

DESIGNING SUPPLEMENTARY READING EXERCISES TO ENHANCE READING PERFORMANCE FOR 10TH GRADERS

Nguyen Thi Hong Minh*, Tran Thi Lan

TNU - University of Education

ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
Received:	15/4/2022	The purpose of this study was to discover whether supplemental reading tasks are suitable to 10th graders at a local upper secondary school in Vietnam and whether implementing such tasks is effective to enhance their reading performance. A series of additional reading exercises was designed on the basis of the English 10 Textbook used in that school. A group of 15 students took part in a 7-week intervention in which they were required to complete 2 or 3 reading assignments each week and take a reading test before and after the treatment. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to the students to gain some insights about their opinions towards the materials. The findings of the pre-test and post-test indicated that the students' reading skills had improved significantly after they used the supplementary reading exercises. According to the results of the questionnaires, the materials provided were adequate and suited for 10th graders who want to improve their reading skills. This study also revealed that these supplemental materials appeal 10th graders' interests in improving their reading performances. As a result, it is proposed that a more frequent utilization of supplementary reading exercises should be provided in reading instruction to improve the reading performance of 10th graders.
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THIẾT KẾ BÀI TẬP ĐỌC BỔ TRỢ ĐỂ NÂNG CAO KHẢ NĂNG ĐỌC CHO HỌC SINH LỚP 10

Nguyễn Thị Hồng Minh*, Trần Thị Lan

Trường Đại học Sư phạm – ĐH Thái Nguyên

THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	15/4/2022	Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là để tìm hiểu xem liệu các bài đọc bổ trợ có phù hợp với học sinh lớp 10 của một trường trung học phổ thông ở Việt Nam hay không và việc hoàn thành các bài tập này có hiệu quả nâng cao khả năng đọc của các em hay không. Một chuỗi các bài đọc bổ trợ được thiết kế dựa trên cơ sở Sách giáo khoa Tiếng Anh 10 được sử dụng trong nhà trường. Một nhóm gồm 15 học sinh đã tham gia vào cuộc thực nghiệm kéo dài 7 tuần, trong đó các em được yêu cầu hoàn thành 2 hoặc 3 bài tập đọc mỗi tuần và làm bài kiểm tra đọc trước và sau khi thực nghiệm. Ngoài ra, một bảng câu hỏi khảo sát đã được gửi cho học sinh để thu thập ý kiến của các em đối với tài liệu. Kết quả của bài kiểm tra trước và bài kiểm tra sau cho thấy kỹ năng đọc của học sinh đã được cải thiện đáng kể sau khi họ sử dụng các bài tập đọc bổ trợ. Theo kết quả của phiếu điều tra, tài liệu được cung cấp đầy đủ và phù hợp với những học sinh lớp 10 muốn nâng cao kỹ năng đọc của mình. Nghiên cứu này cũng cho thấy rằng những tài liệu bổ sung này thu hút sự quan tâm của học sinh lớp 10 trong việc cải thiện khả năng đọc của các em. Do đó, các bài tập đọc bổ trợ được đề xuất sử dụng thường xuyên hơn trong việc dạy đọc để nâng cao khả năng đọc cho học sinh lớp 10.
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* Corresponding author. Email: minhnh@tnue.edu.vn

1. Introduction

There is a shared belief among language educators that reading performance is regarded as one essential indicator of language proficiency; thus, reading is one of the fundamentals of foreign language learning and teaching. However, in Vietnam, where English is taught in a non-native context and often within the prescribed school textbook within the classroom setting, there have been a number of students who are struggling with learning English reading skills. Mislaini (2015) claims that a variety of factors can contribute to reading difficulties, including students' limited vocabulary, a lack of interest in improving their reading ability, a lack of learning support, a lack of language knowledge, difficulty pronouncing words, a lack of word knowledge, phrases, paragraphs, and passages or texts, a lack of reading application of reading strategies, and a lack of motivation [1]. Therefore, a range of extra activities are required to produce an effective teaching environment [2]. On that account, should the students have access to more reading resources which are designed supplementally to the officially used textbook, it could be more advantageous to reading instructions at schools. An educator should produce resources that supplement the curriculum and take all learners' interests and backgrounds into account [3]. In this mentioned local upper secondary school, the English learning of the 10th graders is largely limited to their textbook in that they are required to complete the language tasks given in the book during class time. Reading resources are available online, but students seem not to have adequate skills to select which exercises to do and they do not have strong willingness to study autonomously. Therefore, the teachers of English in the school are supposed to supply their learners with additional English resources which provide the students with reading assignments supplemented to their in-class regular reading exercises for the enhancement of students' reading performance.

