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ENGLISH READING SKILL OF THE SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY – THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY: BASIS FOR ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITIES

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SUMMARY

The present study aimed to work on English reading skill of 80 second-year students as basis for enhancement activities. The procedure of this study required to find out the answers for a series of logical problems: 1) the level of reading ability of the respondents; 2) the level of acceptability of developed enhancement activities.

This study employed the descriptive method in gathering data. The questionnaires were used to serve as the source of data. The enhancement activities recommended in this paper can be of great applicability. Promisingly, the new reading strategies presented in this study may enhance English reading abilities of the students.

Keywords: Reading skill, second-year students, University of Agriculture and Forestry - TNU, enhancement, activities.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays English is used all over the world in every field of our life. This is also true in Vietnam. Vietnam is an open country. It has established the relationship in economy, politics. culture. science, technologies, tourism and in many other fields with over 160 countries. English became the main language in all government range activities in the country. In Viet Nam, English is important not only for communication and entertainment but also for those who want to have a chance to find a good job or to advance their careers. That is why in the last 20 years, English has become one of the major subjects to be studied in Vietnamese schools. To meet the aims and demands of teaching English in schools, the teachers of English always tend toward finding out more effective methods to improve the educational quality, and to enhance English standard of Vietnamese students

To become a proficient student in learning English, the students should know how to make great effort in practicing four skills at the same time: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Among them, reading skill plays an important role in improving English standard.

Obviously, reading is the most important skill for the students to enhance their English. However, the students are facing with a lot of problems in learning reading. Being aware of the importance of enhancing reading skill of the second year students, within the scope of this study, the researcher aims at giving out some solutions to solve the typical problems in forming expected reading skill as the basis for developing enhancement activities in teaching and learning English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Francoise, G. (1981) [2], reading can be done as a class activity but reading activities can be devised to individualize student's work at home. Instead of choosing one activities for the whole class, two or three sets of exercises of varying difficulty can be prepared based on the same text so that each student can work at home at his own level. If the text is then to be

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Reading skill is specific ability which enables a reader to read the written form as meaningful language, to read anything written with independence, comprehension and fluency and to mentally interact with the message. Naturally, the enhancement of reading skill for Vietnamese students plays an important role in the educational activities of the teachers of English.

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discussed in the class, each group of students who have worked on the same exercises will be able to talk about what they have done.

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 coconstruct 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 results in the meaning that is comprehension. Comprehension always attends to what is coded or written in the text, but it also depends upon the reader's background experiences, purposes, feelings, and needs of the moment.

Adrian, D. (1998) [1] 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 Penny, Ur. (1996) [4] improving the inferential reading comprehension skills of reluctant/struggling readers in grade ten is simple or easy goal. Closing the achievement between gap expected independent reading level and a student's actual reading proficiency cannot be done with a brief, even though with intensive, and remediation program. The improvement of students in reading comprehension will require a change in teacher practice within the school. All teachers must consciously and intentionally incorporate process targets for reading into their pedagogy.

By asking your student read along in the book while listening to the same book on tape, you are providing excellent reading benefits. The student sees and hears words and phrases together, a good way to reinforce sight-word recognition. Your students may also benefit

from assistive technology such as text readers. These methods provide the students exposure to work, he might not otherwise choose to read because of the difficulty. He can gain knowledge of the content and increase vocabulary through the book and perhaps be discouraged.

SUBJECT AND METHODOLOGY

The study focused on the second year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry. From the total population, a sample size of 80 respondents was utilized based on Slovin's sampling formula, equal to two random sample classes in which sample lessons were applied.

In gathering the needed data, two sets of questionnaires were developed. The first one was consisted of the following parts: vocabulary, and comprehension (here referring to noting details, giving main idea, sequencing of events and predicting outcomes). The scale is shown below:

The second questionnaire was developed to find out the level of acceptability of enhancement activities. The bases of constructing the instrument are information needed about sample lessons after having been applied in sample classes, including: accuracy, clarity of the material, appeal to the target user and originality in presentation

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

FINDINGS

Level of reading abilities of the respondents through reading testing

By checking the students' level of reading ability, the researcher asked the students to do a reading test. The scores are shown in the table given below:

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Excellent	0	0%
Good	36	45%
Fair	27	33.75%
Poor	12	15%
Very poor	5	6.25%
Total	80	100

Test reading statistical results:

Content	Total of Respondents	Mean	SD	Remark
Reading abilities	80	5.68	1.63	Fair

The result showed that 55% of the respondents have fair and under fair level and it is necessary to enhance the students' reading abilities. Further more, other parameters such as 5.68 of Mean, 1.63 of SD reflect non-expected results in teaching and learning reading. These are basic, important data bases for the research. The goal of the research is to find out effective methods to improve the results, to help the students to reach to the level, at least, of Good and Excellent, or in other words, to enhance the students reading abilities in learning English at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

Table 1. The acceptable level of enhancement activities for English reading ability on accuracy as perceived by the respondents

Accuracy	SA	A	FA	NA	WM	DR
1. The activities are well-arranged to provide clear sequence for understanding.	16	54	10	0	3.08	A
2. It provides sufficient repetition of learning through examples and illustrations to easily understand the concepts.	36	34	10	0	3.32	A
3. It provides a variety of exercises and activities for mastery of concepts and skills.	34	26	14	6	3.1	A
4. The enhancement activities are appropriate to the age, maturity and experience of the user.	48	20	12	0	3.45	SA
Average Weighted Mean					3.23	A

The findings as shown in table 1 revealed that the accuracy of enhancement activities was perceived to be acceptable with an average weighted mean of 3.23. Among the four items, the enhancement activities are appropriate to the age, maturity and expensive of the user was ranked first with the weighted mean of 3.45, described as strong acceptable. Least-rated was the item 1. The activities are well arranged to provide clear sequence for understanding with weighted mean of 3.08, described as acceptable.

