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**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
HAIPHONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY**

**A STUDY ON THE CAUSES OF DIFFICULTIES IN READING
SKILL EXPERIENCED BY FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS
AT HAI PHONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY AND SOME
SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS**

GRADUATION PAPER

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HẢI PHÒNG - 2019

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HPU	Haiphong Private University
EFL	English foreign language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
ELLiE	Early Language Learning in Europe

PART A: INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

There is no denying that reading is one of the important skills in English and gives a variety of benefits to us. Reading is the window of the world because of the fact that people can get more knowledge and information from books, magazines, newspapers, etc. It helps readers to discover new words and phrases that they come across in everyday conversations. Many foreign language students often regard reading as one of the most important goals in learning process and social interaction because, first, reading is an indispensable communication tool in a civilized society. Second, that the reading materials produced in any period of time in history is most influenced by social background. Third, the developments over the period of the recorded history of reading have led to two very different poles.

In the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Vietnam in general, and at Haiphong Private University (HPU) in particular, reading has always been paid a great deal of attention from both teachers and students. Like many other universities in Vietnam, English at HPU is learnt and taught in a non-native environment, therefore, reading is not only considered as a means to gain knowledge but also a means by which further study takes place.

Traditionally, reading is a passive activity, but in fact, it should be active. As Block (1992: 319-343) indicates, "reading is such a hidden process that it is often unnoticed in the language classroom. Teachers often believe that reading classes should be teacher-centered."

However, according to Bedir (1998), if teachers adopt rote learning, learners are usually expected to tackle comprehension difficulties by themselves. Moreover, teachers must focus not only on language development, but also on reading strategy practice.

Rivas (1999: 12-21) notes that language problems seem to be the most frequent source of reading difficulties confronted by EFL learners at intermediate level. Thus, we must focus on reading skills as well as language problems.

It is a fact that reading in a foreign language is strongly linked with thinking in that language. If you want to read well in English, you must think in English as you read. If you think in another language and translate into English, you will usually have difficulty with comprehension. According to Bedir (1998), this is time-consuming and the result is usually incomplete comprehension. Understanding the words and the grammar is not enough while reading. The learner needs to make logical connections between the ideas and information in reading. This means using the information the learner already knows to reach a conclusion.

Haiphong Private University EFL students are less exposed to training in reading skills. The students do not know how to activate their schemata. Thus, they encounter difficulties in comprehension.

This results in poor marks in reading sections of their examinations. As observed by the researcher, the students complain about their marks and they do not know how to tackle texts in English. However, if reading skills, such as finding the main idea and contextual clues are emphasized in the training period, the students might be more successful in reading comprehension. There exists numerous studies on reading skills and comprehension. Alderson (2000: 1-20) notes that the readers' knowledge affects what they understand. There are other factors which affect reading comprehension. According to Mikulecky and Jeffries (2004), reading comprehension is a problem for many students. When they read in English, they tend to attribute the comprehension difficulties to the English language. They may also feel that the problem is their own lack of ability.

Nonetheless, in my opinion, the problem is about their approach to a text. If the students understand how the information is presented in English texts and are aware of the cognitive processes, they will be better at comprehension.

This is especially true to the students at the HPU, where learners are often future interpreters, translators, or teachers whose desires are to be able to handle subjects related to written materials in English and to work with their English-speaking colleagues and partners. It is essential for them to acquire the ability to read English effectively and efficiently. However, despite the teachers' and students' effort, students still often claim to have a lot of difficulties in reading English textbooks or English materials, and therefore, they sometimes read them inefficiently.

For the first-year students of English, although they have been learning English for at least several years, it is still often difficult for them to understand text or a passage in English, since they still lack vocabulary, grammar, reading skills and poor background knowledge. Besides, the teachers sometimes have to face with difficulties in dealing with the students' learning demand and newly introduced sources of materials. In addition, teaching methods and teaching techniques in general, are still below the international standard of education. Identifying the areas of students' difficulty at HPU and the causes of their unsuccessful reading comprehension is necessary. Therefore, these reasons have inspired the writing of a study on main causes of difficulties faced by first-year English majors at HPU as well as some suggested solutions . It is hoped that the study will make some contributions to improve learning English in general, and reading in particular among the 1st year English majors at HPU. The author also hopes that it will be possible to make useful suggestions for the teachers to improve the situation of teaching and learning reading at HPU.

2. Aim of the study

The general aim of this study is to identify the major causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by first-year English majors at Haiphong Private University. In addition, the study is expected to give some solutions for students

to deal with their reading difficulties. To achieve these purposes, the study will focus on the following research questions:

- *What are the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by first-year English majors at HPU?*
- *What are possible solutions to students' reading difficulties?*

3. Methods of the study

The study was carried out on the basis of quantitative research methods in which questionnaire was chosen as the main tool.

Questionnaires were designed as a means to make the researcher's evaluation more objective. The questionnaires were given to the first-year students at HPU with the hope to find out the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by them and some suggested solutions to their difficulties.

Analyzing statistics from the survey questionnaire on reading activities was conducted with the cooperation of first-year English major students at HPU. All comments, remarks recommendation assumptions, and conclusion provided in the study were based on the data analysis.

4. Scope of the study

In order to improve reading skill for students of English at HPU, the teachers can make use of various techniques and a great number of things should be done. However, the study cannot cover all the aspects of reading skill. It mainly focuses on the causes of difficulties in reading skill and some suggested solutions to help students become good and effective readers. The subject of the study mainly aimed at first-year English majors at HPU.

5. Design of the study

The study is composed of three main parts:

- ✚ Part A is the introduction which consists of rationale, the aims, scope, methods, and design of the study.
- ✚ Part B is the development- the core of this paper which is divided into three chapters :

- ❖ Chapter one is literature review which provides an overview of reading, difficulties in learning reading skill and factors affecting reading difficulties.
 - ❖ Chapter two shows detailed explanation of the methodology.
 - ❖ Chapter three indicates the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by first-year English majors at HPU and some suggested solutions to reading difficulties as well as implications for teaching and learning reading skill at HPU.
- ✚ Part C is the conclusion which summarizes what was given in previous chapters and limitations of the study as well as recommendations for further study.

PART B: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1:

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. An overview of reading

1.1.1. Definition of reading

There are many reasons why getting students to read English texts is an important part of the teacher's job. In the first place, many students want to be able to read texts in English either for their careers, for study purposes or simply for pleasure. Anything we can do to make it easier for them to do these things must be a good idea. Reading is useful for language acquisition. Provided that students more or less they read, the more they read, the better they get at it. Reading also has a positive effect on students' vocabulary knowledge, on their spelling and on their writing understand what Reading texts also provide good models for English writing.

However, The student also feels complication learning to read as Козак indicates:

"Reading is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Reading consists of two related processes: word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text".

(2017:7)

In addition, There are many definitions of "reading" based on some different views. Starting with tradition view which concentrated on the printed form of a text and turning to the cognitive view which enhanced the role of background knowledge in addition to what appeared on the printed form. It seems to be that the cognitive view is more reliable because here, the reader rather than the text is the heart of the reading process.

❖ The traditional view

Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. Learn how readers integrate these facets to make meaning from print.

To - making meaning from print, we have to:

- ✓ Identify the words in print – a process called word recognition
- ✓ Construct an understanding from them – a process called comprehension.
- ✓ Coordinate identifying words and making meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate – an achievement called fluency.

(Diane Henry Leipzig, 2001)

Similarly, according to Nunan (1991), reading in this view is basically a matter of decoding a series of written symbols into their aural equivalents in the quest for making sense of the text.

❖ **The cognitive view**

According to Rohit Valand (2010)

"A good reader understands not only the meaning of the passage, but its related meaning as well which includes all the reader knows that enriches or illuminates the literal meaning. Such knowledge may have acquired through direct experience, through wide reading or through listening to others."

Reading is also a complex process in which proficient readers give to the text as much as they take. They make meaning from the text by using their own prior knowledge and experiences. Proficient readers are constantly making predictions while reading. They are continuously anticipating what will come next. Their prior knowledge and experiences with texts as well as the world around them allow them to do this. It is this continuous interaction with the text that allows readers to make sense of what they are reading (Rohit Valand, 2010)

To sum up, from all these opinions above, each linguist's definition reflects what reading means as seen from their own point of view. So, In my opinion "Listening, speaking, reading and writing" are regarded as four fundamental skills to acquire a foreign language. The reading skill is a necessary

skill for a language acquisition because it has positive effects on vocabulary knowledge, spelling as well as the learners' writings.

Reading is viewed as an interactive process between the reader and the writer in which the former has to understand the message of the passage and then to decode it. Moreover, it is a dynamic process in which information from the text and knowledge possessed by the reader interact to enable us to construct meaning before, during and after reading. In this respect, Dubin (1982:125) assumes that the task reading is a complex skill that contains a number of psychological, physical and social elements.

Therefore, reading is considered as the most difficult language skill, which involves the interaction of multiple cognitive, meta-cognitive, linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects. i.e.; some other sub-Skills operate all together in order to perform the task.

Reading is not a passive task, but rather an active one. In fact, reading requires both the learner's mental and experimental inputs of who is expected to comprehend the written message. Therefore, in order to highlight the importance of reading comprehension, I believe that reading is considered as the most important activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and a pleasurable activity, but also as a means of consolidating and extending one's knowledge of the language.

1.1.2. The importance of reading skill

A Student's reading skills are important to their success in school as they will allow them to access the breadth of the curriculum and improve their communication and language skills. In addition, reading can be a fun and imaginative time for students, which opens doors to all kinds of new worlds for them, especially first-year English majors at HPU because English at the HPU is learnt and taught in non-native environment. Indeed, reading is not only considered as a means to gain knowledge but also a means by which further study takes place. Learning to read is about listening and understanding as well as working out what is printed on the page. Through the teacher's conversation,

students are exposed to a wide range of words. This helps them build their own vocabulary and improve their understanding when they listen, which is vital as they start to read. It is important for them to understand what the teacher's opinion is and what he or she is talking about. Even if students do not understand every word, they will hear new sounds, words and phrases which they can then try out, copying what they have heard because of their desire to handle subjects related to written materials in English and to work with their English-speaking colleagues and partners.

Why is reading so important?

Studies show that reading for pleasure makes a big difference to student's educational performance. Likewise, evidence suggests that students who read for enjoyment every day not only perform better in reading tests than those who do not, but also develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures.

