

# Difficulties and solutions to poor reading comprehension skills in English by the 10th graders at a high school in Vietnam

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**Abstract-** The study aims at identifying the difficulties affecting the students in the area of reading comprehension skill in English language curricula, and finding out the methods to tackle these problems that tenth grade students face in reading comprehension skill for English language. The descriptive method has been utilized to fit the purposes of this study. The participants were 90 students in a high school in Vietnam, who were in grade 10. Results of the study has shown that categories affecting the reading comprehension skills of the students are vocabulary, text coverage, background knowledge, sentence structure, grammar and others. The finding indicated that when teachers were aware of the factors that affected students' reading comprehension competence, they could help their students develop effective reading strategies and ultimately solve those difficulties in reading and improved reading comprehension.

**Index Terms-** Reading comprehension skills, language learning, high education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension skill is known to be a basic skill that strives to teach the learners how to establish the necessary components in the reading process. It is argued that reading skill is known as one of the most difficult skills to be mastered because the readers have to suffer from the production of the current level of vocabulary knowledge, sentence coherence, misunderstanding, cohesion aspect, and things. They state that some students do not have enough time to read a total reading task, resulting in losing good marks in the reading tests.

However, many 10<sup>th</sup> graders in Vietnam struggle with understanding and comprehending English texts. This study aims to investigate the causes of poor reading comprehension skills among 10<sup>th</sup> grades in a high school in Vietnam and suggest solutions to improve these skills.

Many reading program experts face great challenges and serious difficulties in finding access to more developed technologies in teaching reading to children because reading is a secondary skill that overlaps and is difficult to be taught and learned separately from

other language skills. It becomes more difficult problems when the educational situation requires language teachers to work in a diverse language environment that makes the social dynamics associated with multiple reading in a classroom unique and different. Environment. Reading teachers are directly responsible for the management of these cultivars. It teaches extremely difficult decision-making in this regard (Michael & Susan & Bonnie, 1999; Roe, 1992).

Due to the growing interest in teaching English, the importance of using new teaching strategies has been appeared, which focuses on students' understanding and understanding of writing content to have to better understand the reader and improve their level through training them in reading practice comprehension. By investigating the actual situation, I found that students have faced a significant number of difficulties that prevented them from performing the reading task. Most students thought that learning the reading skills were the hardest and some students thought the reading skills were relatively new. Meanwhile, the period of training at junior high school according to the distribution of each semester was more than 50 periods (3 periods/ week), in 18 weeks in a semester, the amount of time spent on reading comprehension was too little. Less time was spent on self-study, and fewer students could practice reading at home from 1 to 2 hours a week. Another issue was that most students have a lack of vocabulary. Hence, it is a serious problem when learning to read that made the reading process not meet the requirements and goals of the curriculum.

This study was conducted to find out the causes of poor reading comprehension skill in English experienced by the 10<sup>th</sup> graders at a high school in Vietnam and some suggested solutions.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study was a mixed – mode approach. This means that both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in this study. This thesis employed simultaneously a combination of the two main data collection instruments:

- Questionnaire
- Interview

To collect the data for this study, a mixed quantitative - qualitative was used to ensure the objective for the final results. Both methods were employed parallel and they were supportive of each other. Quantitative and qualitative methods were merged to help gain reliability and validity of the result.

### III. DISCUSSIONS OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Followings are findings and interpretation of the data with supported research results and evidence.

To answer the research questions, the result of the students' questionnaire and data analysis were conducted to ask about the factors affecting reading skill, potential difficulties. The analysis of the questionnaire was based on criteria such as *Vocabulary, Text Coverage, Background Knowledge, Sentence Structure, Grammar and Others...*

#### 1. Areas of difficulties in students' reading comprehension

CHOICES ITEMS	1 (strongly disagree)	2 (disagree)	3 (neutral)	4 (agree)	5 (strongly agree)
Vocabulary	1	20	76	239	364
Text Coverage	0	0	45	90	145
Background Knowledge	0	10	20	155	95
Sentence Structure	0	5	30	120	215
Grammar	0	0	55	160	145
Others (Timing, motivation and materials)	0	0	125	390	315
<b>Total (✓)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>1154</b>	<b>1279</b>
<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>0.03%</b>	<b>1.24%</b>	<b>12.44%</b>	<b>40.92%</b>	<b>45.35%</b>

Table 1 showed students' choices with 5 different scales (*strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree*) for each student's personal opinion. It could easily see that the rate of students made a choice of strongly agree answer with 45.35% that was highest point in the categories. About 40.92% of voters approved of this statement. The table also indicated that there were 12.44% of people choosing neutral opinion. The fourth rank was considered to be the disagreement with 1.24% that was 1.21 % higher than the first option (0.03%) . The detail was specifically analyzed below.

