

# Some Measures to Improve Reading Comprehension Ability for First Graders in Vietnam

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**Abstract:** Reading comprehension is an important competency, which plays a decisive role in the learning process for students at all levels. This is also a matter of concern around the world. Our research is aimed at primary school students in general and first grade students in particular in Vietnam with the desire to improve reading comprehension when studying first-grade Vietnamese textbooks compiled according to Chapters. new general education program (General Education Program in Literature, 2018). Proposing a number of measures to influence the content and organization of teaching reading comprehension in order to form and improve reading comprehension ability for first grade students, contributing to improving the quality of reading for students in the first grade. at the beginning of primary school, meeting the goal of educational reform in Vietnam in the new period.

**Keywords:** Reading comprehension, language ability, primary school students, first graders, Vietnamese

## I. Introduction

Reading comprehension is an important competency that plays a decisive role in the learning process for primary school students in general and first grade students in Vietnam in particular. Through studying a number of mother tongue teaching programs in the UK, the US, Japan, Australia, the Czech Republic, etc., we found that the issue of improving students' reading comprehension ability is of particular interest. Teaching reading comprehension as teaching a skill is introduced right from the beginning of the classroom. The biggest goal of teaching reading comprehension in many countries around the world is for students to understand texts that exist in both written and digital forms.

With this approach, many international reading comprehension assessment programs have been organized and received enthusiastic participation from countries such as: PIRLS Literacy (Program in International Reading Literacy Study) of children through student achievement; National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), assessment of educational achievement of students (IEA)... Current national and international assessment programs focus on focused on measuring the reading comprehension skills of students in Grade Two and above.

In order to realize the goal of educational reform in Vietnam, the General Education Program - Literature Program, 2018 is built on the concept of "taking communication skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking and listening) ) as the main axis throughout all three levels of education in order to meet the requirements of the competency-based program and ensure the integrity and continuity in all levels/grades". For primary level only, the Program has the initial goal of helping students form general competencies, develop language competence in all skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening at a basic level: reading correctly. , fluent text; understand the main content and information of the text; contact, compare outside the text; correct spelling and grammar; write a few sentences, paragraphs, short essays. Reading skills are always put first and more important in elementary school, especially in First grade. Thus, it can be seen that competency-based teaching is a key issue in teaching innovation in Vietnam today. In which, teaching reading comprehension needs to be pushed to a new development step.

However, the reality shows that the issue of improving the capacity of teaching reading comprehension for first grade students in Vietnam has not been adequately researched. Our research is aimed at primary school students in general and first grade students in particular in Vietnam with the desire to improve reading comprehension when studying first grade Vietnamese textbooks compiled according to the curriculum. new general education (General Education Program in Literature, 2018).

## II. Theoretical Review

Primary school students are the target group that is prioritized for research on developing reading comprehension because this is the stage to create a solid foundation for students to continue to study further and explore extensive knowledge. Therefore, developing reading comprehension for this subject is one of the indispensable and necessary requirements. Without being able to recognize and understand words, have a natural response to words, and make rational decisions, students cannot function in society. Students need to develop the necessary reading ability before entering the next grade.

An overview of the research works on teaching reading comprehension for primary school students around the world, we found that the researches pay much attention to the process of teaching reading comprehension with specific steps, methods and methods. used by teachers and student assessment tools in the teaching and learning process.

In the UK, the language learning program for first graders includes learning to read and spell. The goal is to help students mix phonemes for reading; segments for spelling; know common spellings for sounds; apply common strategies of reading and spelling and apply reading vocabulary skills in reading according to children's psycho-physiological development, ability to recognize the world around them. Using phonetics is a focused ability.

In the Czech Republic, the Czech curriculum for first graders requires them to speak clearly and with correct grammar. Czech grammar is very difficult, it is necessary to divide many words, so it is difficult for first-graders to speak the correct grammar. The corpus that students need to read and understand is a corpus specifically designed for children. In particular, students have the opportunity to express their personal views. In the process, students distinguish sentences and words, associating information in the text with their experiences.

It can be seen that reading comprehension is a very important ability in primary education curricula in many countries around the world. Levels and reading requirements increase gradually from the first grade through the last grade of elementary school. In which, word units, sentences and paragraphs are important elements. In particular, students not only read through writing but also understand through pictures. Picture channel is not only used to illustrate the text channel but also to show the content. Reading comprehension requirements for elementary school students are specific to each grade, in which, right at the first grade stage, students have been able to read and understand texts with simple, age-appropriate requirements.