Supplementary exercises are resources borrowed from another source or any other items created for learning reasons [4] in addition to the official or formal use of a coursebook [5]. Teachers can use existing materials such as textbooks, worksheets and other authentic materials in their teaching activities. Besides, the educators can also expand the teaching resources by collecting materials from a variety of sources that are adjusted to be suitable for students' abilities and demands [6]. Sailors, Martinez, Villareal (2015) pointed out that teachers can create their own reading exercises. When teachers produce resources, they may tie them to their students' culture, language, and lifestyles. Students will have a better comprehension of the content and will be better able to apply the ideas in their community as a result [7]. Furthermore, Cunningsworth (1984) asserted that additional resources which might be visual, auditory, audio-visual, e-learning, or games may come from reliable sources such as newspapers, magazine articles, films, and so on [8]. In educational settings where the supply and availability of regular learning materials are not adequate, supplementary exercises are beneficial in that they can compensate for resource inadequacy. Those borrowed or created materials, according to Spratt et. al., (2005) attempt to fill in the gaps that textbooks cannot as they usually feature information that is not covered in depth in the coursebook [9]. Supplementary reading exercises engage students by piquing their interest in the material and motivating them to apply the language in class [10]. They assist students with comprehending and retaining information from specific material. They can also aid to contextualize the teaching-learning environment by providing knowledge about the people and culture of the target language society [11]. They save the educators' time and effort by reducing the load of providing the learning materials. They also make it easier for learners to retain direct touch with objects, places, things, and people, as well as limit the usage of the learner's native language in classroom activities. According to Abbasi (2015), the usage of supplementary materials can also assist students to enhance their autonomous learning of English, improving reading comprehension and other skills [12]. Because there is a gap between the new information that the students need to know or be able to accomplish and the resources offered in their textbooks, the instructor employs extra activities [4], which entails attempting to bridge the gap between students' needs and textbooks. These resources, according to Thakur, were beneficial

to students because they allowed them to develop subjective evaluations, increase self-awareness, and find the complexities and correlations in the materials [13].

However, Brown (1994) [14] suggests that English teachers augment the resources in order to drive pupils in their learning processes. Supplemental materials should not merely be any added instructional resource but that boost learners' motivation in teaching and learning processes and provides extension, enrichment, and support to the curriculum. These instructional resources should complement or supplement curricula and be relevant to the course's learning goals and content. Moreover, it is advisable that teachers should utilize these supplementary exercises to cover all abilities not covered in depth in the main coursebook, as well as to use them for learning in regular courses, for enrichment, or for therapeutic reasons.

2. Research methods

2.1. Participants

The subject of the study is the 10th graders in the academic year 2021-2022. A group of randomly chosen 15 students from grade 10 in a Vietnamese local upper secondary was selected as the research participants who were willing to complete the additional reading exercises as required and provide their feedback on the supplementary reading materials through the questionnaire. Those learners have all studied English for more than 5 years, yet their proficiency level is estimated at A2 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

2.2. Research design

The aim of this study was to find out whether the supplementary reading exercises could help 10th graders improve their English reading performance. The experimental method was employed to investigate the effect of supplementary reading exercises on students' English reading performance.

First and foremost, the 10th graders, who took the pre-test which can provide information about students' reading performances, were invited to participate in a seven-week intervention during the school year 2021-2022. Participants were also provided with a brief introduction regarding the treatment as well as the research timeline. Before doing a variety of supplementary reading exercises uploaded on Google Form, they were guided on how to access the resources and how to complete those electronically designed reading assignments.

Afterwards, participants were asked to share their views and opinions on the usefulness and appropriateness of supplementary reading exercises for improving their reading performance through a Likert scale questionnaire. Students' mean scores of responses for each item on the questionnaire were calculated and allocated to five levels of agreement, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The categorization of level of agreement through Likert-scale questionnaire

Mean level	Level of agreement
4.50 - 5.00	Strongly agree
3.50 - 4.49	Agree
2.50 - 3.49	Neutral
1.50 - 2.49	Disagree
1.00 - 1.49	Strongly disagree

(Source: [15])

After 7 weeks of intervention, the participants were required to complete the reading post-test, the results of which provided data of students' reading achievements and thus could suggest whether the application of additional reading exercises had an impact on students' reading performance via the analysis of paired differences between pre-test and post-test scores.

2.3. Data collection instruments

2.3.1. Tests

Reading tests as the main data collection instruments were administered twice in this study to collect quantitative data on students' reading abilities before and after the use of additional

reading exercises in the regular 10th-grade English reading syllabus. The pre-test and post-test were designed with the same pattern of reading Key English Test (A2 level).

In the beginning, the pre-test was given to participants in order to obtain information about their initial reading abilities. The post-test was administered at the end of the seven-week intervention to determine whether the students' reading skills have improved or not after supplementary reading exercises were implemented in English reading instruction for 10th graders in the second term in the academic year 2021-2022. Students' pre- and post-test scores were gathered and analyzed in order to compare the mean scores in the two tests and determine the impact of supplementary reading exercises on the reading performance of 10th graders.