In fact, reading for pleasure is more likely to determine whether a student does well at school than their social or economic background.

1.1.3. Types of reading skill

In this section, according to Hafiz and Tudor (1989: 5), reading skill can be divided into two main types, namely, intensive and extensive reading.

In intensive reading activities learners are in the main exposed to relatively short texts which are used either to exemplify specific aspects of the lexical, syntactic or discoursal system of the L2, or to provide the basis for targeted reading strategy practice; the goal of extensive reading, on the other hand, is to "flood" learners with large quantities of L2 input with few or possibly no specific tasks to perform on this material.

However, it is necessary for students to be aware of the purpose and goals of reading a particular piece of written text. The important notice for both teachers and learners is that the purpose of reading is related to the types of reading skills. The subjects will attain their goals quickly and efficiently if they apply appropriate reading skills.

So in this study, I relied on Maija MacLeod's analysis, the governor of the University of Calgary to make the types of reading more explicit. He analyzed that:

“Intensive reading is used to teach or practice specific reading strategies or skills. The text is treated as an end in itself. Extensive reading on the other hand, involves reading of large quantities of material, directly and fluently. It is treated as a means to an end. It may include reading simply for pleasure or reading technical, scientific or professional material. This latter type of text, more academic, may involve two specific types of reading, scanning for key details or skimming for the essential meaning. A relatively quick and efficient read, either on its own or after scanning or skimming, will give a global or general meaning.”

1.1.3.1 Intensive reading

Intensive Reading, sometimes called "Narrow Reading", may involve students reading selections by the same author or several texts about the same topic. When this occurs, content and grammatical structures repeat themselves and students get many opportunities to understand the meanings of the text. The success of "Narrow Reading" on improving reading comprehension is based on the premise that the more familiar the reader is with the text, either due to the subject matter or having read other works by the same author, the more comprehension is promoted.

Intensive reading focuses on closely following a shorter text, doing exercises with it, and learning it in detail. According to this approach, this helps language learners really understand the language's grammar and syntax. The proponents of this method use a range of exercises to complement the reading itself. Foreign language students can, for example, read a short paragraph and then answer questions about the text, order sentences, or find specific words.

Intensive reading tends to be more concentrated, less relaxed, and often dedicated not so much to pleasure as to the achievement of a study goal. It is also related to further progress in language learning, and designed to enable learners to develop specific receptive skills and strategies. Thus, “the intensive

reading lesson is intended primarily to train students in reading strategies” as stated by Nuttall (1982:23). However, sometimes the learner may prefer to read the text in which he/she divides it into parts and then to read each part alone in order to comprehend it very well.

In Long and Richards's view (1987) on intensive reading, it is a detailed in-class analysis, led by the teacher, of vocabulary and grammar points, to arrive at a profound understanding. Consequently, teachers need to find some accommodation between their desire to have pupils develop particular reading skills (such as the ability to understand the general message without understanding every detail) and their natural urge to understand the meaning of every single word.

According to Palmer's opinion (1964) the learner focuses on using the dictionary in which he has to analyze, compare and translate while reading texts. Therefore, the use of a dictionary helps the learner to progress in his language learning process. However, this may interrupt the learner's reading speed. In the same line of thought, the reading comprehension task for Harmer means not to stop for every word neither to analyze everything (Harmer 2001), that is to say, the reader should not stop at every single point or analyze each idea alone, but rather he should make a general comprehension of the text and to extract the meaning by taking the content into account.

1.1.3.2 Extensive reading

It simply refers to the outside reading students do on their own, with no help or guidance from the teacher, it means : “rapidly, reading book after book”. Extensive reading plays an important role in foreign language learning. It is an activity that can be carried out by the learner on his or her own outside the classroom. Furthermore, it may be the only way a learner can keep contact with English outside the classroom sessions. It also provides valuable reinforcement of language and structures already presented in the classroom. An extensive reading suggests reading for general language improvement and pleasure on topics that interest the learner. It increases their motivation and gives them a

more positive attitude towards the target language. As the learner is reading for pleasure, they will be eager to see what happens next and will therefore try to read more rapidly, i.e. the more a learner reads extensively, the faster they learn to read.

Undoubtedly, the main way in which the teacher can help the students to read extensively is by directing their attention towards reading material they find interesting. Most students will not do a lot of extensive reading by themselves unless they are encouraged to do so by their teachers. It is therefore important to convince learners of the value of extensive reading.

Thus, the learner should be encouraged to read extensively outside the classroom. Extensive reading, especially where learners are reading material written at their level has a number of benefits for the development of a learner's language. Davies (1995 : 335) suggests that : “Any classroom will be the poorer for lack of an extensive reading programme, and will be unable to promote its pupils' language development in all aspects as effectively as if such a programme were present”. Davies also claims that such a programme will make learners more positive about reading, improving their overall comprehension skills, and give them a wider passive and active vocabulary. Beside, Long and Richards (1971: 216) identify extensive reading as "occurring when students read large amounts of high interest material, usually out of class, concentrating on meaning, "reading for gist" and skipping unknown words."

Extensive reading is therefore, the best possible way for learners to develop automaticity that is the automatic recognition of words when they see them. It is, by far, the best way to improve their English when reading. Grabe discusses some of the benefits of extensive reading and notes that:

“Longer concentrated periods of silent reading build vocabulary and structural awareness, develop automaticity, enhance background knowledge, improve comprehension skills, and promote confidence and motivation”.

(1991:396).

To sum up, the aims of extensive reading are to build reader confidence and enjoyment. Extensive reading is always done for the comprehension of main ideas, not for specific details.

➤ **Scanning**

Scanning is a speed-reading technique and a useful reading activity in which learners need specific information without dealing with the whole text. Scanning involves quick eye movements, not necessarily linear in fashion, in which the eyes wander until the reader finds the piece of information needed. Scanning is used often with technical, scientific or professional materials to locate specific information. It is a valuable skill for second language learners to develop because often they do not require a detailed read of a text. There are many everyday uses for scanning, relevant to a purpose, such as reading a schedule.

Scanning is very useful for finding a specific name, date, statistic, or fact without reading the entire article.

In short, when scanning, learners try to locate particular information by moving their eyes over the text rapidly, and then get the required information to complete a certain task.

➤ **Skimming**

Skimming refers to the process of reading only main ideas within a passage to get an overall impression of the content of a reading selection.

It is a strategy that can be taught to students to help them identify the main ideas in the text. Skimming is used to quickly gather the most important information, not essentially understanding each word.

Skimming is useful in three different situations:

- *Pre-reading Skimming*: It is more than simple previewing and can give a more accurate picture of text to be read later.
- *Reviewing-Skimming*: It is useful for reviewing text already read.
- *Reading-Skimming*: It is most often used for quickly reading material that, for any number of reasons, does not need more detailed attention.

When skimming the reader dips into the text looking for:

- a. Clue words that answer who, what, when, why, how
- b. Proper nouns
- c. Unusual words, especially if capitalized
- d. Enumerations
- e. Qualifying adjectives (best, worst, most, etc.)
- f. Typographical cues--italics, boldface, underlining, asterisks, etc.

1.2. Difficulties in learning the reading skill

In fact, all of us want to know where and why the reading process breaks down. Although problems may occur in any area and there are many difficulties with reading, decoding, comprehension, retention are the roots of reading problems in the view of many experts, such as Ann Logsdon (2018), Alison (2016), Klingler (2011), Haager (2003), David(2007) , etc...

1.2.1. Decoding difficulties

Decoding is a key skill for learning to read that involves taking apart the sounds in words (segmenting) and blending sounds together. It requires both knowledge of letter-sound relationships, as well as an ability to apply that knowledge to successfully identify written words and make meaning.

For example, proficient decoders separate the sounds "buh," "aah" and "guh" in the word "bag." A student who has reading difficulty especially (decoding difficulty), may not differentiate these phonemes. "Buh," "aah" and "guh" might be meaningless to them in relation to the word "bag" on the page.

Signs of decoding difficulty:

- Trouble sounding out words and recognizing words out of context
- Confusion between letters and the sounds they represent
- Slow oral reading rate (reading word-by-word)
- Reading without expression
- Ignoring punctuation while reading

(Klinger, 2011)

Decoding is essential to reading. It allows students to figure out most words they've heard but have never seen in print, as well as sound out words they're not familiar with. The ability to decode is the foundation upon which all other reading instruction—fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, etc... are built. (Asheville, 2018)

1.2.2. Retention difficulties

Retention requires both decoding and comprehending what is written. This task relies on high level cognitive skills, including memory and the ability to group and retrieve related ideas. As students progress through grade levels, they are expected to retain more and more of what they read.

From first-year students, reading to learn is central to classroom work. For English majors at HPU it is an essential task.

Signs of retention difficulty:

- Trouble remembering or summarizing what is read
- Difficulty connecting what is read to prior knowledge
- Difficulty applying content of a text to personal experiences

(David, 2007)

1.2.3. Comprehension difficulties

Researches on reading comprehension show that EFL learners face some difficulties when they read. In fact, students suffer mainly from understanding vocabulary. This is a persistent problem of all students in the country in general and first-year students at HPU in particular. This problem may fall into multiple categories among them, learners may have difficulties for example with words that have similar lexical forms; Some words seem to be phonetically the same (in terms of sounds) as in „boss“ and „bus“, also in ‘cut’ and ‘cat“, other words seem to be similar at the level of morphology like the words receptive and deceptive.

One important category is represented; the idioms and proverbs which seem to be distinct from the learner's culture so that, we are going to translate a given

proverb word by word, thus, we cannot obtain the real meaning but just the literary one.

For example the proverb: “*he kicked the bucket*” which means “*he died*”

The problem is that the learner will translate each word alone we will not obtain the meaning of the proverb. Comprehension relies on mastery of decoding; student who struggle to decode find it difficult to understand and remember what has been read. Because their efforts to grasp individual words are so exhausting, they have no resources left for understanding.

Signs of comprehension difficulty:

- Confusion about the meaning of words and sentences
- Inability to connect ideas in a passage
- Omission of, or glossing over detail
- Difficulty distinguishing significant information from minor details
- Lack of concentration during reading

Farshad farzami (2016:10)

Furthermore, insufficient vocabulary leads to many obstacles in reading comprehension since lexis has a very important role for a successful reading. When the learner has a large vocabulary, we will not face problems comprehension in understanding the whole text, and this comes from habitual reading, i.e. whenever the learner reads a lot we will acquire new vocabulary, and then improve our vocabulary knowledge which makes the reading task much easier for us.