#### 2. Vocabulary

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1. I always find it difficult to do reading tasks because I cannot guess the meaning of the words or phrases.	0		10	55	25
2. There are many unknown words when translating the texts.	0	0	15	45	30
3. I do not have enough vocabulary to understand the texts.	0	0	15	50	25

4. The terminology is strange to me.	1	2	5	26	56
5. I always have difficulty with finding out what the main purpose of the reading task I am going to do is.	0	3	6	24	57
6. When reading the texts in English, I experience difficulty with reading for the main idea of the text.	0	5	5	11	69
7. While doing the reading tasks, I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words.	0	0	10	13	67
8. While reading, I always have difficulty in remembering the new words I have learnt.	0	10	10	35	35

The table illustrated the result of the first questionnaire which caused difficulties in reading comprehension among 10<sup>th</sup> students. It was noticeable that the majority of the students had problems with vocabulary; a very small number of them had the opposite opinion.

The first area consisted of 8 items that learners often faced with different aspects of the reading process.

Regarding the first item, the table showed that level 4 accounted for highest point (61.1%) compared to other ones and about 27.8% of students strongly agreed that they always found it difficult to do reading tasks because they could not guess the meaning of the words or phrases. It was noticeable that only 11.1% of them had no idea about this. No one chose the first and second answer.

In the term of the item 2, it could be seen that the number of participants accepted that there were many unknown words when translating the texts was 45% followed by the fifth choice with 30%. According to the questionnaire, a very small number chose to have no idea with 10%. The number of pupils selecting to strongly disagree and agree hit the lowest point of 0% in the categories.

Looking at the item 3, it was not deniable that the majority of students thought that they did not have enough vocabularies to understand the texts. Option 2 and 5 accounted for 15% and 25 % respectively. The figure for students choosing option 1 and 2 remained stable at 0%.

Taking the item 4 into the consideration, the number of people choosing strongly agree statement was 56 % (56/90 students). Followed by this, about 26% of them agreed that the terminology was strange to them while the proportion of them made a choice of neutral option was 5%. Mere 2% of students disagreed with this opinion. On the other hand, option 1 had the lowest rate at 1 % (1/ 90 students).

In the item 5, it could be seen that the rate of participants who chose strongly agreement took highest in the categories and about 26.7% made a choice of the fourth option. Neutral view was considered to be third with 6.7 % meanwhile only 3.3% of them disagreed that they had always difficulty with finding out what the main purpose of the reading task they were going to do was. No students strongly disagreed.

Approximately 80% of the participants strongly agreed that when reading the texts in English, they experienced difficulty with reading for the main idea of the text, while 12.2% of them agreed with this one. The number of students selected the second and third choice was equal at 5.6%. The results also showed that no one made an option of strong disagreement.

In terms of item 7 “While doing the reading tasks, I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words”, the overwhelming majority of the students participating in the questionnaire was strongly opposed stood at 74.4%. About 14.4% of the students agreed with this view while 11.1% of participants felt neutral. No pupils selected to object.

The item 8 was considered one of the important causes in reading difficulties, the rate of participants voting the option of agreement and strong agreement accounted for 77.8% in total. In contrast, only 22.2% of students chose option 2 and 3 in this category. Finally, no students strongly disagreed that while reading, they always had difficulty in remembering the new words they had learnt.

### 2. Text Coverage

1. I cannot explain the meaning of the text because I do not understand the context in the task.	0	0	10	20	60
2. I cannot generalize the meaning of a paragraph	0	0	15	35	50
3. I cannot summarize the content of a passage.	0	0	20	35	35

Regarding the capability of text coverage, around 66.6% of respondents accepted strongly that they cannot explain the meaning of the text. About 22.2% of them agreed with this choice meanwhile a small minority of pupils had no idea with this point of view. This item 9 also indicated that no one objected.

Taking item 10 into consideration, around 38.9% of the respondents said that they could not generalize the meaning of a paragraph, around 55.6% of them agreed strongly; the rate of students who felt neutral accounted for 5.5% and no student chosen the option of strongly disagree and disagree.

With reference to the item 11, 22.2% of the participants said that they could not summarize the content of a passage while the percentage of students choosing level 4 and 5 was equal with 38.9%. At last, option 1 and 2 were not chosen by any participants.

### 3. Background Knowledge

1. I do not understand anything about the content of the reading because of the lack of background knowledge.	0	0	0	6	3
2. I do not know anything about the topic of the text whenever I read it.	0	5	1	4	3
3. I have not had the background knowledge since I was at primary school.	0	5	5	5	3

Taking item 12 into the consideration, the majority of students accepted that they did not understand anything about the content of the reading because of the lack of background knowledge. About 33.3% made a selection of strongly agree option while 0% of participants chose option 1, 2 and 3.

Regarding the aspect of item 13, about 38.9% of the respondents said that they they did not know anything about the topic of the text whenever they read it; agreement was considered the highest with 50% (45/90 votes). The second and third option accounted for 5.6% and 16.7 % respectively. Finally, option 1 was not selected by any students.