Like in the world, Vietnam has many research works on developing reading comprehension for primary school students, but very few works for first graders. These studies focus on a number of authors who have devoted much effort to general education such as: Le Phuong Nga (2019), Hoang Hoa Binh (2012; 2015), Nguyen Minh Thuyet (2012), Nguyen Thi Hong Van (2015), Herman et al (2020), Sinaga et al (2020), Dhillon et al (2020) Ivantara et al (2020), Sirait et al (2020), Lumbantobing et al (2020), Damanik and Herman (2021). In this study, the issue of developing reading comprehension for students is seen from many different perspectives.

In the trend of research on reading comprehension and development of reading comprehension ability, researchers highly agree on the content of the concept of reading comprehension, methods and methods of developing this capacity. Through the development periods, with the operation of three factors: the text, the reader and the context, to the present time and the forecasted future trend, the reader (who is a student in the teaching and learning process). ) is at the heart of the reading comprehension model. This affirms that the choice of research on teaching reading comprehension according to students' ability approach is to update and follow the development trend of advanced teaching technology in the world. With this requirement, even in the stage of learning rhyme, many countries with developed education in the world have asked students to read and understand texts. This level is considered appropriate for the level and age of the student.

Theoretical basis of teaching reading comprehension for first grade students in the direction of competency development:

Regarding Vietnamese syllabic characteristics, Vietnamese is an isolated language with syllabic counts. Each utterance is always made by a sequence of syllables. Vietnamese syllable is a phonetic unit with stable form. When a syllable is placed in a word and that word in a sentence with different grammatical

functions, the syllable form is not changed. The fixed, unvarying nature of Vietnamese syllables makes its pronunciation separate and its identification easy. The separation is also reflected in the written word: each syllable is written separately, not immediately like English or Russian languages. Thus, each syllable is a form of expression of a morpheme. And most Vietnamese syllables mean that they all function like words.

On language characteristics of first graders: Language is the key for first graders to discover knowledge. This is also the foundation for children to develop their perception, imagination, emotional and rational perception, and is a mirror that reflects children's movement and intelligence development. Grade One is the "golden period" for children to master language. The children's language at this stage is strongly developed in terms of phonology, grammar and vocabulary. If the spoken language of the first graders is quite proficient, the written language is like a blank sheet of paper. This comes from many reasons such as: children's ability to use grammar is still limited, they don't know how to choose words,... Even with better spoken language, children in grade 1 still have many difficulties in learning. When reading comprehension texts because children have only just been introduced to reading comprehension techniques, reading fluency is still a heavy task for them. However, it is still necessary to familiarize students with things that are not interesting, but in moderation to train them to read and understand all kinds of texts. Students can understand words attached to a specific context, through play to activate language. This is a favorable feature to expand children's vocabulary through reading comprehension materials such as sentences, paragraphs, and articles. However, they just stopped at understanding the literal meaning but did not understand the figurative and abstract meanings of words. From there, children will be formed and develop a new form of language - written language. This also shows the important position and role of Vietnamese in general and reading comprehension in particular in the formation and development of language for first grade students. The psychological and physiological characteristics of early primary school students are the basis for us to offer appropriate measures to teach reading comprehension. The proposed lessons (including contents containing required reading comprehension requirements) must be suitable for cognitive characteristics, age psychology, and are designed to be lively, attractive and attractive. Students actively participate in learning activities.

About text reading comprehension: the concept of reading comprehension for first graders is used by us with the following contents: Reading comprehension is a process of transforming written form (and also images and symbols. .. in a multimodal text) into sound speech and understand it at a simple level. The reading comprehension process is classified into 3 levels: accurate reading (accuracy); read fluency and understand text (comprehension) at a simple level.

### **III. Research Methodology**

Specific methods such as analysis, synthesis, comparison, systematization, generalization and modeling of scientific theories are used to overview the research problem and build a scientific basis.

Statistical and classification methods: applied to statistics and classification of text types, exercises in Vietnamese grade One and some Vietnamese One programs of countries around the world.

In addition, to a certain extent, we also use a number of other methods such as: systematic (systematize concepts related to the research problem, compare (compare mother tongue programs for first grade students and reading comprehension requirements for first graders in the compulsory education programs of countries around the world with each other and with Vietnam); analyze, synthesize (apply to analyze and evaluate) prices, summarizing the results obtained).

### **IV. Finding And Discussion**

#### **4.1. Findings**

Starting from the theoretical and practical basis, we have proposed measures to improve the quality of teaching reading comprehension for first grade students in the direction of capacity development. The

proposed and presented measures have a close, resonant relationship with each other towards the goal of forming and developing reading comprehension for first grade students.