1.3. Factors affecting reading difficulties

Reading difficulties have been the focus of long time, these have mainly focused on students with poor decoding skills, often defined as dyslexic reading problems, and the literature on its causes and consequences as well as remediation is extensive .

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by

poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically results from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

In this regard, David Morgan (2017) gives the 9 factors affecting reading difficulties:

❖ ***Guessing short words and poor spelling***

"Most of the children we help are trying to read whole words by sight, rather than decoding them. That leads to lots of errors with short, easy words, because they tend to be very interchangeable." David Morgan (2017)

❖ ***Struggling to decode long words***

One key element of learning to read by decoding is that you have to hold various complex bits of information in your short term auditory memory. There are the phonemes in a word, then when you have blended those you need to keep the word in memory while you look for the meaning of that word. Then you hold that in memory while you do the whole thing again with the next word. And then you hold a series of words in memory as you form a sentence.

So, all this stuff is shooting around in your temporary storage areas of the brain. If your capacity for short-term memory gets overloaded, then you will lose part of what you are trying to remember and the reading process will fail..

❖ ***Skipping words and whole lines of text***

As you read text on a page, your eyes focus on a word or group of words and then jump to the right to view the next word or group of words. Each jump is called a saccade. This saccade movement is probably the most complex and delicate muscle movement that the body does. If you can read single words well but really struggles with lines of text, it is a good indication of some eye-tracking difficulty. And if the eyes are not able to converge and focus comfortably on each word, reading will be badly affected.

❖ *Difficulty with blending sounds*

Auditory processing weakness or auditory processing deficit is a common cause of reading difficulty. The first-year student have auditory processing weakness , and this weakness can significantly affect a student's ability to learn how to read, because it is hard to work out the sounds in words when you have auditory processing weakness. That then makes phonics very hard to apply as you try to read.

❖ *Battles and meltdowns*

Stress is talked about so much nowadays, that it can be hard to focus on what it really is. The body is designed to react to fear and excitement in very clear ways that help us survive in dangerous situations.

Example: Previously, fear and excitement were normally linked to danger in the form of other tribes coming to visit or bumping into large carnivores in the woods! At those moments, survival depended on how you reacted. You really had three options: fight, flight or freeze (so that you went unnoticed). Our stress reaction is designed to achieve one of the three.

In all three cases, the brain shuts down the higher thinking areas of the frontal cortex and moves control to the more basic ones of the brain stem (the "lizard" brain). So you will see raised emotion and a much reduced ability to think clearly. But you will probably run, get aggressive or freeze, which are often better options than almost anything else when faced by something dangerous.

But nowadays we can have lots of other causes of stress that activate the same reactions. In these modern situations of stress, the body's natural reaction is often not so helpful.

Reading is very much a higher brain function. So it is no surprise that stress is generally a negative input when learning to read. However, as anyone knows who has helped someone struggling to read, stress levels can rise very quickly, sometimes for everyone involved.

So it is very easy to get into a negative spiral of failure... leading to stress... leading to cerebral shutdown... leading to more failure and eventually crisis. In

fact, the conventional experience of learning to read for many student is an inevitable series of public failures as the learner stumbles over words that cannot be read.

❖ *Very poor fluency*

Some student develop a good ability to decode words, but are always stuck laboriously decoding them without it becoming fluent. The reason for this seems to be that they are building a mapping of letter patterns to sounds with the letter patterns stored in their general visual memory, not the specialist “letterbox” cortex normally used by most readers.

❖ *Words “moving around on the page”*

To read well your eyes must be working optimally. So the first step is to get a complete checkup with a good optician. But beyond this, there is a syndrome that some opticians may not check for, where the eye is sensitive to the contrast of a pure black on a white background.

The eye is effectively a part of your brain that has extruded itself out of the skull. One of the most important elements of processing that happens in the eye is to look for shapes and the edges of shapes. There are around 100 million rods and cones in each retina and only 1 million neurons in each optic nerve. So the eye is aggregating the individual rods and cones and it is in the aggregating process that the eye is very sensitive to changes in intensity.

❖ *Poor focus while trying to read*

It is not surprising that any form of Attention Deficit makes learning to read very hard, because it is a skill that takes prolonged practice and application to master. There are plenty of theories on how to help a student with attention difficulties, but the simple ways to get them reading. And the key to that is to make them interested in the task and keep the sessions short.

❖ *Poor comprehension*

There’s a lot going on in reading, from letter and word recognition to understanding meaning at the phrase, sentence, and paragraph level. When a beginner reader encounters vocabulary they do not know or do not recognize

due to inaccurate decoding, they are likely to skip ahead. The more blanks in a line of text, the harder it is to make meaning and the more cognitively challenging and frustrating the reading task becomes. That's why poor comprehension can result when a student struggles with decoding, has a limited vocabulary or attempts to read a text that is at too high of a level.

There are 9 factors affecting reading difficulties. Similarly, Birch stated that:

“Young learners’ development of English L2 reading skill is influenced by a number of factors, such as age, motivation, aptitude, personality, gender, strategies, learning style, metacognition, autonomy, beliefs, L1, L1 reading skill, L2 oral skills, prior knowledge, a text read, teaching method, and exposure to L2 printed material. To be able to understand how L2 readers develop reading in English and how best to support them, teachers need to know “what factors complicate the acquisition of the knowledge and processing strategies for effective reading in English”

(2008: 11)

Or in other words, what factors contribute to later proficient or expert reading and can be used as guidelines for intervention and improvement of the teaching of reading.

In this section, Alderson (2005) reported research indicating that “the second-language reading problem should be reformulated, not as an Either / Or question, but as a question of the interaction between the two abilities / knowledge sources” (p. 38). Metacognition plays a very important role in L1 reading and has a significant effect on reading performance: poor readers lack knowledge of strategies and how and when to apply them, and “over-rely on word-level cues” (Alderson, 2005, p. 41), which has important implications for L2 reading. While purposes for reading, motivation and interest, and reader affect may vary depending on the reading task, there are more stable reader characteristics that affect reading success, like personality, gender, intelligence, social class, and occupation, research results indicating that girls perform better in L1 and L2 reading than boys (Alderson, 2005).

Results of a groundbreaking study of young learners’ L2 development were reported by Enever (2011). The ELLiE (Early Language Learning in Europe)

project was a longitudinal and comparative study of early language learning in the seven different country contexts, i.e. Croatia, England, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Sweden, in the period 2007-2010. It was one of the most extensive research studies of foreign language learning of young learners carried out in Europe in recent years. The study aimed to show how different factors interacted in the outcomes of early foreign language learning, and found that both learner factors (attitudes, motivation, self-perception) and contextual factors (education policy, school level policy, immediate learning environment) influenced success of young language learners.

To understand both factors, the section that follows explains the relationship between individual factors like motivation, positive attitude and self-confidence on reading outcomes.

- **Individual factors**

Individual characteristics, such as attitudes, preferences, self-confidence and motivation have been found to contribute to reading success (McKay, 2006, p. 228), and more generally to linguistic outcomes of young learners (Cable et al., 2010; Drew, 2009; Edelenbos et al., 2006; Enever, 2011; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2013, 2014; Mihaljević Djigunović & Lopriore 2011; Nikolov, 1999, 2009; Pinter, 2006, 2011; Saville-Troike, 2006; Szpotowicz, 2012). Moreover, individual differences like age, gender, cognitive style, reading strategies, aptitude, personality, working memory, self-regulation, anxiety, willingness to communicate, and learners' beliefs have been found to affect success in L2 learning (Dorney, 2009; Ellis, 2008). To help us understand individual factors better, Saville-Troike (2006) presented a comprehensive list of 10 categories of factors that may affect L2 reading achievement (Table A).

Table A: Individual factors affecting reading outcomes

Individual Factors
❖ Age
❖ Gender
❖ Cognitive style ✓ Field-dependent - Field-independent

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Global - Particular ✓ Holistic - Analytic ✓ Deductive - Inductive ✓ Focus on meaning - Focus on form
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reading strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Metacognitive ✓ Cognitive ✓ Social – affective
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Aptitude <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Phonemic coding ability ✓ Inductive language learning ability ✓ Grammatical sensitivity ✓ Associative memory capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Personality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Anxious — Self-confident ✓ Risk-avoiding — Risk-taking ✓ Shy — Adventurous ✓ Introverted — Extroverted ✓ Inner-directed — Other-directed ✓ Reflective — Impulsive ✓ Imaginative — Uninquisitive ✓ Creative — Uncreative ✓ Empathetic — Insensitive to others ✓ Tolerant of ambiguity — Closure-oriented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Attitude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Preferences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Self-confidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Integrative ✓ Instrumental

Ellis (2008) proposed a less comprehensive list of 10 factors within 4 categories: 1. abilities: intelligence, working memory, language aptitude; 2. propensities: 1. learning style, motivation, anxiety, personality, willingness to communicate; 3. learner cognitions about L2 learning: learner beliefs; 4. learner actions: learning strategies. However, Ellis (2008) warns that there is no framework yet for studying these factors, with two main reasons emerging so far: the overlapping of the factors and the absence of a theory of individual differences in L2 learning. Still, individual factors have been a focus of a great

body of research in the field of L2 acquisition and learning. Age has been studied as an important variable in overall L2 achievement, and its contribution to native-like pronunciation, grammar judgments and functional competence has been determined (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Regarding age factor and reading success, age has been found to influence reading outcomes only in combination with other factors, and by correlating with the use of reading strategies (Šamo, 2009). As regards gender, most of the research focused on differences in linguistic/reading outcomes resulting from the interaction of gender with other individual factors, such as cognitive style, reading strategies, attitudes and motivation, or with contextual factors, such as opportunities for interaction and types of input and exposure (Enever, 2009; Griva, 2014; Lefever, 2010; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2013).

A significant factor that may explain L2 learners' success is motivation, because it "largely determines the level of effort which learners expend at various stages in their L2 development, often a key to ultimate level of proficiency" (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 85). Moreover, motivation is the factor that both language teachers and learners mention when explaining success and failure, and a technical term used in applied linguistics and psychology, often with a wide spectrum of meanings (Dörnyei, 2014, p. 518). But, L1 reading motivation research strongly stresses that "intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and expectations for success predict both amount of reading and reading comprehension development" (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 122). Wang and Guthrie's (2004) study supported the implication that children's text comprehension required not only cognitive processes, but also motivational processes and that "students' reading is associated with both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation" (p. 162).