In the item 14, students agreed at a rate of 50 % (45/90 students) that they have not had the background knowledge since they were at high school. On the other hand, people who voted for the first choice had the lowest rate with 0 %. This category also saw 33.3% of participants considering high agreement as their choice. Finally, it was shown that the proportion of students taking option 2 and option 3 was the same at 5.6%.

### 5. Sentence Structure

15. There are many complicated structures in the lesson that make it impossible for me to complete the reading text.	0	0	5	30	65
16. It is too difficult for me to analyze the sentence structure and identify the parts in the sentence.	0	5	5	20	60
17. I can not apply the sentence structure to the test.	0	0	10	30	50
18. When the words in a sentence are flipped, I cannot arrange them because I don't remember the sentence structure.	0	0	10	40	40

As presented in the table, all students showed their agreements with different levels. They thought that sentence structure played a vital role in reading difficulties.

In item 15, the percentage of students who chose approval was 33.3% while 5.6% of students might feel neutral. 72.1% of the sample students claimed that they strongly agree with this section. However, no one chose to object to this view.

The table also showed that the number of students strongly agreeing to the item 16 is quite high with 66.7% compared to the other levels. Meanwhile, the proportion of students disagreeing and not giving an opinion was equal at 5.6%. Finally, 22.2 % of the students agreed with this section because it was believed that it was too difficult for them to analyze the sentence structure and identify the parts in the sentence. Similar to item 15, no one voted for strong disagreement.

Section 17 was considered as one of the important causes of difficulties in reading comprehension, in which the percentage of students voting in favor of this idea accounted for 33.3%. In contrast, only 22.2% chose option 3 in this category. 55.7% of the respondents said that they can not apply the sentence structure to the test. Finally, option 1 and 2 were not selected by any students.

Approximately 90% of the participants agreed that when the words in a sentence are flipped, they cannot arrange them

because they do not remember the sentence structure, while 11.1% percent of them felt neutral. The results also showed that no one objected to this cause.

In general, most of the participants had a positive attitude towards the factors of reading difficulties due to content, but with different levels. Some of them might agree, while the others strongly agreed or even they might felt neutral.

**6. Grammar**

19. There are many tenses in a reading text and verb conjugation always worries me.	0	0	10	55	25
20. The tenses are really complex and difficult.	0	0	10	20	60
21. There are a lot of linking words in the sentence that confuse me.	0	0	15	45	30
22. I have difficulty distinguishing pronouns in sentences such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.	0	0	20	40	30

Taking the grammar in consideration, about 61.1 % of the respondents agreed that there were many tenses in a reading text and verb conjugation always worried them, meanwhile 27.7% of students made a selection of level 5. Approximately 11.1 % of the participants might feel neutral and none of them made a choice of option 1 and option 2.

Regarding the aspect of item 20, the majority of the respondents accepted totally that the tenses are really complex and difficult. This confused them when taking the test. About 22.2% of students made a choice of agreement while the rate of the participants selecting neutral opinion was 11.1%. However, no students objected this view.

With reference to item 21, there were 16.7% of the students felt neutral, a half of them agreed that there were a lot of linking words in the sentence that confused them, 33.3% of them considered the fifth option as their choice. Meanwhile, 0% of the students said that they had no disagreement.

In terms of item 22, it was considered that the percentage of student chose “agree” was highest in the category with 44.4% following by option 5 (33.3%). About 22.3% of them did care about problems and similar to item 21, there was no objection.

It was undeniable that grammar is a big barrier preventing students from reading comprehension.

**7. Others (Timing, motivation, materials...)**

23. The time to read a text is too short.	0	0	5	60	35
24. My passage reading speed is slower than my classmates.	0	0	10	50	30
25. My teacher does not give me interesting topic to encourage my reading.	0	10	25	40	35
26. When a reading text becomes hard, I do not want to continue reading.	0	0	15	60	15
27. Unattractive topics always make me sleepy when reading.	0	0	20	30	40

28. The description of a reading text is really too difficult to understand.	0	0	10	40	40
29. Reading materials are not as diverse and rich as speaking skill.	0	0	10	40	40
30. The illustrations of the text are often strange to understand.	0	0	5	35	50
31. It's difficult to find the reliable materials.	0	0	25	35	30

The table demonstrated the difficulties of timing, motivation and materials that students had to deal with in the process of learning at school.

66.7% of students agreed that they did not have enough time to finish a whole text because of the lack of time while 27.7% of students chose option 5 in this item 23. Only 5.6% of students said that they had no idea. At last, no one disagreed this item 23.

Taking item 24 into the consideration, it is noticeable that level of gree was higher than level of strongly agree with 55.6% and 33.3% respectively, and about 11.1% of participants said that they had no idea with this opinion. Finally, no one made a selection of option 1 and option 2.

From the item 25, it is clear that the number of students who chose the fourth and fifth choice was approximately at 44.4 % and 38.9% meanwhile the proportion of students felt neutral accounted for 27.7 %. Of the data gathered, a mere 9 % of people disagreed that their teacher did not give them interesting topic to encourage their reading. Lastly, strong disagreement was not chosen by any participants.