The five proposed measures do not exist separately but support each other to create a mechanism for teaching reading comprehension for first graders as follows:

\* Speed up the process of learning to read aloud:

The new General Education Program in Literature (2018) sets high requirements for Grade One in all language skills, strongly oriented towards the development of student capacity. Accordingly, the requirements for reading, especially reading comprehension, writing (especially writing ideas), speaking and listening are described carefully. To achieve the new goal, accelerating the process of learning to read aloud becomes a must. This is also a challenge for new textbook authors. Shortening the time to learn to read out loud will quickly create early success for students to enjoy and have a basis for further study, firmly forming other competencies, especially reading comprehension. Specifically: Design the familiarization week; Increase the number of syllables in each lesson; Prioritize the combination of rhymes according to the last pair of syllables; Using syllable models in teaching reading; Increase the frequency of occurrence of the sounds/rhymes being studied.

\* Build reading comprehension materials for grade 1 students in agreement with the goal of teaching reading aloud, specifically as follows:

- The corpus and its meaning in teaching reading comprehension in the direction of developing the capacity of first grade students;

- Building a system of rhyming lessons in relation to reading comprehension materials;

- Requirements/criteria for a reading comprehension text in the direction of capacity development.

\* Building a system of reading comprehension exercises for grade 1 students in the direction of capacity development. Reading Comprehension exercises define the goal of reading, as well as the means to achieve student understanding of the text. In order to build appropriate reading comprehension exercises, it is necessary to start from paying attention to how students' reading comprehension ability is demonstrated in complex and practical contexts and situations.

The structure of each reading comprehension exercise consists of two parts: the command part and the data part. The command is presented in the form of a command or a question. The command part indicates the goal and content of the activity. The corpus is a language-speech unit (language, word, sentence, paragraph, article) or can be a picture, picture, or drawing that reflects or evokes the content (meaning, idea, material) of the text. language-speech units that students need to use to investigate or think about when doing tasks.

Description of the system of exercises for teaching reading comprehension for students of grade One is proposed in three groups of exercises: (1). Exercises to identify and reproduce; (2). Exercises to clarify the meaning, (3). Response exercises.

Examples of types of Exercises to clarify meaning: This group of exercises requires students to recognize the meaning of words, recognize the meaning of sentences, recognize the meaning of paragraphs, articles, initially have interpretation operations, initially know concepts generalization and inference to derive the meaning of units in the text. Therefore, students' logical thinking is shaped and developed. This group of exercises meets both the content and formal university requirements of the new General Education Program in Literature. Specifically, the exercise of word interpretation: Word meaning is an important requirement of first grade right from the sound study. In the capital of experience, their background knowledge already has familiar words about things, actions, properties... with explicit meanings. However, due to the limited exposure environment and low memory capacity, the interpretation of words is not only for the purpose of reading comprehension, but also a way to develop vocabulary for children. Defining word definitions is a task of particular importance for understanding text. Understanding the meaning of words, new students have a basis to grasp the meaning of sentences in the text and from there grasp the main content of the lesson. To interpret words in the text, there are the following ways: visual interpretation, definition interpretation, contextual interpretation, synonymy and antonym interpretation.

For example, visual interpretation is a method of giving real objects, real objects models, pictures, diagrams, etc. to interpret words. At this time, real objects, models of real objects, pictures, diagrams... are used to represent the meaning of words. For example, when teaching students to interpret the word tomato in

a rhyming lesson “ua”, the teacher might show a tomato and say “This is a tomato”, or when teaching the word pruning in a rhyme lesson “ ia”, the teacher can use the act of pruning directly on a small tree in the class and say “I am pruning leaves”. This interpretation is often chosen to teach specific nouns, both to help students recognize the "symbolic meaning" of words, and to help them expand and develop their vocabulary.

For example, a contextual word interpretation exercise is to put words into phrases or sentences to infer the meaning or explain the meaning by defining the whole phrase or sentence containing the word. This type of exercise can be done from the stage of learning ton. Students make sentences with the word to be explained or know how to come up with a correct word combination containing the given word or explain by stating the meaning of the whole phrase or the whole sentence. Example: Say a sentence with the word humming. (Answer: Mosquito/fly buzzing.) What does the word luxuriant in “luxury leaves” mean? (Answer: many, many).

\* Implement exercises with active and exciting teaching methods. The learning activities of first graders need to be organized into a system of jobs, jobs need to promote their positivity and initiative, bring and maintain their interest in learning. The thesis refers to methods of organizing social interaction activities such as games, role-playing,...

\* Organize reading comprehension activities for first grade students according to the three-stage model. The ultimate goal of teaching reading is to teach students to have skills in working with texts and mastering texts. Knowing how to read is also knowing how to receive and process information. For first grade students, we absorbed the research achievements of researcher Le Phuong Nga (2019) three-stage model of reading comprehension process to deal with the problem of the impact of the method, progress reading curriculum to the formation and development of students' reading comprehension ability. Accordingly, the process model of teaching reading comprehension consists of three stages: activity before reading, activity while reading and activity after reading.