Furthermore, aptitude is also understood as a specific language learning talent involving four components: 1. phonemic coding ability, which is very important at early language learning; 2. inductive language learning ability; 3. grammatical sensitivity; 4. associative memory capacity (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Drawing on research in this field, Saville-Troike (2006) argues that although it is not necessary to possess all four components to be a successful L2 learner, “[t]he findings that aptitude is an important predictor of differential success in L2 learning holds both for naturalistic contexts and for formal classroom instruction” (p. 85).

- **Contextual factors**

Learners’ reading is influenced by a great number of contextual factors (McKay, 2006), research indicating that in EFL settings, factors like out-of-school exposure, may have a strong influence on linguistic outcomes of young learners (Drew, 2009; Lefever, 2010; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2013). Contextual factors refer to learning environment both in and out of school and may include teacher quality (education), teaching method, instructional input, socio-economic status (SES), home support, parents’ use of L2, availability of reading material, extensive reading opportunities, and out-of-school exposure, like out-of-school classes, opportunities for watching undubbed TV programmes/films, using the internet, playing computer games in L2, or using L2 for communication with foreigners/native speakers of L2. Table B shows the complexity of contextual factors, distributed into two large groups depending on the formality of the learning environment. A growing body of research into young learners’ L2 programmes in a variety of contexts has strengthened “the awareness that contextual factors may play an essential role” in early foreign language learning (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2013, p. 160).

Table B: In-school & Out-of-school contextual factors affecting reading outcomes

School level contextual factors	Out-of-school contextual factors
grade curriculum	out-of-school English classes
school profile: - availability of teaching materials - availability of reference books - L2 (English) books - authentic books for children in English	exposure to English: - foreign TV programmes (series, shows) - foreign films - foreign cartoons (cable TV) - the internet (reading material,

- children's dictionaires - equipment - technology	videos, video games, music in English) - music in English
teacher qualifications	interacting with English-speaking people
teacher attitudes	reading English storybooks or comics
teaching approaches	using dictionaries
classroom exposure to English	parents' support (practising, explaining, checking homework)
classroom processes and activities	siblings' support (practising, explaining, checking homework)
classroom arrangement	

Mihaljević Djigunović (2013) investigated key contextual factors influencing Croatian young learners' L2 learning processes and linguistic outcomes within the ELLiE study. Through interviews with teachers and school principals, teacher and parent questionnaires, and observation. She has found two groups of contextual factors were distinguished: 1. school level contextual factors, referring to the curriculum, school characteristics, like attitude to foreign language teaching, availability of teaching materials, L2 (English) books, equipment and technology use, teacher qualification and attitudes to teaching young learners, teaching approaches, i.e. types of tasks and classroom exposure to L2; 2. out-of-school contextual factors, comprising out-of-school exposure to English through taking private classes, watching foreign TV programmes (films, cartoons, series, and shows), using the internet (watching videos, playing video games, listening to music in English), interacting with English-speaking people, reading English storybooks or comics, and practising English with parents and older siblings. The study showed that contextual factors had a great influence on individual factors, like motivation and attitudes, and caused their fluctuation with time.

In this respect, according European Commission (2012) exposure to L2 as prescribed by a national curriculum and as classroom practice is recognized as one of key factors of L2 learning. Beside, in relation to classroom exposure to

L2, European Commission (2012) stressed that “according to students, teachers do not 'usually' use the target language in the classroom, although they still use it on some or frequent occasions” (p.12), pointing to the need “to make sure that the target language is used during language lessons both by teachers and pupils” (p. 12)

To sum up, from the opinions above, each factor reflects what reading difficulties are seen from his own point of view. In this study, the research results of Enever (2011) shed a light on the questions in the questionnaire so that the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by first-year English majors at Haiphong Private University were identified.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

The population of the study consisted of 30 students from NA2201, NA2201T and NA2201N who are in their first year of HPU, aged between 18 and 23 years. All these participants are students from different regions in Vietnam.

They have been studying English as a school subject for more than 12 years from Primary to High school. They had to study many different subjects. Therefore they don't spend enough time focusing on learning English. These students have just access to basic English, so they are generally at the elementary and pre-intermediate level of English. They could use English as a foreign language to communicate with their teachers and classmates in English classes.

Currently, their number of English periods taught in a semester is 40,5 periods with three periods per week in which the duration of each period is 50 minutes and their current syllabus is “*EFFECTIVE READING*” at pre-intermediate level.

After this survey is completed, we will have a better understanding about the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by first-year English majors.

2.2. Instrument

In the study, questionnaire was used as a main instrument to collect the data needed in quantitative form because it is regarded as an easy tool to summarize, analyze, report the collected data and find out the causes of difficulties in reading skill because all participants answer the same questions.

It is clearly seen that a questionnaire is a data gathering tool designed to meet specific, needed information. It can collect data more than any other instruments because all the informants receive the same questions in the same form. It

involves a set of questions that are addressed to the research informants for data collection purposes. In this regard, Dornyei (2007: 101) states that: “The popularity of questionnaires is due to the fact that they are relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily accessible”

In this study, the questionnaire consists of 10 questions, which covers two main factors, namely, individual and contextual factors affecting students’ difficulties in reading skill. Questions from 1 to 6 mainly aim at identifying individual factors influencing students; meanwhile, questions from 7 to 10 are designed to find out contextual factors leading students’ difficulties. The questionnaire was written in both English and Vietnamese in order that students might have a clear understanding of the researcher’s purpose because of the fact that some of the first-year English students have limited English proficiency.

2.3. Data collection procedure

Step 1: Distribute the questionnaire to students

In order to collect data for the study, the questionnaire was distributed to 30 students at their recess. Students were given 10 minutes to fill in personal information in part one and select the best answer to ten multiple choice questions in part two. All the answers made by participants were kept confidentially to serve for the data analysis.

Step 2: Process the data

Data were processed by using the descriptive statistics so as to find out the percentage of each factor leading to students’ difficulties in reading skill.

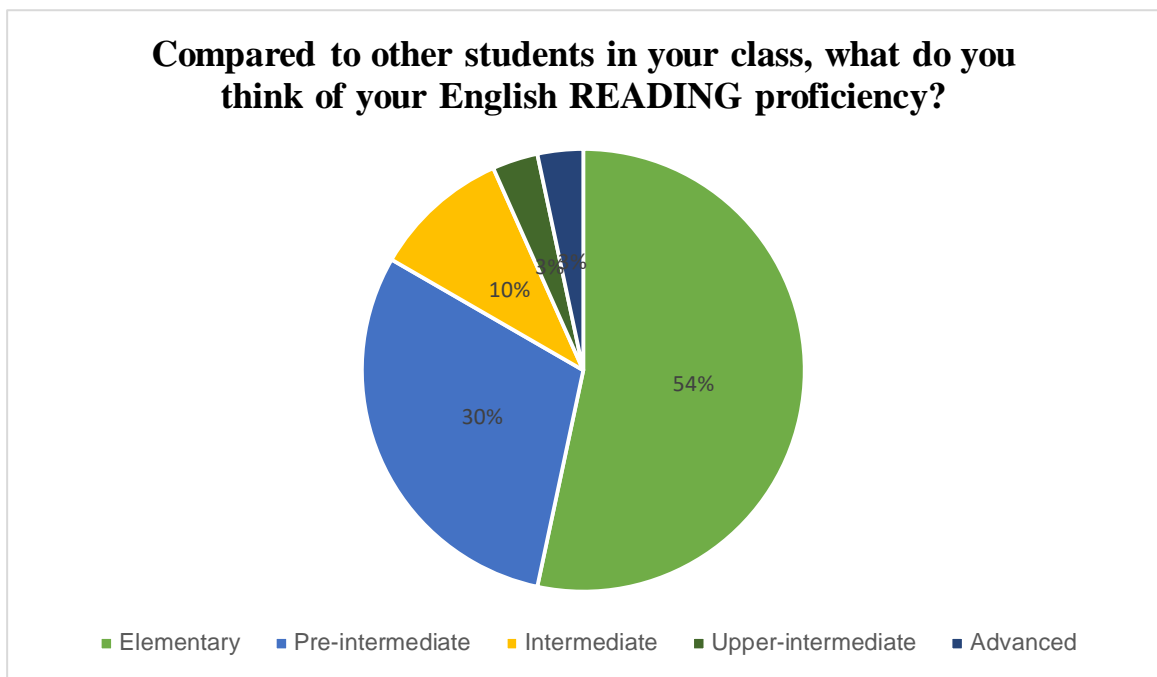
Step 3: Suggest possible solutions to students’ problems

Based on the findings from data analysis, the researcher would give some useful pedagogical implications to help teachers especially teachers in charge of teaching reading subject to find appropriate ways to support their students in studying reading skills better. At the same time, students can improve their reading skills.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

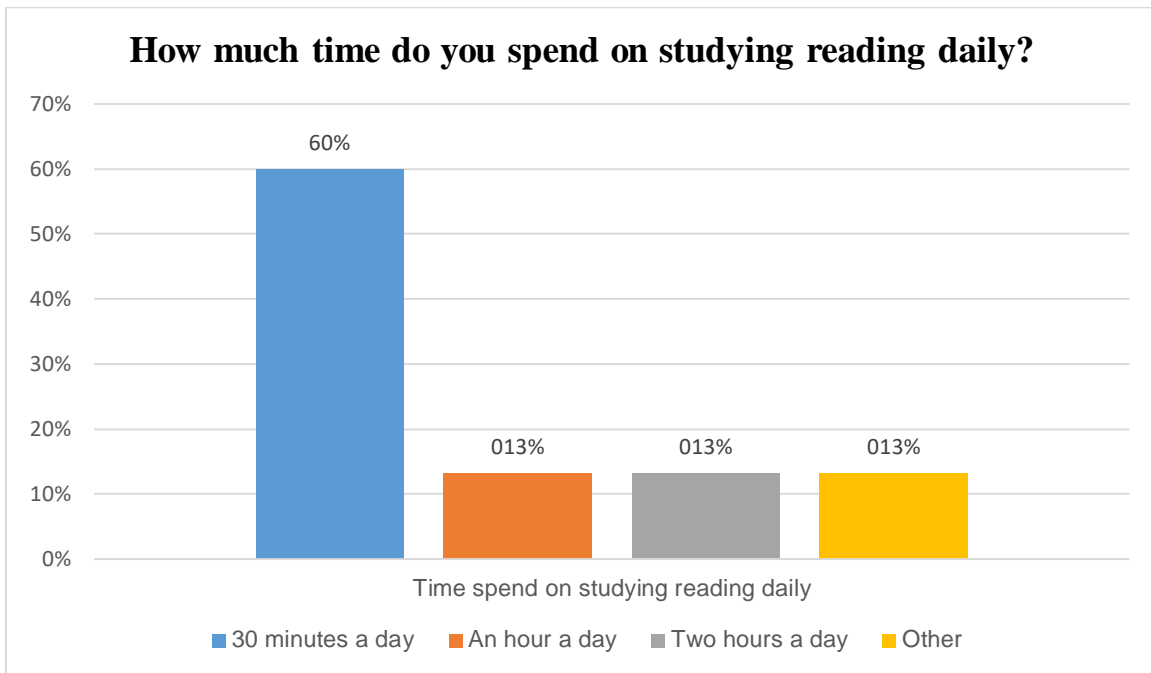
3.1. Causes of reading difficulties experienced by first-year English majors at HPU