Regarding the aspect of item 26, the table illustrates that the percentage of students choosing the neutral option was 16.7%. The same pattern can be seen for the degree of strong disagreement. Option 4 was considered highest point at 66.6%. It meant that the majority of students agreed that when a reading text became hard, they did not want to continue reading. In this item, there was no choice of objection.

For the 27<sup>th</sup> item, the number of pupils choosing agreement was fewer compared with high agreement at 33.3% and 44.4% respectively. 22.3% of the students showed that unattractive topics always made them sleepy when reading, while 20 students among them had no idea about this. This result revealed that no students made a selection of strong disagreement and agreement.

This table showed that the number for items 28 and 29 was the same. It was witnessed that the rate of participants coming to an agreement and a fully agreement remained equally at 44.4%. A mere 11.2% of them took the third option into the consideration. At last, the percentage of students showing disagreement with this statement stood at 0%. Regarding the aspect of item 30, more than half of the respondents (55.6%) that was followed by option 4 with 38.9% said that the illustrations of the text were often strange to understand; about a mere 5.5% of the respondents required option 3 as their selection. Finally, from the data being shown above, 0% of students thought they felt neutral with this opinion.

In the last section, students agreed at a rate of 38.9 % (35/90 students) that it's difficult for them to find the reliable materials. On the other hand, the number of responders chosing disagreement and extreme disagreement had the lowest rate with 0%. This

category also witnessed 27.8 % of participants who chose neutral view.

### 3.2. The result of the Interview

Based on the interview results, the researcher found that teachers had come up with useful methods to solve students' reading difficulties. The results also showed that teachers were indeed essential to students' reading success.

In question one, teachers were asked about the attitudes and the concentration of students when they were given a reading task. Most teachers responded that it depended on the students as well as the difficulty of the lesson, attitude and concentration of students would be different. Students who learn English better would have a better attitude and focused on reading comprehension than the rest of the students. Teachers' statements supported these opinions:

*"It depends on the level of students and the difficulty of reading task".* (Teacher 1)

*"Students who have a good background knowledge will have a positive attitude and focus on reading than other students".* (Teacher 2)

One of them also accepted that beside the knowledge of students, the attitudes and concentration depended on teachers. It is undeniable that teachers are the inspiration for students. If teachers design interesting lessons, students will be more keen on.

Question 2 was designed to ask about methods of teaching vocabulary to students. It was clear that every teacher has a way of teaching that was suitable for his or her students. Of the responses, 2 out of 5 teachers used games to teach students new words. It is obvious that playing games not only helped students remember words but also made them more excited. Teachers' statements supported these opinions:

*"Rub-out technique is my choice. The purpose of this game is to help students memorize vocabulary longer, also near the same as "What and Where" however need applied interchangeably to avoid the boring to students."* (Teacher 3)

*"Slap the board is really an effective method that they often use when teaching reading. This is an interesting movement game to review the vocabulary learned in the previous lesson as well as the newly learned vocabulary. In addition, this game can be applied to teach English topics for children such as colors, shapes, animals..."* (Teacher 4)

In addition, using the pictures, writing words many times or making sentences with the words that they have learned were applied effectively in teaching vocabulary.

Teachers' statement supported these opinions:

*"I often encourage students to write down vocabulary words in a notebook, write new words on the back of their class notebooks. I then check students' pronunciation of each word and let them underline the main stresses."* (Teacher 5)

When being asked the third question about skimming technique, 5 teachers are of the opinion that skimming was indeed one of the effective methods for covering the reading passage. These things were clearly shown in the teacher's interview responses. Teachers' statement supported these opinions:

*"Skimming is as a form of previewing that can help students better comprehend what they read. It is not simply flipping through a text quickly or paying half attention to it. When skimming, students should be deliberate and intentional with what*

*they choose to read, and make sure that you are focused."* (Teacher 5)

However, there was still one feedback that students have not yet applied this method when reading. Teachers' statement supported these opinions:

*"This is a good method but my students haven't applied it to the test yet. I'm trying to help them use this."* (Teacher 4)

There is no denying that the knowledge base is very important when learning any skills. In question four, the researcher asked the teachers which method in warm-up could increase the students' background knowledge. The answers were actually quite diverse with different methods such as: singing songs, playing games, making sentences and asking questions. However, they all had in common that was related to old knowledge that students have learned through.

The fifth question was designed to talk about guiding students to learn grammar and structures. In this question, there were 3 out of 5 teachers who thought that communication skills should be combined to help students develop all skills so that students could learn better grammar and sentence structure.

Teachers' statement supported these opinions:

*"Communication between students is one of the best ways to practice grammar. Give students a real life application that they will need to practice and allow them to work it out among themselves."* (Teacher 4)

In addition, one teacher suggested that underlining sentence components and giving examples could help students distinguish pronouns in sentences. It was true that students still had a lot of difficulty in reading because of their lack of knowledge of tenses.