- Pre-reading activities: Right from the Audio lesson, when students just start to participate in decoding written characters, the formation in them of a sense of task before reading includes: Mobilizing knowledge students' background knowledge and experiences related to the subject content of the reading comprehension text; Supplementing the necessary background knowledge so that students can perform reading comprehension activities. Teachers can supplement background knowledge for students by talking, telling more insights about the surrounding life,...; Create a state of readiness to engage in reading activities; Generate initial projections to enable frameworks of projections and expectations. Teachers make requests (drawing, discussing, asking questions, ...) to elicit and help students present their initial associations, thoughts, and understandings about the text; The first step is to choose appropriate reading comprehension strategies.

With first graders, we choose the strategy of overviewing or predicting the text at the pre-reading stage. Instruct students to look at the title of the text, glance at how long or short it is, more or less dialogue... These elements help them recall relevant insights, create a mood. readability, simplifies the reading comprehension process. These tactics are developed through questioning. Questioning activities are closely related to quickly perceiving a number of elements in the form outside the text such as: presentation, illustrations, text length; quick perception of the title, the genre of the text (at the level of simple recognition of a sentence, paragraph, essay or poem...).

Along with asking questions, the use of pictures/photos to state task requirements is also very effective. This form is often applied to increase the attractiveness, interest, activate the imagination and association of students. To ask competency-based questions, teachers need to pay attention to questioning skills. How to ask questions for activities before reading should focus on goals such as: warm-up questions (What is the name of the reading? What does the title of the passage tell you? Who does the illustration draw? What are they doing? ...); Predictive questions (Think about whether the characters in the picture / in the title are in the same class / live in the same house?; What is the dog standing on the bridge for?... ); Inferential questions (Looking at the drawing of a lion, do you think it is very aggressive? Why do you think that?...) This is how we form in you a portrait of a Learners have the ability to read on their own in an active, proactive way with personal nuances. Right from the Audio lesson, we have guided them to read and understand short texts using this strategy. The following reading is an example: Crab and Turtle

In the past, the crab house was tiny, the turtle house was big. When it rains, crabs take shelter in turtle houses. When crabs come back from far away, they have gifts for turtles.

We guide students to observe the title of the text and ask for the following task: Please color the name of the text; Can you guess how many characters this passage has?; How is the story of the characters going?

Students were excited to participate in the tasks, excited to answer the questions. Thanks to that, the students' mood to prepare to enter the text is very good.

#### **4.2. Discussion**

From the research results and contributions to teaching reading comprehension for first grade students presented above, we have the following recommendations:

(1) With the work of compiling Vietnamese One textbooks according to the orientation of the new General Education Program in Literature: Researchers and textbook authors focus on compiling and guiding teachers. teachers organize reading comprehension activities to form and develop reading comprehension ability for first grade students. The thesis can be considered as a reference, providing tested orientations of teaching practice.

(2) With the work of training and fostering teachers: In order for teachers to teach at university in accordance with the orientation and requirements of the new general education program, the Ministry of Education and Training, the Departments, the Education Department Schools need to organize training, retraining and professional development for teachers in both professional knowledge and reading teaching methods. Management levels should pay due attention to training teachers on how to set reading teaching goals and design teaching activities, test and evaluate student learning outcomes. The teacher plays the role of a guide, organizer and operator of reading comprehension activities, so it is necessary to pay attention to the reasonableness and appropriateness of the answers, how to solve problems, create conditions and opportunities. for students to express creativity and initiative in the reading process. It is also the way through teaching reading comprehension to form for students the main qualities and core competencies as required by the General General Education Program.

(3) For all levels of management: Allow and encourage teachers to actively compile more reading teaching materials in accordance with the school model, in accordance with the spirit of the General Education Program in Literature 2018, taking the required requirements of the Program as a basis for assessing students' reading comprehension ability.

### **V. Conclusion**

Capacity development for students is a topical issue and is particularly focused on in the current period of reforming general education. The general general education program has mentioned three common competencies: autonomy and self-study, communication and cooperation, problem-solving and creativity, and professional competencies of Literature subject: competence. linguistic and literary competence. In particular, the requirements for language development for students have been shown specifically in the requirements of reading, writing, speaking and listening (including multi-modal communication). Forming and developing reading comprehension ability for primary school students in general and first grade students in particular is focused on the reading requirements of the program. Proposing a number of measures to influence the content and form of organizing teaching reading comprehension in order to form and develop reading comprehension ability for first grade students, contributing to improving the quality of reading for students in the first grade. at the beginning of primary school, meeting the goal of educational reform in Vietnam in the new period.

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