Question 1



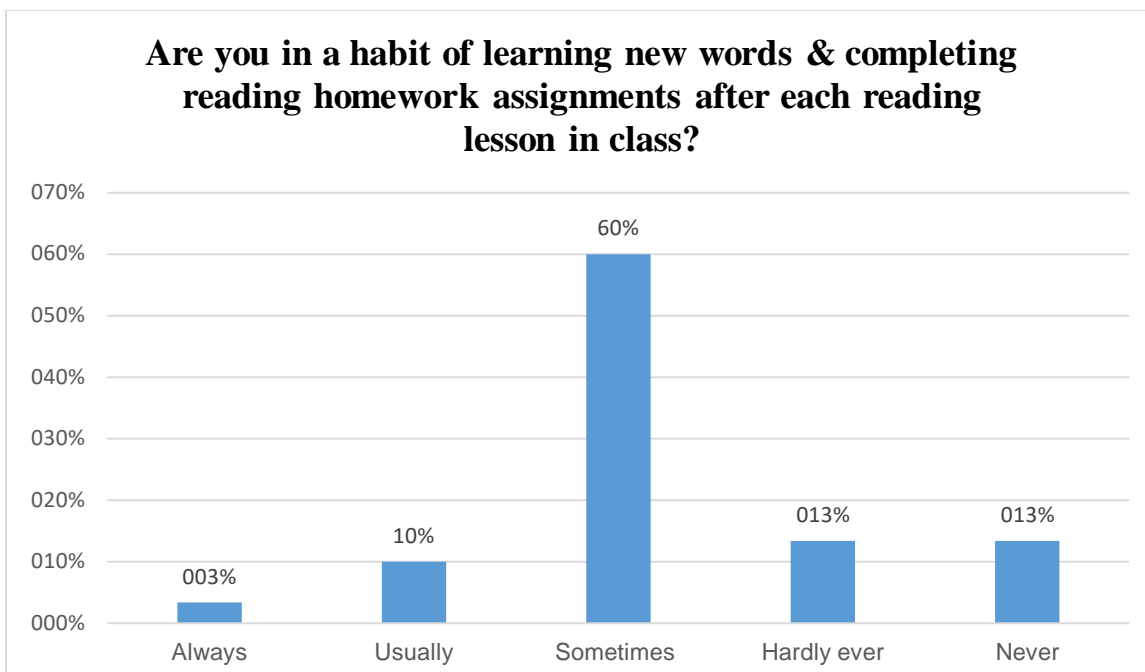
The pie chart above shows the English reading proficiency of students in classes, namely, NA1601, NA2201T and NA2201N are quite different. Some students who rated their reading English skill at the intermediate level (10%), Upper-intermediate level (3%) and advanced level (3%). However, that's just a very small portion of Foreign Language Department. Because all of them are first-year students, they have just had access to basic English in a few years. Therefore, their reading English skill is at the level of elementary or pre-intermediate rather than intermediate or advanced. Apparently, students' limited English reading competency is one of the factors causing their difficulties in reading skill.

Question 2



It is clearly seen from the bar chart that students seemed to pay less attention to study reading everyday. Most of them spent 30 minutes on studying reading daily. The number of students who studied from an hour a day and more than an hour was very limited with the same figure of 13,33%. Spending too little time on studying reading has a profound influence on students' efficiency in reading skill.

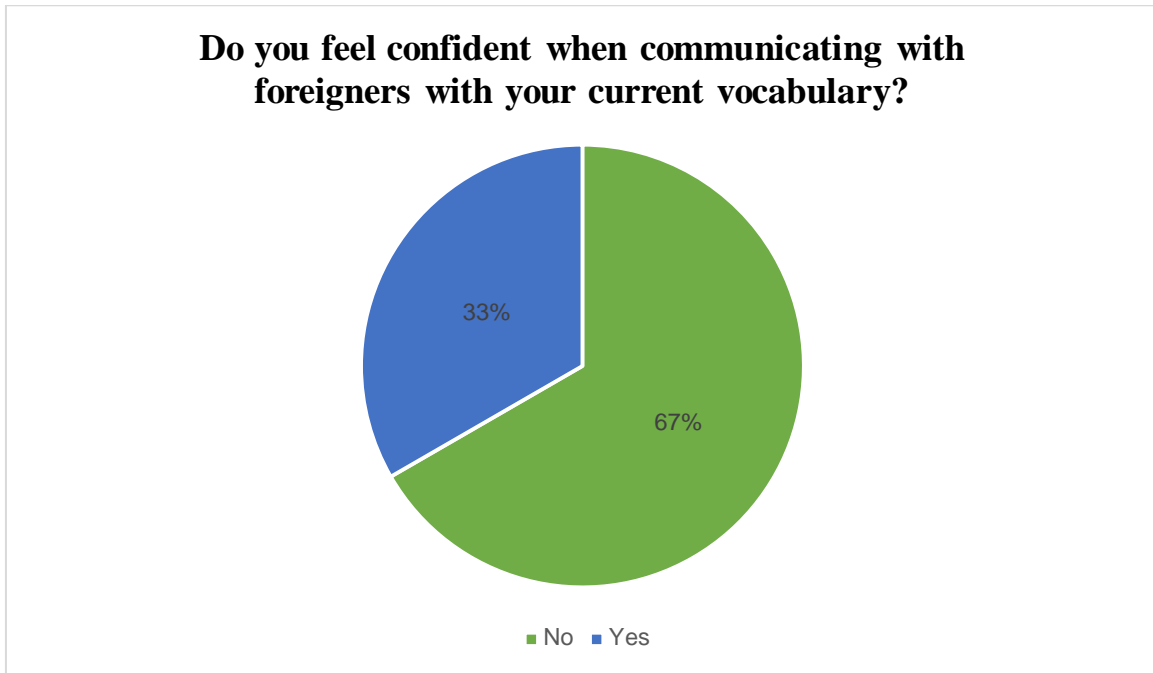
Question 3



It is thought that a habit of learning new words and completing reading homework assignments after each reading lesson in class is good for practicing reading skills. The bar chart illustrates how often the students do this work. The number of hard working students who always learned new words and completed their reading homework assignments seemed to be the least with only 3,33% student. 60% students sometimes learned new words and did reading exercises while 13,33% of them never did it. There were 10% and 13,33% students who usually or hardly did this work.

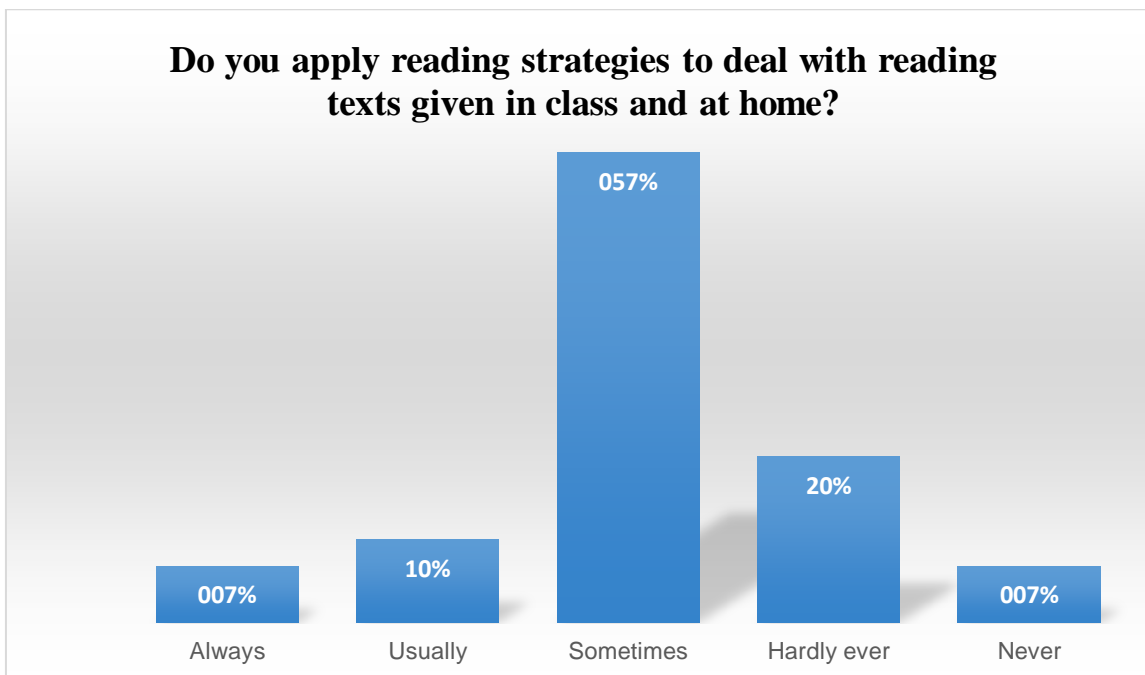
This sad figure reflects one of the causes of difficulties in learning reading skill As a matter of fact, limited vocabulary is one of the problems that make learners unable to understand the content in English reading texts. In addition, the lazier the learners are, the worse they are at reading skill.