The findings imply that the factors on accuracy of enhancement activities are rated acceptable by the respondents.

Table 2. The acceptable levels of enhancement activities for English reading ability on clarity of the material as perceived by the respondents

Clarity of the material	SA	A	FA	NA	WM	DR
1. The concepts of some activities are organized and clear.	40	30	10	0	3.37	A
2. It includes statements which are easy to understand.	40	32	8	0	3.4	A
3. Lesson and activities are well explained.	66	8	6	0	3.75	SA
4. Each part of the activities has adequate margins, legible type face and comfortable type size.	32	36	12	0	3.25	A
5. The sentence constructions in the enhancement activities are clear.	30	40	4	6	3.17	A
Average Weighted Mean					3.38	A

Clarity of the material of enhancement activities was perceived by the respondents as acceptable with the weighted mean of 3.38 with item 3 - lesson and activities - are well explained with weighted mean of 3.75 on top of list and item 5-

The sentence constructions in the enhancement activities are clear with weighted mean of 3.17 described as acceptable and least-rated.

The findings imply that clarity of the material of enhancement activities as perceived by the respondents are rated acceptable.

Table 3. The acceptable level of enhancement activities for English reading ability on appeal to the target user as perceived by the respondents

Appeal to the target user	SA	A	FA	NA	WM	DR
1. It captivates the learner's interest.	42	22	18	0	3.37	A
2. It enables the learners to develop their critical thinking skills.	32	40	8	0	3.3	A
3. It motivates the learners to have positive attitudes toward reading.	42	28	10	0	3.4	A
4. The activities are presented at a pace that allows for reflection and review.	28	34	14	4	3.07	A
5. The activities are worth the time, effort and expense.	12	24	22	22	2.32	FA
Average Weighted Mean					3.09	A

The findings revealed that appeal to the target user was perceived to be acceptable with average weighted mean of 3.09 with item 3. It motivates the learners to have positive attitude towards reading ranked first. Least-rated was item 5. The activities are worth the time, effort and expensive with weighted mean of 2.32 described as fairly acceptable.

Table 4. The acceptability level of enhancement activities for English reading ability on originality in presentation as perceived by respondents

Originality in presentation	SA	A	FA	NA	WM	DR
1. The design and process of the activity are exceptionally different from other activities.	8	30	30	12	2.42	FA
2. The activities serves as a new basic model in assessing effectively one's learning in the subject.	22	38	20	0	3.02	A
3. It provides a variety of relevant evaluation measures.	22	34	14	10	2.85	A
Average Weighted Mean					2.76	A

The data in the table shown that the item 2 – the activities serves as a new basic model in assessing effectively one's learning in the subject ranked first with weighted mean of 3.02. Least-rated was item 1. The design and process of the activity are exceptionally different from other activities with weighted mean of 2.42 described as fairly acceptable. The findings imply that originality in presentation was rated acceptable with 2.76 of average weighted mean.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- 1. The enhancement activities presented by the researcher in this study can be applied.
- 2. The instructional material formulated is valid.
- 3. With the new reading strategies presented in this study, the students can enhance their English reading abilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of findings and conclusion of this study, the researcher hereby recommends the followings:

- 1. English teachers should be more active for seminar attendance and training workshops to improve reading proficiency of the students and likewise the teaching strategies.
- 2. The administrators must organize and conduct more seminars and carry out more specific programs to orient more instructors on enhancing reading ability for students.
- 3. It is also recommended that the leaders should spend more money in preparing a

larger number of references and reading materials for poor students.

- 4. The teachers and the parents of the students should try more to stimulate and encourage the students to read more at home at their leisure time.
- 5. For further reading enhancement, the material of instruction presented in this study is also recommended to use.

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TÓM TẮT

NGHIÊN CỨU KỸ NĂNG ĐỌC CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ 2 TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NÔNG LÂM – ĐẠI HỌC THÁI NGUYÊN, CƠ SỞ ĐỂ THIẾT KẾ CÁC HOAT ĐÔNG RÈN LUYÊN TĂNG CƯỜNG

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Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích tìm hiểu về năng lực đọc tiếng Anh của 80 sinh viên năm thứ hai tại trường Đại học Nông Lâm – Đại học Thái Nguyên làm cơ sở để thiết kế các hoạt động rèn luyện tăng cường kỹ năng đọc. Nội dung nghiên cứu tập trung vào các vấn đề sau: 1) năng lực đọc hiểu của sinh viên; 2) khả năng áp dụng các hoạt động rèn luyện tăng cường để nâng cao năng lực đọc hiểu cho sinh viên.

Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp thống kê mô tả trong việc thu thập dữ liệu. Các bảng hỏi được sử dụng để thu thập dữ liệu. Các hoạt động rèn luyện tăng cường được khuyến nghị trong bài báo này có thể mang tính ứng dụng cao. Các chiến lược đọc mới được trình bày trong nghiên cứu này được kỳ vọng có thể nâng cao năng lực đọc hiểu tiếng Anh của sinh viên.

Từ khóa: kĩ năng đọc hiểu, sinh viên năm thứ 2, trường Đại học Nông Lâm – Đại học Thái Nguyên, tăng cường, hoạt động.

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