related to Vocabulary Skills.

It is also recommended that improvement be done on the areas of the teachers' Knowledge of the Subject Matter, Teaching Methods and Techniques, Student Faculty Relation, Readiness, Dynamism and Warmth to make teaching English more effective.

Teachers, who have no training in teaching reading, should attend seminars and other in-service training for the development of more skills.

It is further recommended that parallel studies be undertaken to gain more and deeper insights about Reading Comprehension Skills as well as to negate or affirm the findings of this study.

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TÓM TẮT

NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ CÁC NHÂN TỐ ẢNH HƯỞNG TỚI KHẢ NĂNG ĐỌC HIỂU CỦA HỌC SINH TẠI TRƯỜNG THPT LƯƠNG NGỌC QUYẾN, THÀNH PHỐ THÁI NGUYÊN

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Đọc là một trong bốn kỹ năng quan trọng nhất đối với học sinh trong quá trình học tiếng Anh tại trường phổ thông. Tuy nhiên khả năng đọc của học sinh tại bị ảnh hưởng bởi nhiều nhân tố. Do đó nghiên cứu này nhằm tập trung vào việc nghiên cứu các nhân tố ảnh hưởng tới khả năng đọc hiểu của 100 học sinh tại trường THPT Lương Ngọc Quyến, Tp Thái Nguyên, năm học 2014-2015.

Từ khóa: *kỹ năng đọc, nhân tố, các hoạt động học sinh Trường THPT Lương Ngọc Quyến*

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