Teachers' statement supported these opinion:

*"Students often have difficulty distinguishing nouns, verbs, and adjectives in sentences, so I often ask to underline the parts of the sentence and give examples for each of them."* (Teacher 5)

The sixth question was interviewed about helping students managing time when taking reading test. Most of the interviewees thought that allocating a reasonable time for each task is an effective way to have enough time to do the test. In addition, they also reminded students not to forget to take 2 minutes to check the whole test. Self - study was considered to be an effective way for students to learn reading skill as well as other skills. One of the benefits was mentioned that every individual as per their way of understanding make themselves get that topic or information in the most convenient way they like.

When being asked the last question, all teachers answered the same. More or less, their students faced many difficulties in reading comprehension. It was undeniable that the topics to read are often quite dull and less attractive so teachers need to step up their role in improving student knowledge. The teachers all gave personal views and make positive contribution to help students improve this skill. They agreed that teachers should encourage them like a daily habit and give them complications when they do well. More than that, they also thought that they should actively design creative lessons to make their students more interested because this skill is considered one of the most boring skills. The teachers also said that their students were quite shy so they would try to often encourage their students to overcome shame to read aloud new words throughout the lesson. Teachers recommended

that providing many vivid images could make students more excited about the reading lessons.

To sum up, in this interview, teachers gave their personal opinions about the factors that they had also come up with some strategies and suggestions to help their students in learning reading skills.

### 4.3. Discussion

From the data analyzed above, the difficulties in students' reading comprehension and teachers' solutions in enhancing this skill in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade English classes at a high school in Thai Nguyen city were clearly seen. Most students appreciated reading skills and were aware of the importance of reading in language learning and they were interested in learning it. They wanted to get some reading improvement and they had a good attitude when learning it.

Moreover, it could be deduced from the questionnaire data that there were still many difficulties in these students when they learn to read. All the areas of difficulties had relatively impact rate on students' reading comprehension ability. The teachers, obviously, were aware of the causes affecting their understanding of students including grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, background knowledge, text coverage and others (timing, motivation and materials). These items had been concretized with the factors discovered in the data collected from the questionnaire.

The results of this study were similar with the results of the previous studies in that they have identified factors that affected the ability of students to understand comprehension. This finding is consistent with the results of the study carried out by Ha (2011), who concluded that students often have difficulty in the text processing read ESP because ESP vocabulary is incomplete and limited foundational knowledge of ESP. However, compared with the results of previous studies, there was significant difference. This study had identified six areas that affected students' reading skills. It also determined that all six areas of difficulty had a direct impact on students. The reasons for this difference might be that different objects or environments and study times were also different, led to differences in results.

In addition, research showed the importance of teachers in students' success. In addition to students' efforts, teachers really need to be passionate about teaching and actively explore new methods to help students develop this skill. Regarding the most common difficulties student's face when reading the text, the matters of vocabulary, background knowledge, grammar, reading materials and text reading time were shown in the questionnaire, the researcher also proposed solution questions related to those same difficulties in the teacher interview. The teachers' solutions given to improve reading skill for students were mentioned as: using pictures to teach new words, making sentences with new words, playing interesting movement games to review the vocabulary learned in the previous lesson as well as the newly learned vocabulary, applying skimming techniques in text coverage. In addition, teachers also shared experiences in applying techniques to teaching grammar and sentence structures so that students could achieve the best results. It cannot be denied that the lack of time to do the test caused students to get bad grades, so teachers also helped students manage time and allocate time for each parts in a reasonable way. Finally, it was impossible to

mention the motivation to help students overcome the fear of learning reading skills that the teacher shared in the interview.

In summary, this study was based on the English language learning of a high school students, so the factors affecting their reading comprehension were pointed out including grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, background knowledge, text coverage and others (timing, motivation and materials). These areas of difficulties had relatively impact rate on all students and the results of this study were differed from all previous studies.

### 4.4. Summary

In chapter 4, the researcher presented data analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire and interviewed the research question.

The results of the difficulties indicated the problems that they often faced when performing reading tasks. After collecting and analyzing data, the results of questionnaires had shown the six equally areas of difficulties: vocabulary, text coverage, background knowledge, sentence structure, grammar and others.

The results of the interview questions also showed the solutions that teachers should do to help students learn reading well. Applying their experience and knowledge through the specific methods mentioned in the interview responses will bring significant benefits to students in the future when learning reading skills.

It could be said that the study has led to some important results. However, the limitations of the research were inevitable. To make up for these limitations, some recommendations for further studies had been reported in the next chapter.

