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Create Interest When Teaching Reading Comprehension to Non-Major Students

Hoang Thi Hien [(1)]*, Trinh Thi Thuy* [(1)]

[(1)] University of Social and Labour Affairs
Email: tracythuy16@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

Reading comprehension is an important skill among the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This skill provides students with a lot of interesting, up-to-date information as well as the necessary structures and expressions to develop the remaining skills. However, most students are not interested in reading comprehension classes, so their reading is not effective. Reality shows that one of the most important factors leading to success in learning English in general and learning reading skills in particular is that learners must always be encouraged and motivated to learn. This is a challenge for teachers. In this article, I would like to give some tips to motivate non-majors during reading lessons, and at the same time help teachers improve teaching reading comprehension skills to students.

Keywords: Reading comprehension skills, interest in learning, reading comprehension methods, reading comprehension teaching strategies

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension plays an important role in teaching and learning foreign languages. It can be understood as the ability to capture required information as efficiently as possible. Therefore, the reading comprehension process includes three elements: reading comprehension, the reader's background knowledge, and contextual aspects related to understanding the reading.

Swam (1995) gave the definition of a person with good reading comprehension skills as someone who has the ability to read accurately and effectively in order to obtain maximum information from the reading text without having to make much effort.

According to Grellet (1985), reading comprehension means gathering the required information in the reading text as effectively as possible.

In short, reading comprehension is the process by which the reader can recognize the written form in the text and understand the content behind the writing.

2. Literature review

2.1. Reading comprehension in the English program for non-majors and the teaching of lecturers at a university in Hanoi

Regarding the form of learning, students mainly do it in class, or in the practice room with instructors.

Student testing and evaluation are conducted according to 03 types of scores including: weighted attendance score of 10%; midterm test score weighted at 30%; The weighted final exam score is 60%.

For reading comprehension skills, testing and assessment are carried out both in the midterm exam and the final exam. This shows that reading comprehension skills are a teaching focus of the School, stemming from the actual quality of students.

Reading comprehension skill as a concept and a theoretical framework has a connotation with specific skills. In this regard, Karlin (1987) has generalized five groups of reading skills as follows:

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

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

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

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

Appreciation skills: is the recognition of language and types of literature.

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

Mastering the content and format of the English program, our lecturers have proactively implemented it according to the general regulations of the professional and teaching management aspects, along with each individual'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 of wasting time using the dictionary to look up. the meaning of each new word but you may still not understand the lesson content.

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 have not yet determined the necessary reading techniques for each type of reading text.

Stemming from those difficulties, the issue of innovating methods of teaching reading comprehension skills is posed to lecturers to help students become more interested in learning reading comprehension skills, helping students achieve results. Study well and apply reading comprehension skills well in future work.

2.2. What is effective reading comprehension?

- Effective reading comprehension is a process that includes the following elements:

- Have a clear purpose in mind;

- Highly motivated while reading;

- Apply appropriate reading comprehension strategies based on the purpose and motivation of the reading;

- Adequate background knowledge and vocabulary;

- Pay detailed attention to important passages;

- Reading speed.

2.3. Factors affecting students' reading comprehension motivation.

There are many factors that affect students' interest in learning to read such as lecturers, students, reading materials and success. Among them, instructors and reading materials are the two most important influencing factors.

2.3.1. Lecturers

The instructor's personality and attitude in class play an important role, affecting students' interest and progress. In fact, if a teacher comes to class with a lively, sympathetic, enthusiastic or humorous attitude, he or she will certainly be more successful in teaching than those who do not have, or lack, one of these characteristics. Teachers who are enthusiastic in teaching and have a positive attitude toward the subject and learners will make them interested in reading class.

In addition, the lecturer's language ability, teaching methods and assessment methods also affect learners' motivation. The ability to design interesting lessons, using diverse and appropriate tips and activities will attract the active participation of students.

Another influential factor in lecturers is the assessment and recognition of student progress. Lecturers should not compare one student with another, but should encourage and create a learning environment that helps each other. However, instructors should also evaluate their progress so that they are confident and interested in participating in activities.