Question 4



67% students asked said - No. Most of them were often afraid of communicating with native speakers. They felt awkward and shy when they met foreigners because they were afraid that their English vocabulary was not enough to express ideas and their pronunciation s not acacurate, resulting in the misunderstanding among speakers. Obviously, students' unconfidence in communication skills with foreigners becomes an obstacle for their difficulties in reading.

Question 5



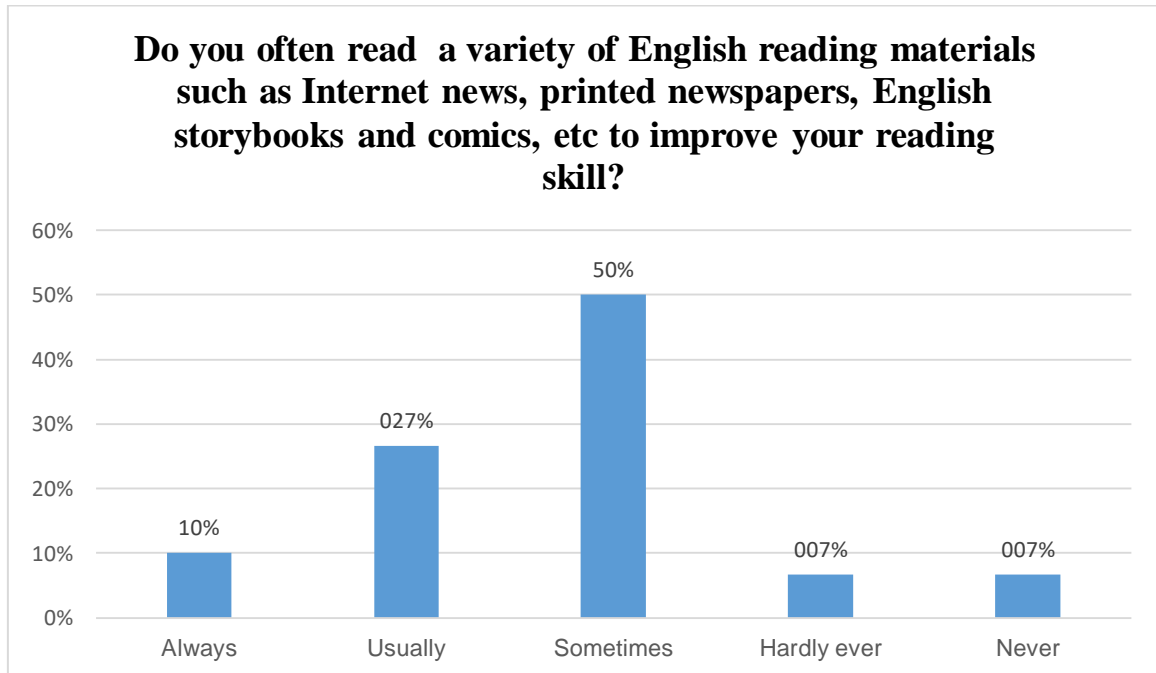
The chart above reflects the frequency of using reading strategies to deal with reading texts given in class and at home by students. Only 6,67% students always applied it and the same figure never did. 56,67% students said they sometimes applied reading strategies. Besides, there are 10% and 20% students for usually, hardly ever.

Students who are sometimes, hardly ever or never not interested in applying reading strategies, often cope with a lot of problems during the reading English text such as:

- Read and try to translate word by word, only interested for vocabulary without having a deep understanding of the reading text.
- Pay attention to small details leading to ignoring main ideas in the reading
- Waste a lot of time
- Psychology of fear: long readings and a lot of new words

This leads to a situation of feeling bored during the process of reading comprehension causing passive-aggressive psychology as well as difficulty in absorbing information in the reading text.

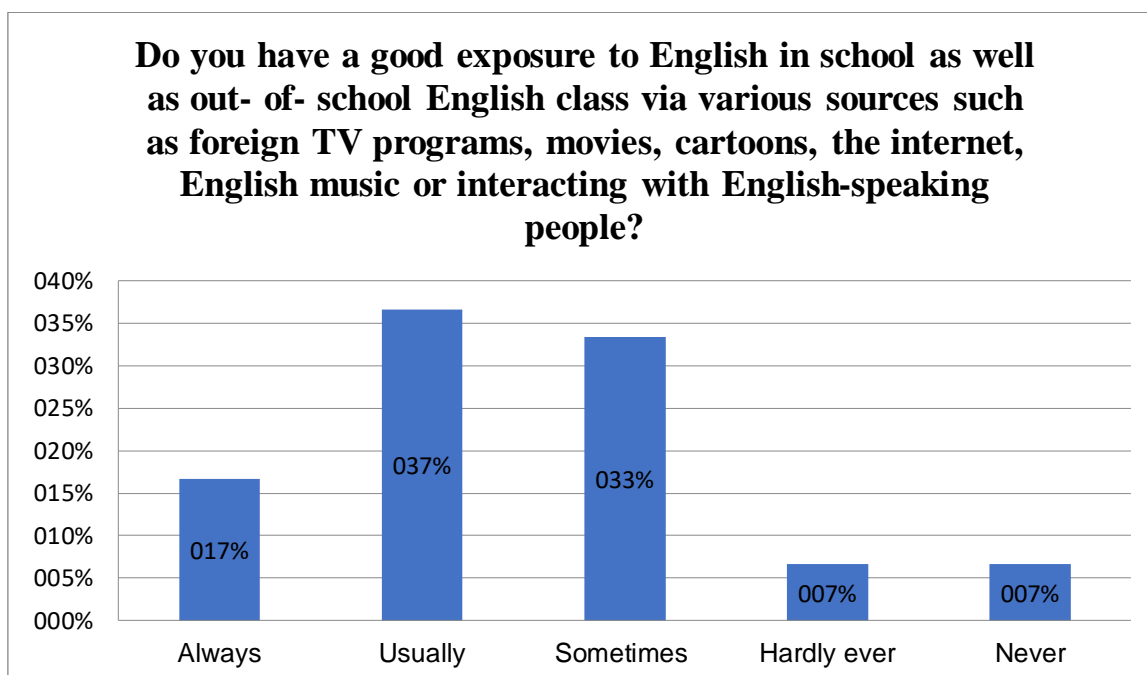
Question 6



It is clearly seen that the percentage of students who always or usually read English materials accounts for a very small proportion making up only 10% and 26,67% students in turn and most of them were sometimes in the habit of reading English materials with the figure of 50%. The same number of students hardly ever or never read materials at 6,67%.

If the students do not have the habit of reading materials, internet news, stories or comics in English, their vocabulary and structures will be limited because when reading English, the words and phrases will be repeated many times. Images of English phrases will help them remember longer and learn a variety of new words. However, first-year English majors at HPU seem to consider reading various materials unimportant for them. It is their low frequency in reading different materials that makes them face a lot of difficulties in reading skill.

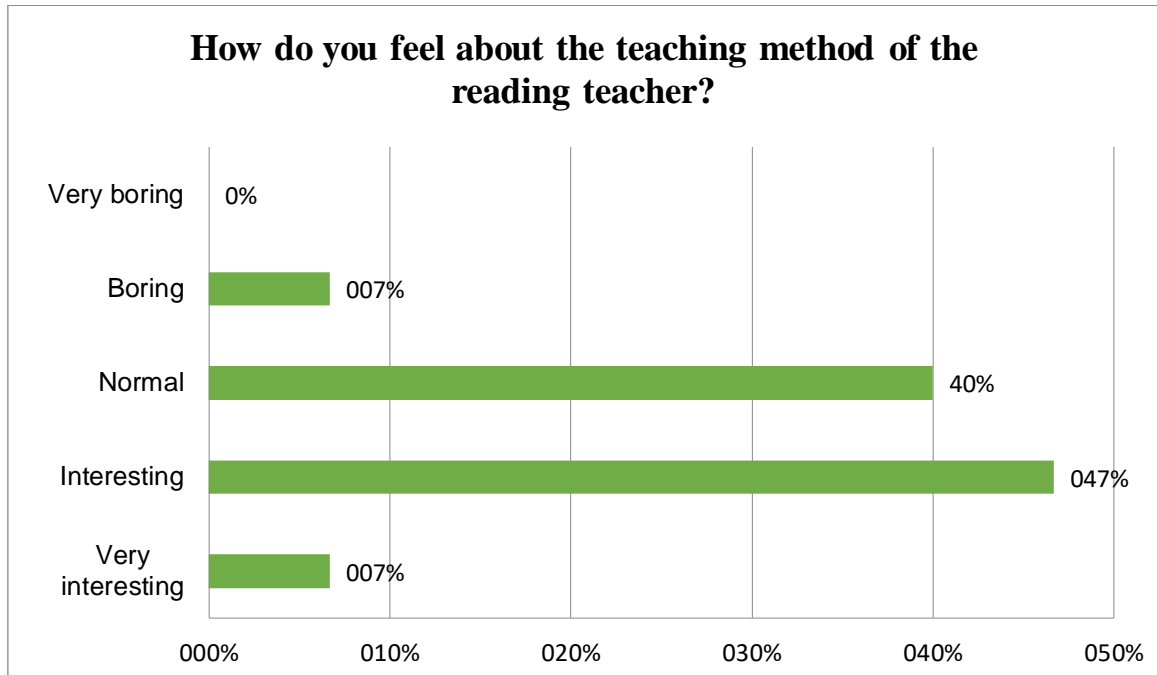
Question 7



According to the result of survey questionnaire, the percentage of students who was self-aware of learning English was higher. There were nearly half of students usually or always practice English via different ways. However, half of students were still unaware of ways to learn English suitably for themselves.

After a tiring day at school, most of the students want to entertain themselves through foreign TV programs, movies, cartoons, the internet or English music. Although students have a good exposure to a variety of sources to study reading skill, they do not take advantage of those means for their study, mainly for their entertainment. As a consequence, those useful tools become useless in supporting their study in general and their reading skill in particular.