**Table 4.1: Areas of difficulties in students' reading comprehension**

CHOICES ITEMS	1 (strongly disagree)	2 (disagree)	3 (neutral)	4 (agree)	5 (strongly agree)
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<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>0.03%</b>	<b>1.24%</b>	<b>12.44%</b>	<b>40.92%</b>	<b>45.35%</b>

#### 4.1.1. Vocabulary

**Table 4.2: Vocabulary**

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
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4. I always find it difficult to do reading tasks because I cannot guess the meaning of the words or phrases.	0		10	55	25
5. There are many unknown words when translating the texts.	0	0	15	45	30
6. I do not have enough vocabulary to understand the texts.	0	0	15	50	25
7. The terminology is strange to me.	1	2	5	26	56
8. I always have difficulty with finding out what the main purpose of the reading task I am going to do is.	0	3	6	24	57
9. When reading the texts in English, I experience difficulty with reading for the main idea of the text.	0	5	5	11	69
10. While doing the reading tasks, I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words.	0	0	10	13	67
11. While reading, I always have difficulty in remembering the new words I have learnt.	0	10	10	35	35

The table illustrated the result of the first questionnaire which caused difficulties in reading comprehension among 10<sup>th</sup> students. It was noticeable that the majority of the students had problems with vocabulary; a very small number of them had the opposite opinion.

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Regarding the first item, the table showed that level 4 accounted for highest point (61.1%) compared to other ones and about 27.8% of students strongly agreed that they always found it difficult to do reading tasks because they could not guess the meaning of the words or phrases. It was noticeable that only 11.1% of them had no idea about this. No one chose the first and second answer.

In the term of the item 2, it could be seen that the number of participants accepted that there were many unknown words when translating the texts was 45% followed by the fifth choice with 30%. According to the questionnaire, a very small number chose to have no idea with 10%. The number of pupils selecting to strongly disagree and agree hit the lowest point of 0% in the categories.

Looking at the item 3, it was not deniable that the majority of students thought that they did not have enough vocabularies to understand the texts. Option 2 and 5 accounted for 15% and 25 % respectively. The figure for students choosing option 1 and 2 remained stable at 0%.

Taking the item 4 into the consideration, the number of people choosing strongly agree statement was 56 % (56/90 students). Followed by this, about 26% of them agreed that the terminology was strange to them while the proportion of them made a choice of neutral option was 5%. Mere 2% of students disagreed with this opinion. On the other hand, option 1 had the lowest rate at 1 % (1/90 students).

In the item 5, it could be seen that the rate of participants who chose strongly agreement took highest in the categories and about 26.7% made a choice of the fourth option. Neutral view was considered to be third with 6.7 % meanwhile only 3.3% of them disagreed that they had always difficulty with finding out what the main purpose of the reading task they were going to do was. No students strongly disagreed.

Approximately 80% of the participants strongly agreed that when reading the texts in English, they experienced difficulty with reading for the main idea of the text, while 12.2% of them agreed with this one. The number of students selected the second and third choice was equal at 5.6%. The results also showed that no one made an option of strong disagreement.

In terms of item 7 “While doing the reading tasks, I find it difficult to guess the meaning of unknown words by linking them to known words”, the overwhelming majority of the students participating in the questionnaire was strongly opposed stood at 74.4%. About 14.4% of the students agreed with this view while 11.1% of participants felt neutral. No pupils selected to object.

The item 8 was considered one of the important causes in reading difficulties, the rate of participants voting the option of agreement and strong agreement accounted for 77.8% in total. In contrast, only 22.2% of students chose option 2 and 3 in this category. Finally, no students strongly disagreed that while reading, they always had difficulty in remembering the new words they had learnt.

#### 4.1.2. Text Coverage

**Table 4.2: Text Coverage**

12. I cannot explain the meaning of the text because I do not understand the context in the task.	0	0	10	20	60
13. I cannot generalize the meaning of a paragraph	0	0	15	35	50
14. I cannot summarize the content of a passage.	0	0	20	35	35

Regarding the capability of text coverage, around 66.6% of respondents accepted strongly that they cannot explain the meaning of the text. About 22.2% of them agreed with this choice meanwhile a small minority of pupils had no idea with this point of view. This item 9 also indicated that no one objected.

Taking item 10 into consideration, around 38.9% of the respondents said that they could not generalize the meaning of a paragraph, around 55.6% of them agreed strongly; the rate of students who felt neutral accounted for 5.5% and no student chosen the option of strongly disagree and disagree.

With reference to the item 11, 22.2% of the participants said that they could not summarize the content of a passage while the percentage of students choosing level 4 and 5 was equal with 38.9%. At last, option 1 and 2 were not chosen by any participants.

**4.1.3. Background Knowledge**

**Table 4.4: Background Knowledge**

15.	I do not understand anything about the content of the reading because of the lack of background knowledge.	0	0	0	6	3
16.	I do not know anything about the topic of the text whenever I read it.	0	5	1	4	3
17.	I have not had the background knowledge since I was at primary school.	0	5	5	5	3

Taking item 12 into the consideration, the majority of students accepted that they did not understand anything about the content of the reading because of the lack of background knowledge. About 33.3% made a selection of strongly agree option while 0% of participants chose option 1, 2 and 3.

Regarding the aspect of item 13, about 38.9% of the respondents said that they they did not know anything about the topic of the text whenever they read it; agreement was considered the highest with 50% (45/90 votes). The second and third option accounted for 5.6% and 16.7 % respectively. Finally, option 1 was not selected by any students.