2.3.2. Questionnaires

A closed-ended questionnaire was employed in this study as a research instrument to gather information on students' views and opinions on the efficacy and appropriateness of supplementary reading exercises in improving reading proficiency. The questionnaire includes four categories with 16 statements regarding the appropriateness of the visualization, the appropriateness of the graphic, the appropriateness of the language, the appropriateness of the feasibility of the reading assignments.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. The appropriateness of the suggested supplementary reading exercises to 10th graders

Table 2. Students' opinions about the use of visualization and layout of the supplementary reading exercises

Visualization and layout		
Statement	Mean	Level of agreement
1. The pictures used in the exercises are not matched with the content.	1.40	Strongly disagree
2. I find that the pictures used in the exercises help me to understand the content.	4.27	Agree
3. The highlights of titles, subtitles or intended unknown words facilitate my comprehension of the text.	4.47	Agree
4. I cannot read the writing in the exercises clearly.	1.33	Strongly disagree
5. The layout of the exercises is not very eye-catching.	1.60	Disagree
6. The layout of the assignments makes me interested in reading the text and the follow-up exercises.	4.33	Agree

Table 2 demonstrates 10th graders' opinions about the use of visualization and the layout of the supplementary reading exercises. Statement 1 with a mean score of 1.40 implies that students strongly disagreed that the photos used in the exercises are not matched with the content. When it comes to the idea that the images used in the exercises help 10th graders to understand the content, there is a mean score of 4.27 which means that students primarily agreed with this viewpoint. Students generally agreed that when titles, subtitles or intended unknown words were highlighted, they could have a better understanding of the given text as it is proved by the mean score of 4.47 for this statement. Regarding the graphic of the additional reading assignments, the participants strongly disagreed with the opinion that they cannot read the writing in the exercises clearly. With a mean score of 1.60, statement 5 suggests students' disagreement with the idea that the layout of the exercises is not very eye-catching. What is more, they tended to support positive evaluation of the layout of the assignment when asserting that the layout of the assignments created interests in reading the text and the follow-up exercises.

Table 3. Students' opinions about the language used in the supplementary reading exercises

Language		
Statement	Mean	Level of agreement
1. The vocabulary used in the exercises is not too challenging for my understanding.	4.40	Agree
2. The sentence structures used in the exercises cause confusion in understanding the reading texts.	1.53	Disagree
3. The instructions of the exercises are not clear and easy to understand.	1.13	Strongly disagree

Table 3 shows students' opinions about the language used in the supplementary reading exercises. In statement 1, the mean score of 4.40 denotes that students generally agreed that the vocabulary used in the exercises is comprehensible. Furthermore, the 10th graders commonly disagreed that the sentence structures used in the reading assignments prevented their understanding of the texts. In reference to the instructions of the exercises, the mean score of 1.13 displayed in statement 3, students strongly disagreed that the instructions of the exercises are not clear and easy to understand.

Table 4. *Students' opinions about the feasibility of the supplementary reading exercises*

Feasibility		
Statement	Mean	Level of agreement
1. The exercises do not match with the reading topics and the targeted reading skills as indicated in the textbook.	1.67	Disagree
2. I find that the exercises are suitable for my English level.	4.40	Agree
3. The additional exercises are not designed based on the lesson objectives to be achieved.	1.87	Disagree

As illustrated in Table 4, overall, the students have positive opinions on the feasibility of the supplementary reading exercises. It was proved by the mean score of 1.67 that 10th graders generally disagreed that the exercises do not match with the reading topics and the targeted reading skills as indicated in the textbook. Statement 2 with a mean score of 4.40 signifies that students commonly agreed that the exercises are adequate for their English proficiency level. Regarding the relevance of the supplementary reading exercises and the lesson objectives, the participants disagreed with the idea that the additional exercises are not designed based on the lesson objectives to be achieved as indicated by the mean score of 1.87.

Table 5. *Students' opinions about the effectiveness of the supplementary reading exercises*

Effectiveness		
Statement	Mean	Level of agreement
1. I can finish my reading assignments before the allotted time ends.	4.47	Agree
2. The number of my wrong answers in the reading exercises keeps remained or increases.	1.47	Strongly disagree
3. The exercises do not help increase my interest in practising my reading skills.	1.60	Disagree
4. I have higher reading scores after the 7 weeks.	4.40	Agree

Table 5 presents 10th graders' opinions about the effectiveness of the supplementary reading exercises in terms of reading speed, accuracy, interest and achievement. The mean score of statement 1 is 4.47 indicating that students agreed that they did not use up the allocated time for the reading assignments. In statement 2, the mean score is 1.47 implying that 10th graders strongly disagreed that the number of wrong answers in the reading exercises remained or increased. Furthermore, the mean score of 1.60 signifies that the participants disagreed that the additional reading assignments did not have any role in increasing students' reading interests. Finally, students generally expressed their agreement with the fact that they have gained better reading achievement as inferred in the mean score of 4.40.