2.3.2. Materials

The level of challenge, topic and content of the reading material play an important role in motivating students to learn. If the reading comprehension is too difficult for the student's level, they will become less confident and discouraged. Or if they have to read texts with uninteresting content that is beyond their experience or knowledge, they may not continue reading. Therefore, choosing readings or delivering readings in ways that can increase readers' interest and motivation is a challenge for teachers...

3. Some measures to create excitement for students when learning reading comprehension skills.

3.1. State the benefits of reading comprehension for students

It is essential for teachers to help students realize how beneficial reading is. Lecturers need to focus on developing the remaining three skills (listening, speaking, writing) combined with reading skills during reading comprehension lessons. Therefore, if they learn good reading skills, it means they will accumulate sufficient vocabulary, structures or ideas to be able to write or speak in English. Even if they have to read a stack of documents at the office, it doesn't cause them any anxiety when they know how to read effectively.

3.2. Use a variety of teaching strategies

Instructors must use a variety of teaching strategies to help students at all three stages of reading comprehension.

❖ **Pre-reading**

- In the pre-reading stage, teachers can use some of the following activities to increase students' interest in learning to read:

- Give a one or two sentence general introduction to the content of the reading through the use of introductory sentences, visual aids, language games, titles and headings of the reading...

- Ask leading questions before reading. The questions that the lecturer asks must refer to the general meaning or main ideas of the lesson, not the content.

- Details in the article. Most importantly, the questions posed to students must be easy to answer and not too long, making it difficult for them to understand.

- Introduce some new words or difficult words in the reading that hinder students in understanding the reading content.

- Ask students to predict the content of the reading by answering the teacher's questions, pictures, etc.

- Organize discussions about the topic of the reading.

- Explain the instructions of the reading comprehension text.

- Use brain maps to discuss the topic of the reading.

❖ **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:

- 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.

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

- 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: This type of question (yes, no) is very useful for testing reading comprehension. Students often find it easy to answer.

+ Alternative questions: This is also a type of question that is often used to test students' understanding of the lesson.

+ Wh – questions: This type of question can be called an information question with most Wh – questions and can also be answered briefly, because at this point we only need to check the student's understanding of the lesson.

- 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 these skills. what you learned in the reading.

❖ **Post-reading**

A reasonable teaching strategy to use in the post-reading stage is to expand the knowledge acquired from the reading by learners in the pre-reading stage and during reading through exercises using writing skills, for example. : summarizing, evaluating, synthesizing, commenting and reflecting.

Summarizing is an effective method to gain knowledge from reading and, most importantly, a way to recall what you have read. However, the summary writing exercise is not simply a summary, but the lecturer can ask students to evaluate, synthesize, comment or reflect on what they have read. All of these strategies will help students reinforce in their writing the evaluative and interpretive understanding of what they have learned from the reading.

To encourage students to participate in activities before, during and after reading, teachers not only help them understand the content of the reading, but also create opportunities for them to master reading comprehension, vocabulary and Learn skills so as not to interrupt lesson content. Instructors should make decisions about how to use these activities during class, whether they achieve the instructional purpose, the difficulty of the reading, and how well students can read…

3.3. Applying information technology to teaching reading comprehension skills

Students' reading comprehension skills will not be improved and enhanced if they only rely on classroom sessions, but very importantly, they must work independently and study on their own. Understanding students, lecturers assigned and guided their assignments through the use of information technology application methods.

❖ **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 Now button to finish.

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. Instructors 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 instructor. 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 question sets to test students' reading comprehension levels.

❖ **Dreamreader website**

Dreamreader is a free website, with over 500 audio readings. Printable worksheet and a multiple-choice quiz. This website offers 5 reading categories, but the most attractive ones that help improve reading comprehension 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.

By assigning and guiding learning materials for students to self-study using information technology application methods, it shows that the quality of teaching and learning students' reading comprehension skills has improved quite quickly and clearly. Students gradually get into the habit of reading books and reading books becomes increasingly effective. Of course, here, the lecturer's teaching method is not simply one method of applying information technology, but is a combination of many methods. That is to use a combination of different teaching methods, such as the teacher-student contract approach, the individualized instruction method, and the student-style teaching method. student - structured learning, team teaching method.