In the item 14, students agreed at a rate of 50 % (45/90 students) that they have not had the background knowledge since they were at primary school. On the other hand, people who voted for the first choice had the lowest rate with 0 %. This category also saw 33.3% of participants considering high agreement as their choice. Finally, it was shown that the proportion of students taking option 2 and option 3 was the same at 5.6%.

**4.1.4. Sentence Structure**

**Table 4.5: Sentence Structure**

15.	There are many complicated structures in the lesson that make it impossible for me to complete the reading text.	0	0	5	30	65
23.	It is too difficult for me to analyze the sentence structure and identify the parts in the sentence.	0	5	5	20	60
24.	I can not apply the sentence structure to the test.	0	0	10	30	50
25.	When the words in a sentence are flipped, I cannot arrange them because I don't remember the sentence structure.	0	0	10	40	40

As presented in the table, all students showed their agreements with different levels. They thought that sentence structure played a vital role in reading difficulties.

In item 15, the percentage of students who chose approval was 33.3% while 5.6% of students might feel neutral. 72.1% of the sample students claimed that they strongly agree with this section. However, no one chose to object to this view.

The table also showed that the number of students strongly agreeing to the item 16 is quite high with 66.7% compared to the other levels. Meanwhile, the proportion of students disagreeing and not giving an opinion was equal at 5.6%. Finally, 22.2 % of the students agreed with this section because it was believed that it was too difficult for them to analyze the sentence structure and identify the parts in the sentence. Similar to item 15, no one voted for strong disagreement.

Section 17 was considered as one of the important causes of difficulties in reading comprehension, in which the percentage of students voting in favor of this idea accounted for 33.3%. In contrast, only 22.2% chose option 3 in this category. 55.7% of the respondents said that they can not apply the sentence structure to the test. Finally, option 1 and 2 were not selected by any students.

Approximately 90% of the participants agreed that when the words in a sentence are flipped, they cannot arrange them because they do not remember the sentence structure, while 11.1% percent of them felt neutral. The results also showed that no one objected to this cause.

In general, most of the participants had a positive attitude towards the factors of reading difficulties due to content, but with different levels. Some of them might agree, while the others strongly agreed or even they might felt neutral.

**4.1.5. Grammar**

**Table 4.6: Grammar**

26.	There are many tenses in a reading text and verb conjugation always worries me.	0	0	10	55	25
27.	The tenses are really complex and difficult.	0	0	10	20	60
28.	There are a lot of linking words in the sentence that confuse me.	0	0	15	45	30
29.	I have difficulty distinguishing pronouns in sentences such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.	0	0	20	40	30

Taking the grammar in consideration, about 61.1 % of the respondents agreed that there were many tenses in a reading text and verb conjugation always worried them, meanwhile 27.7% of students made a selection of level 5. Approximately 11.1 % of the participants might feel neutral and none of them made a choice of option 1 and option 2.

Regarding the aspect of item 20, the majority of the respondents accepted totally that the tenses are really complex and difficult. This confused them when taking the test. About 22.2% of students made a choice of agreement while the rate of the participants selecting neutral opinion was 11.1%. However, no students objected this view.

With reference to item 21, there were 16.7% of the students felt neutral, a half of them agreed that there were a lot of linking words in the sentence that confused them, 33.3% of them considered the fifth option as their choice . Meanwhile, 0% of the students said that they had no disagreement.

In terms of item 22, it was considered that the percentage of student chose “agree” was highest in the category with 44.4%

following by option 5 (33.3%). About 22.3% of them did care about problems and similar to item 21, there was no objection.

It was undeniable that grammar is a big barrier preventing students from reading comprehension.

#### 4.1.6. Others (Timing, motivation, materials...)

**Table 4.7: Others (Timing, motivation, materials...)**

23. The time to read a text is too short.	0	0	5	60	35
24. My passage reading speed is slower than my classmates.	0	0	10	50	30
25. My teacher does not give me interesting topic to encourage my reading.	0	10	25	40	35
32. When a reading text becomes hard, I do not want to continue reading.	0	0	15	60	15
33. Unattractive topics always make me sleepy when reading.	0	0	20	30	40
34. The description of a reading text is really too difficult to understand.	0	0	10	40	40
35. Reading materials are not as diverse and rich as speaking skill.	0	0	10	40	40
36. The illustrations of the text are often strange to understand.	0	0	5	35	50
37. It's difficult to find the reliable materials.	0	0	25	35	30

The table demonstrated the difficulties of timing, motivation and materials that students had to deal with in the process of learning at school.

66.7% of students agreed that they did not have enough time to finish a whole text because of the lack of time while 27.7% of students chose option 5 in this item 23. Only 5.6% of students said that they had no idea. At last, no one disagreed this item 23.

Taking item 24 into the consideration, it is noticeable that level of agree was higher than level of strongly agree with 55.6% and 33.3% respectively, and about 11.1% of participants said that they had no idea with this opinion. Finally, no one made a selection of option 1 and option 2.