3.2. The impact of supplementary reading exercises on 10th graders' reading performance

Table 6. *Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test scores*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Test	4.2533	15	2.11723	.54667
	Post-Test	7.5667	15	1.30256	.33632

Table 6 shows that the post-test score is 3.3133 (7.5667 – 4.2533) higher than the pre-test, indicating that the English reading performance of the 10th graders who completed the supplementary reading exercises was considerably improved. The lower standard deviation in the post-test suggests that the disparity in participants' reading comprehension ability has narrowed.

Table 7. *Correlations between Pre-Test and Post-Test results*

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pre-Test & Post-Test	15	.848	.000

The relationship between pre-test and post-test results is displayed in Table 7. A correlation coefficient of 0.848 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates a significant relationship between the two variables. It can be concluded that the use of supplementary reading exercises in English reading comprehension courses for 10th graders has a significant impact on students' English reading scores.

Table 8. *Paired differences between Pre-Test and Post-Test*

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-Test - Post-Test	-3.31333	1.22583	.31651	-3.99218	-2.63449	-10.468	14	.000

The changes between pre-test and post-test are depicted in Table 8. The resulting t-value of 10.468 and the associated p-value of 0.000 at df = 14 demonstrate the significant difference from the 0.05 threshold of significance. As a result, it can be concluded that the utilization of supplementary reading exercises enhanced students' reading performance. What is more, the gap between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of 3.3133 determines that 10th students' reading abilities increased dramatically after the intervention.

3.3. Discussion

The following discussion is made based on the reading test results as well as the questionnaire findings.

The poor reading pre-test scores imply that reading is a big challenge for 10th graders of the mentioned local high school. This would have a detrimental impact on other English skills and restrict their language proficiency development inputs. Furthermore, students' weak reading skills may lead to a lack of a fundamental understanding of textbook contents such as instructions for task completion and language inputs. As a result, their academic achievements would be severely harmed, and their prospects for future employment success would be substantially questioned. Therefore, improving their English reading skills is a must for individuals in 10th grade, which can result in the development of their English proficiency as the whole.

The higher post-test scores do not only show that utilizing supplementary reading exercises improves students' reading comprehension skills, but also boosts students' confidence in their own abilities. The growth of the 10th graders' reading scores after the intervention could suggest a more frequent use of supplemental reading tasks as crucial materials in reading instructions. Furthermore, when students' reading scores improve, they become more optimistic and confident in their abilities, motivating them to put in greater efforts in order to achieve greater academic and personal success.

However, there should be various factors to consider when including supplementary reading tasks into reading courses in order to maximize the benefits of the materials to students' reading comprehension abilities.

Whereas there are many other genres or types of reading tasks, the supplemental reading assignments designed and utilized for this study purpose limit in such types as multiple choices, gap-fillings or matchings (which are frequent tasks in 10th grade reading tasks). Consequently, learners may have difficulty undertaking other types of reading tasks if they come across unfamiliar texts that are not compatible with the kinds they have already completed. Hence, it should be advisable that the teachers provide their learners with a wider range of reading genres and reading task types.

From the results of the two questionnaires, it can be seen that electronic supplementary reading exercises offer the advantages of having a colourful design, graphics, and online accessibility, which may encourage students' persistence in reading practice and enhance their reading performance. Accordingly, the teachers are expected to include those visualizations into the electronically designed or paper reading assignments to arouse students' interests and motivation for reading.

Though students nowadays are becoming more familiar with online learning and electronic materials, instructions for approaching and completing the supplemental exercises should be provided to students to ensure a full comprehension of what is expected to fulfill. In addition, reading strategies should be trained to facilitate students' comprehending the text and completing the exercises. For instance, students deal with the reading text as a full image to understand it both explicitly and implicitly or use the visual prompts to support their guesses of the reading contents as well as answer the questions.

Last but not least, for further study, it is vital to design supplementary materials that incorporate all language skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking), which is undoubtedly more beneficial to the enhancement of students' English proficiency.

4. Conclusion

The present study has focused on using supplementary reading exercises to help 10th graders improve their reading skills. A 7-week intervention was conducted among the research participants who completed a series of reading exercises with similar topics and skills as required in the official English textbook. The pre-test was used to assess the 10th graders' initial reading performance and the post-test was conducted at the end of the intervention to check students' reading progress. The findings of the study revealed that supplemental reading exercises were effective in boosting 10th graders' reading performance, which is congruent with those of previous studies [16], [17]; subsequently, it would be appropriate to recommend the use of supplementary reading exercises as useful materials for improving reading performance for second language learners.

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