❖ **General method with website Quizlet.com**

Teaching reading comprehension skills, instructors pay a lot of attention to using information technology application methods (multi-media methods - multimedia), first of all using the Quizlet website. Quizlet.com 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.

If you upgrade your account (pay 36 USD/year), instructors can create many classes on Quizlet.com and have students participate enthusiastically, thereby monitoring the students' learning process. Instructors on Quizlet.com can also share their lessons with other instructors and vice versa, so they not only copy and edit for themselves, but also save a lot of time. As for students, if they have a Quizlet account, they will be able to take any courses that the instructor offers, or search for other courses on the Quizlet community.

The application of information technology to teaching English reading comprehension skills (multimedia method) helps students mature quickly, especially in memorizing vocabulary.

- Students choose their own flashcards to use for memorizing word meanings through word testing with different definitions.

- Students can use flashcards to learn words and their meanings as well as pronunciation, by looking, then choosing to flip the card to see the word's meaning and illustration.

- Students can use writing cards to practice writing words according to the definition and the system will display correct - incorrect answers. If incorrect, the correct written word will be provided.

- Students can use spelling cards to practice listening and spelling at the same time and only when they write correctly can they move on to learning another word.

So here, it is very important that this method helps students self-test and evaluate how their vocabulary learning is progressing, thereby creating motivation, goals and methods for learning reading skills. understand them.

As for teachers, Quizlet.com has helped increase the efficiency and quality of teaching, making teaching and learning hours more attractive and fun.

This shows that, from a method of applying information technology through using the website Quizlet.com, lecturers can still use many different methods to achieve the goal of teaching and learning a reading comprehension skill. Among the methods that teachers attach more importance to are: teaching methods using simulation games, teaching methods using dramatization, and small group instruction methods. , teaching method by organizing debate (debate), integrated technical method (intergrative technique).

3.4. Organize group activities

In addition to organizing individual activities, lecturers should organize group or pair activities for students to participate in to make the classroom atmosphere more exciting. Lecturers can use a number of games and storylines related to the reading for students to role-play to create a fun and exciting learning atmosphere for students. Using games and music is an effective way to increase learners' learning motivation. Using them in the pre- and post-reading stages will be highly effective.

3.5. Design appropriate documents

The language in the reading must be at a moderate level of difficulty, the topic of the reading must be interesting, and the grammar must not be too complicated. Most types of reading comprehension exercises in some textbooks are often monotonous and uninteresting to students. Therefore, lecturers should apply a variety of activities related to the reading content such as choosing true or false (T/F), answers given, Wh questions, gap-filling, multiple choice, role-play,…

4. Conclusion

Reading interest and motivation are the first factors that help teachers improve students' reading comprehension skills. To make students love reading, teachers must not only make reading class fun and exciting but also make it useful to them. However, the above two factors play an important role but are not enough to make the reading comprehension process successful. Lecturers, as active participants in the teaching process, need to train students to become effective readers. First, teachers must help them realize the nature of the reading comprehension process so that they know how to appropriately use activities or strategies throughout the reading comprehension process. Second, motivating students to realize the purpose of reading comprehension is also a trick to make their reading effective.

In addition, lecturers need to encourage students to voluntarily participate in activities at the three stages of reading comprehension and have the habit of reading general content. Adjusting the time and effort to design teaching hours to make them effective and make students interested in participating is also very important for teachers. Furthermore, they also need to use a variety of teaching strategies to help learners at the three stages of reading comprehension and know how to apply information technology to teaching reading comprehension skills.

With the aim of improving reading comprehension for non-majors at the University, reading comprehension materials should also be improved. Both lecturers and students need to fully exploit the reading comprehension texts in the curriculum and design a variety of activities related to the reading content. In addition, instructors should carefully select supplementary readings that are appropriate to the student's level and meet their interests.

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