From the item 25, it is clear that the number of students who chose the fourth and fifth choice was approximately at 44.4% and 38.9% meanwhile the proportion of students felt neutral accounted for 27.7%. Of the data gathered, a mere 9% of people disagreed that their teacher did not give them interesting topic to encourage their reading. Lastly, strong disagreement was not chosen by any participants.

Regarding the aspect of item 26, the table illustrates that the percentage of students choosing the neutral option was 16.7%. The same pattern can be seen for the degree of strong disagreement. Option 4 was considered highest point at 66.6%. It meant that the majority of students agreed that when a reading text became hard, they did not want to continue reading. In this item, there was no choice of objection.

For the 27<sup>th</sup> item, the number of pupils choosing agreement was fewer compared with high agreement at 33.3% and 44.4% respectively. 22.3% of the students showed that unattractive topics always made them sleepy when reading, while 20 students among them had no idea about this. This result revealed that no students made a selection of strong disagreement and agreement.

This table showed that the number for items 28 and 29 was the same. It was witnessed that the rate of participants coming to an agreement and a fully agreement remained equally at 44.4%. A mere 11.2% of them took the third option into the consideration. At last, the percentage of students showing disagreement with this statement stood at 0%. Regarding the aspect of item 30, more than half of the respondents (55.6%) that was followed by option 4 with 38.9% said that the illustrations of the text were often strange to understand; about a mere 5.5% of the respondents required option 3 as their selection. Finally, from the data being shown above, 0% of students thought they felt neutral with this opinion.

In the last section, students agreed at a rate of 38.9% (35/90 students) that it's difficult for them to find the reliable materials. On the other hand, the number of responders choosing disagreement and extreme disagreement had the lowest rate with 0%. This category also witnessed 27.8% of participants who chose neutral view.

## IV. CONCLUSION

In chapter 1, the reasons for choosing this topic were given to explain more clearly about the writer's intention and the importance of the study. Furthermore, it also provided the scope or limitation of the study. In chapter 2, some related background information and previous studies were presented to support for this study. Chapter 3 illustrated the methodology that the writer used when carrying out this work. Some data collection instruments were applied to gather the data, such as questionnaires and interview. The results of these instruments were discussed in chapter 4.

The data collected from the questionnaires figured out where reading difficulties come from. All of the respondents believed that the areas of difficulties were problems they faced in their reading performance that they did not realize in the learning process.

These difficulties came from students' educational background as well as subjective reasons. The student's difficulty lies in the question types and limited vocabulary. After analyzing data from the questionnaire and the interview, researchers have figured out where reading difficulties come from and what teachers should do to help them overcome their fear of learning to read. The most common reasons are lack of vocabulary, poor grammar, lack of strategic reading comprehension skills (skimming, scanning ....), inability to cover text and some other reasons of reading difficulties such as: time, motivation and materials...

Taken together, these results showed that students should be encouraged to be provided with the effective methods that the teacher suggested during the interview. The truth is that teacher is an extremely important factor in promoting students' reading ability both subjectively and objectively.

The study found out areas of difficulties affecting the reading comprehension skills of grade 10th students at a high school in Viet Nam.

## Recommendations

From the above recapitulation, the writer has also proposed some strategies to help students improve reading comprehension skills.

For students, it is advisable to learn reading and test-taking strategies as well as improve vocabulary. Students who want to read well in English must remember a lot of vocabulary. They can learn vocabulary by choosing vocabulary to learn, using images and sounds to help them remember more, use a small notebook to record words and phrases, learn related vocabulary and review new words regularly. Students should consider reading practice as a daily routine, persistently practice and create clear goals so that reading comprehension becomes easy and effective. Furthermore, self – study at home is always important. There are many ways to practice at home; however, the students should follow the orientation of the teacher to have the right direction to reach the target.

For teachers, reading is not a key point in communication and sometimes, teachers can ignore it; however, for the examination, reading has become a very important criteria. Therefore, it is important to teach the students how to learn reading in an effective way. It is the fact that the students often feel boring in reading classes and it is difficult for them to remember vocabulary and structure. Sometimes, they learn and then, they forget what they learnt easily. The teachers need to apply new technique and have more activities to help students feel more excited to learn reading. It is necessary to be creative and create excitement for students when teaching reading because this is a skill that is considered tedious compared to the other skills. It is also expected that teachers are an important force for students to improve this skill. They should point out the exact factors the student is facing and then gradually overcome.

Teachers should provide students the interesting materials to improve their reading, for example authentic materials and vivid images. It is recommended that teachers need apply different teaching techniques in reading to achieve a better reading comprehension.

Besides, practice is crucial in developing reading skills. Furthermore, practice reading day by day is a good way to increase their score. To motivate the students practice, the teachers can let their students to arrange sentences by themselves after learning any grammar structures based on the provided materials.

Appendixes, if needed, appear before the acknowledgment.

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