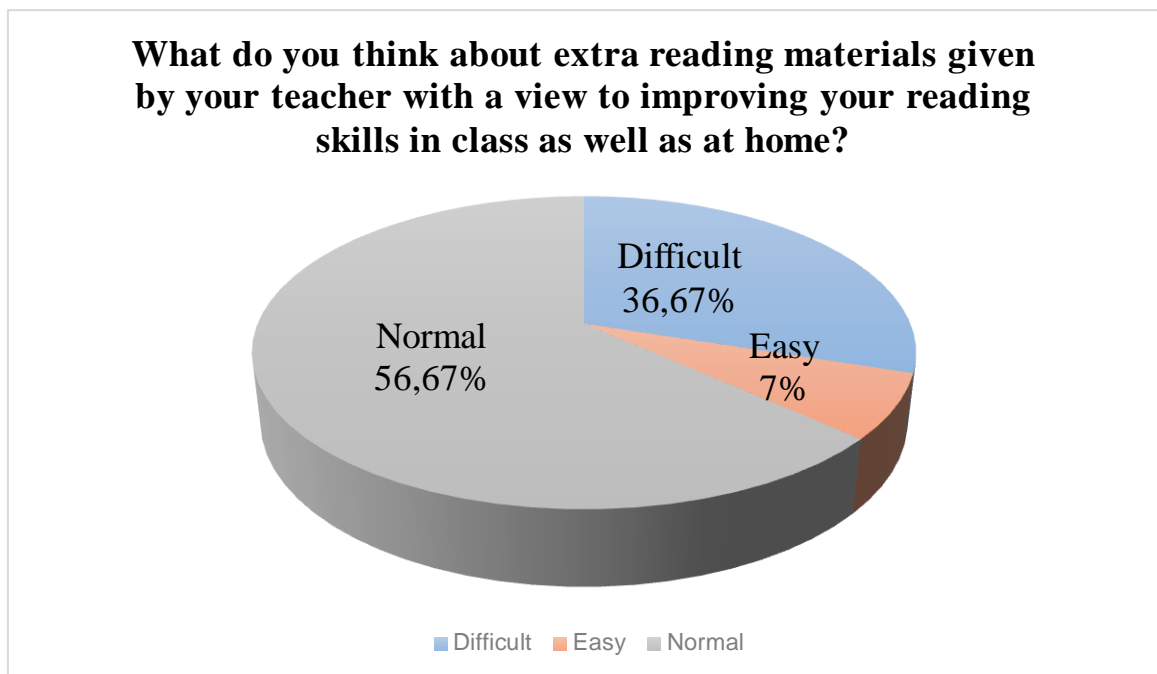
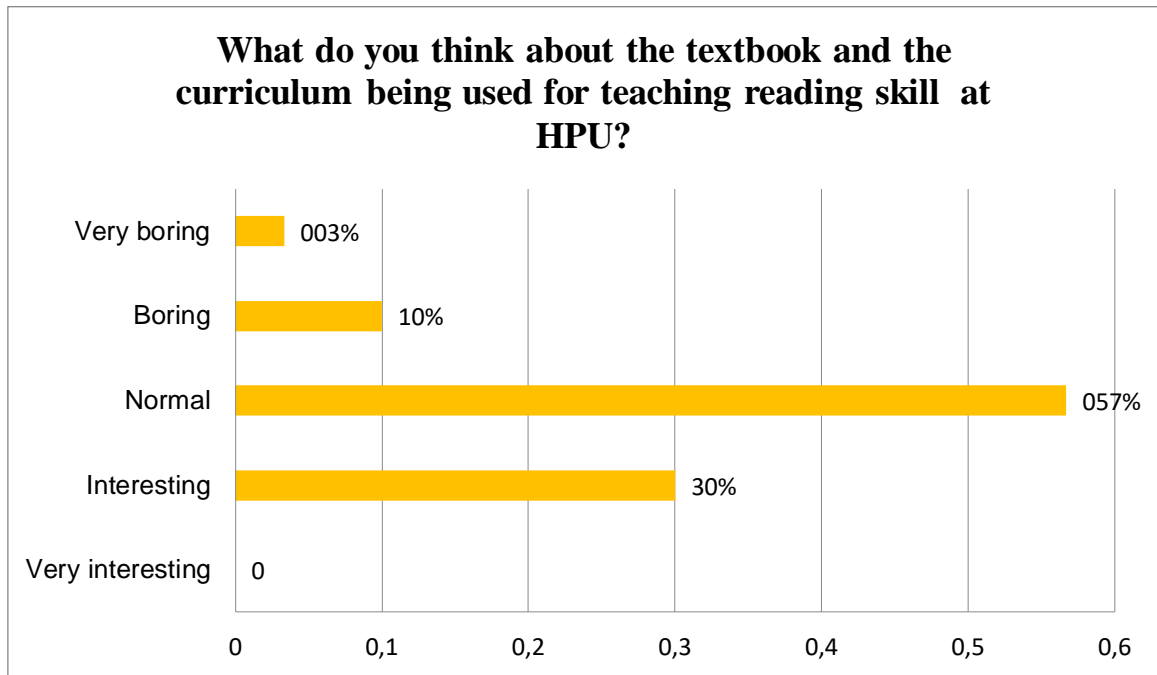
Question 8:



Nearly half of the students found the teaching methods of the teacher interesting whereas 40% and 6,67% students felt teaching method normal and boring respectively.

The teaching method of the reading teacher is an important factor to improve reading skill of students. The more fascinating the teacher’s teaching methods are, the more motivated students feel to study reading subject.

Question 9 and 10



The charts show the impact of textbook, curriculum and extra reading materials on the students' effectiveness in reading skill. Obviously, only a small proportion of students found those factors interesting (30%) and find it easy to learn (7%). 56,67% students thought that they were normal. The rest of the students admitted that the textbook, the curriculum and extra reading materials were boring and difficult.

Undoubtedly, if the content is too hard to understand, the students will become lazy or show their rebellious behavior. These factors make reading periods become ineffective and bring about a lot of troubles for students in learning reading skills.

In summary, the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by first-year English majors at Haiphong Private University include many different factors from individual causes to contextual ones. In terms of individual causes, it is apparent that students have just had access to basic English in a few years so it leads to students' limited English reading competency and it is one of the factors causing their difficulties in reading skill. What is more, students do not spend much time on studying reading and they never learn new words as well as read materials, internet news, stories or comics in English, because of the fact that limited vocabulary makes them unable to understand the content in English reading texts. In addition, the lazier the learners are, the worse they are at reading skill. Furthermore, students have a good exposure to foreign TV programs, movies, cartoons,... to study reading skill. Nonetheless, they do not take advantage of those means for their study, mainly for their entertainment. Consequently, those useful tools become useless in supporting their study in general and their reading skill in particular. Additionally, they do not know how to apply reading strategies to deal with reading texts. This leads to a situation of feeling bored during the process of reading comprehension causing passive-aggressive psychology as well as difficulty in absorbing information in the reading text. With regard to contextual causes, extra reading materials seem to be not straightforward for learners and the teaching methods applied by the teacher do not draw the students' attention. These factors make reading periods become ineffective and result in students' difficulties in learning reading skills.

3.2. Some suggested solutions to reading difficulties faced by first-year English majors at HPU

Basing on the survey, it is clearly seen that the first-year students need to be aware of learning English at their early stage, which will help them have a solid English background before becoming sophomore. They have to be well-oriented about the importance of learning reading. In addition, vocabulary is one of the problems that help them understand the content in English reading texts. Instead of spending time on playing games and going out with friends, they should find a book to read or listen to some English songs which both helps them relax and learn more new words. Moreover, they should spend a lot of time on learning reading skill and form a good habit of reading materials, internet news, stories or comics in English because reading has always been said to be a great way to expand vocabulary. If they are still new to English, they can start by reading something more easily, like an online book or even a children's book. Everyone has to start somewhere. Of course, when they come across a word they do not know when reading, write it down and look it up. Similarly, In Mojca's view (2017) on learning reading, it can bring learners some advantages such as:

✓ *Reading reduces stress*

When we read, we are still. We get comfortable. Most people sit while reading. Our bodies do not carry any special movements, they rest. The breathing slows down. We calm down. We imagine ourselves the world or situations described by words in the book. While reading we cannot think of other tasks or worries. Because of all this reasons, reading does reduce stress.

✓ *Reading helps us build a better vocabulary*

It has been proven that book readers have a richer vocabulary, so for them easier to find the best expression for all that they want to tell others. In general, the more you read, the richer your vocabulary gets. Furthermore, books are definitely a treasure trove of knowledge!

In addition, the first-year students need to have more contact with foreigners and should ignore thoughts and feelings about issues such as:

- Afraid of communicating with native speakers
- Awkward and shy when they meet foreigners
- Pronunciation, grammar is not accurate
- English vocabulary is not enough to express ideas, resulting in the misunderstanding among speakers.

Undoubtedly, practicing English with Native Speakers will teach authentic and practical use of vocabulary. They will be practicing English with Native Speakers, they will be exposed to more idioms, dialect, slang and a generally more extensive vocabulary than with a non-native speaker. Too much slang is, of course, not a good thing, but exposure to this side of the language is always useful to understand what people really mean.

As they hear their native English partner use different vocabulary depending on what topics they discuss and what opinions partner have, they can ask about and highlight new words to use by themselves. Also, if they are struggling to find the word for something they can try and describe what they mean to their native conversation partner and native English partner can identify the correct word for them.

Besides, in order to read a paragraph or even a long text become easily, they should apply reading strategies to deal with reading texts.

As first-year students at HPU, they are asked to read increasingly complex informative and graphical texts in their courses. The ability to understand and use the information in these texts is the key to a student's success in learning. So it is believed that successful students have a repertoire of strategies to draw upon, and know how to use them in different contexts.

Struggling readers need:

- ✓ knowledge of different types of texts and the best strategies for reading them.

- ✓ multiple and meaningful opportunities to practise reading in subject specific contexts.
- ✓ opportunities to practise reading with appropriate resources.
- ✓ opportunities to talk about their reading and thinking.
- ✓ background knowledge in subject areas.
- ✓ expanded sight vocabularies and word-solving strategies for reading subject-specific texts.
- ✓ strategies for previewing texts, monitoring their understanding, determining the most important ideas and the relationships among them, remembering what they read, and making connections and inferences.
- ✓ strategies for becoming independent readers in any context.

And in this respect, Ontario Ministry of Education (2007) stated that effective readers use strategies to understand what they read before, during, and after reading.

Before reading, they:

- use prior knowledge to think about the topic.
- make predictions about the probable meaning of the text.
- preview the text by skimming and scanning to get a sense of the overall meaning.

During reading, they:

- monitor understanding by questioning, thinking about, and reflecting on the ideas and information in the text.

After reading, they:

- reflect upon the ideas and information in the text.
- relate what they have read to their own experiences and knowledge.
- clarify their understanding of the text.
- extend their understanding in critical and creative ways.

What is more, to make reading become easier and more interesting. The foreign TV programs, movies, and foreign cartoons are good options for students' free time because these tools help them to have a variety of vocabulary and English sentence structures. Additionally, the words and phrases are often repeated many times in combination with lively, which will help learners remember new words longer.

As a matter of fact, most of the students at HPU have a good exposure to a variety of sources to study reading skill, however they do not take advantage of those means for their study, mainly for their entertainment. Thus, they need to limit their time on entertainment or they can combine between playing and learning by participating in games such as: Word Bingo, Game hangman, Game Concentration, Prepositions of Place Game and Scattegories,...or they can listening to English songs.

Furthermore, the teaching method of reading teachers is an important factor to improve reading skill of students. First, The teachers must how to help students get the right understanding about the importance of learning English in general and learning reading skills in particular.

Lectures in class must be suitable for all students. In other words, they must be appropriate methods, inspiring students to study. The more fascinating the teacher's teaching methods are, the more motivated students feel to study reading subject.

As students have a void of knowledge, the teacher must organize tutoring for them. During summer vacations, schools should organize extra classes and classify weak, medium, and good students into separate classes.

It has been suggested that evaluating reading comprehension inside the classroom should compose three phases; pre-reading activities, while- reading activities and post -reading activities (Williams 1996). Classroom activities are important for a better achievement in teaching reading skill.

➤ *Pre-Reading Activities:*

- ✓ Guessing the story from the chapter headings and predicting what will happen from the pictures.
- ✓ The teachers should choose new and difficult vocabulary from the story and would write them on the board and pre teach them or review it with the students. After explaining the vocabulary words teachers must ask questions about the chosen words .Students will be asked to use vocabulary in their sentences.
- ✓ The teachers will choose random sentences from the story and will write the sentences on the board not in the order they appear in the story. Learners will be asked to discuss in groups how they think that these sentences will be placed in the correct order.

When they will read the story they can see how the sentences appear in it.

➤ ***While Reading Activities***

- ✓ While reading teachers would like to ask questions based on text and will ask them to predict what will happen next.
- ✓ When learners are reading the story they should be asked to find information from the paragraphs.
- ✓ While reading the text, it is recommended that the teachers should ask students to identify previously discussed vocabulary words.
- ✓ Teachers should ask learners to read the text in pairs.

➤ ***Post- Reading Activities***

- ✓ After reading the text teachers would ask questions based on the text and will ask them to predict what will happen next.
- ✓ Once students read the text they will be asked to think of different endings in group and each group will be asked to share their endings in class.
- ✓ Students will be asked to summarize the story in their own words.
- ✓ Students will be divided into pairs and each pair will be asked to talk about their favorite character in the story.

In addition, teaching materials are also of great significance in learning reading skill. Hence, the teacher should choose materials which are easy for their learners to understand about the content. Only by doing so, do students feel more excited about learning reading subject.

PART C:

CONCLUSION

1. Summary

It can be clearly seen that the research paper was carried out with the view to helping the first-year English major students at HAIPHONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY to realize the causes of their difficulties in reading skill. At the same time the research also gave some solutions for both students and teachers in order to tackle all their problems related reading skill.

Based on the findings and interpretations in the data analysis, the following conclusion could be drawn. Undoubtedly, students' difficulties in reading are originated from both individual and contextual factors. Concerning individual factors, students spend too little time on studying reading. Additionally, they never learn new words and even are not in the habit of reading materials, internet news, stories or comics in English. Moreover, students have a good access to foreign TV programs, movies, cartoons,... to study reading skill. However, they do not make full use of those means to study, but to entertain. Besides, they do not know how to apply reading strategies in handling reading texts. Regarding contextual factors, teaching method and extra reading materials are too hard for learners to understand. As a consequence, the students show their rebellious behavior. These factors make reading periods ineffective and lead to a lot of troubles for students in learning reading skills.

All the individual and contextual factors considered inspired the researcher to give some useful suggested solutions to reading difficulties faced by first-year English majors at HPU.

2. Limitations

Although this research was carefully prepared, I was still aware of its limitations and shortcomings. Due to the shortage of time and knowledge, the study could not cover three other skills, namely, listening, speaking, and writing and in a variety of participants such as sophomore, junior or senior at HPU. This study only focused on the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by 1st year English majors at HPU.

3. Recommendations for further study

From the limitations of this study, the researcher would like to give some suggestions for further study. First, there exists a limitation concerning the data collection for the study. Due to the limited time and a small number of students, the designed exercises were only administered to a small population of first-year (30), which had a great influence on the reliability and accuracy of the collected data to some extent. Therefore, other studies can be carried out on other subjects such as second-year, third-year or final-year students. Second, within the scope of minor research, the study mainly aims at finding out the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by first-year English majors at HPU and gives some solutions. Hence, the forthcoming researches may be conducted in other skills like speaking, listening, writing and assess more aspects of students' language competency. In brief, it is hoped that the study will be of great help in enhancing the teaching and learning quality and become an invaluable reference source for both teachers and students at HPU.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire for students

This questionnaire is meant for a study on the causes of difficulties in reading skill experienced by first-year English majors at Haiphong Private University. Your answers will be strictly confidential and used only for the purposes of the research. Your co-operation will be highly appreciated.

(Bảng câu hỏi này nhằm phục vụ cho nghiên cứu về nguyên nhân dẫn đến những khó khăn trong việc học kỹ năng đọc của sinh viên năm thứ nhất tại Đại học Dân lập Hải Phòng. Các câu trả lời của bạn sẽ hoàn toàn được giữ bí mật và chỉ được sử dụng vào mục đích nghiên cứu. Tôi sẽ rất đánh giá cao sự hợp tác của bạn)

Section I: Personal information (Thông tin cá nhân)

1. Name (Tên).....
2. Age (Tuổi):.....
3. Hometown (Quê quán):.....
4. Class (Lớp):.....
5. Years of learning English (Số năm học tiếng Anh):.....

Section II: Questions (Câu hỏi)

1) Compared to other students in your class, what do you think of your English READING proficiency? (So với các sinh viên khác trong lớp, bạn nghĩ gì về trình độ đọc tiếng Anh của bạn?)

- a) Elementary (Cơ bản)
- b) Pre-intermediate (Tiền Trung cấp)
- c) Intermediate (Trung cấp)

- d) Upper-intermediate (Trên trung cấp)
- e) Advanced (Cấp cao)

2) How much time do you spend on studying reading daily? (*Hàng ngày bạn dành bao nhiêu thời gian cho việc học đọc?*)

- a) 30 minutes a day (Mỗi ngày 30 phút)
- b) An hour a day (Mỗi ngày 1 tiếng)
- c) Two hours a day (Mỗi ngày 2 tiếng)
- d) Other:.....

3) Are you in a habit of learning new words completing reading homework assignments after each reading lesson in class? (*Bạn có thói quen học từ mới để hoàn thành bài tập đọc về nhà sau mỗi bài học đọc trên lớp không?*)

- a) Always (luôn luôn)
- b) Usually (thường thường)
- c) Sometimes (Thi thoảng)
- d) Hardly ever (Hiếm khi)
- e) Never (Không bao giờ)

4) Do you feel confident when communicating with foreigners with your current vocabulary? (*Bạn có cảm thấy tự tin khi giao tiếp với người nước ngoài với vốn từ vựng hiện tại của bạn không?*)

- a) Yes (Có)
- b) No (Không)

5) Do you apply reading strategies to deal with reading texts given in and at home? (*Bạn có áp dụng các chiến lược học đọc để đối phó với việc đọc các văn bản ở trên lớp và ở nhà không?*)

- a) Always (Luôn luôn)
- b) Usually (Thông Thường)

- c) Sometimes (Thi thoảng)
- d) Hardly ever (Hiếm khi)
- e) Never (Không bao giờ)

6) Do you often read a variety of English reading materials such as Internet news, printed newspapers, English storybooks and comics, etc to improve your reading skill? (*Bạn có thường đọc các tài liệu tiếng Anh đa dạng như tin tức trên Internet, báo in, sách truyện và truyện tranh bằng tiếng Anh, v.v để cải thiện kỹ năng đọc của mình không?*)

- a) Always (Luôn luôn)
- b) Usually (Thường thường)
- c) Sometimes (Thi thoảng)
- d) Hardly ever (Hiếm khi)
- e) Never (Không bao giờ)

7) Do you have a good exposure to English in school as well as out- of- school English class via various sources such as foreign TV programs, movies, cartoons, the internet, English music or interacting with English-speaking people? (*Bạn có được tiếp xúc tốt với tiếng Anh ở trường cũng như lớp học tiếng Anh ngoài trường thông qua nhiều nguồn khác nhau như chương trình TV, phim ảnh, phim hoạt hình, internet, âm nhạc bằng tiếng Anh hoặc tương tác với người nói tiếng Anh không?*)

- a) Always (Luôn luôn)
- b) Usually (Thường thường)
- c) Sometimes (Thi thoảng)
- d) Hardly ever (Hiếm khi)
- e) Never (Không bao giờ)

8) How do you feel about the teaching method of the reading teacher? (*Bạn cảm thấy thế nào về phương pháp giảng dạy của giáo viên môn đọc?*)

- a) Very Interesting (Rất thú vị)
- b) Interesting (Thú vị)
- c) Normal (Bình thường)
- d) Boring (Chán)
- e) Very boring (Rất chán)

9) What do you think about the textbook and the curriculum being used for teaching reading skill at HPU? (*Bạn nghĩ gì về sách giáo khoa và chương trình giảng dạy đang được sử dụng để dạy kỹ năng đọc tại HPU?*)

- a) Very Interesting (Rất thú vị)
- b) Interesting (Thú vị)
- c) Normal (Bình thường)
- d) Boring (Chán)
- e) Very boring (Rất chán)

10) What do you think about extra reading materials given by your teacher with a view to improving your reading skills in class as well as at home? (*Bạn nghĩ gì về các tài liệu đọc thêm do giáo viên của bạn đưa ra nhằm cải thiện kỹ năng đọc của bạn trên lớp cũng như ở nhà?*)

- a) Difficult (Khó)
- b) Easy (Dễ)
- c) Normal (Bình thường)

Thank you for your cooperation!
(Cảm ơn về sự hợp tác của bạn!)