

The Strategies to do Some Reading Comprehension Exercises Effectively for English Majored Juniors at Tay Do University in Viet Nam

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ABSTRACT: *Reading is one of the important skills to master English. This study is to identify the strategies to do some reading comprehension exercises effectively for English majored juniors at Tay do University. The study presents how the participants could get good results in some types of reading comprehension exercises as Multiple choice, Filling in the blank, Matching, True/False, and Figuring out the topic. The participants were forty students of English class. Two main instruments to collect data were the questionnaire and the reading test. Students were given the reading test to evaluate reading levels. Then, they answered the questionnaire. The result showed that most of the participants could apply the reading strategies to do reading comprehension exercises perfectly. Moreover, this study also gave some suggestions to help students to study reading comprehension better and to get the good results in this subject.*

KEY WORDS: reading skill, strategies, English majored juniors, university

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Nowadays, English plays a very important role in our life. It is used as a primary meaning of communicating in the world. In fact, English has become an international language that many nations considered it as a second language and it is taught popularly in schools and centers. In addition, the knowledge of English is also an indispensable element in the sciences. Many books, newspapers, magazines, documents, and studies have been written in English, students need to know it in order to research for many scientific subjects. For these reasons, more and more people want to study this language and attend in English courses. It is sure that the final goal of learning English is to communicate English well. To do this, besides the skills of speaking, listening and writing well, students need to pay a special attention to reading skill

because it is an important tool for people who want to access information or expand knowledge of the language, cultures, social and so on.

Reading is one of the important skills in order to master English well. Through reading, students can learn many new grammatical structures, vocabulary, and knowledge in different fields. Besides, reading is a key to comprehend the messages conveyed in the material. Reading is also included into receptive skill besides listening. Receptive skill is the way in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear. (Harmer, 2001).

To master a text, learners have to prepare themselves the good background knowledge. It is all knowledge learners have when entering a learning environment that potentially relevant for acquiring new knowledge (Biemans and Simons, 1996). Reading comprehension is the process of using syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical figures found in the texts to reconstruct in the reader's mind. In addition, Gillet and Temple (1998) say, "Comprehension is the understanding new information in light of what we have already known."

However, reading is not an easy skill (Narvaez, 2002). Studying reading skill is one of the most difficult tasks for English majored students. Most of them encounter many difficulties in the reading process. Normally, these difficulties are associated with the lack of reading strategies to do the exercises. Reading strategies are used in this study such as scanning, skimming, guessing and finding clues in the context. For each type of reading exercise, students need to know the strategies are necessary for applying and getting a good result. Therefore, the strategies in reading are very important. It is not only the useful tool that students practice in order to improve reading speed but also the way of doing reading exercises effectively and accurately.

For the reasons above, suggesting suitable reading strategies to do some reading comprehension exercises effectively is very necessary for English majored juniors at Tay Do University. And this is the reason for choosing the topic of this study "The strategies to do reading comprehension effectively for English majored juniors at Tay Do University" In addition, some suggestions are also given to help students to study reading better.

Aims of research

This research was conducted with the aim to identify the effectiveness of the reading strategy in doing reading comprehension exercises. Besides, it was also hoped that this study would find out the way to do some common reading comprehension exercises effectively and give some suggestions to study reading comprehension better. This is an important element to help students get the good results in the tests.

Significance of the research

This research paper focused on the strategy to do some reading comprehension exercises for English majored juniors at Tay Do University. The result could become beneficial in terms of improving the result of doing exercises. In addition, it may also help to find out possible solutions to study reading better.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of reading and reading comprehension

Definition of reading

Reading is defined as a process involving in word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. (Leipzig, 2001). Reading is an important skill to help people learning from human knowledge and experience. Through reading, knowledge has greatly contributed to the growth of humankind. Reading is the fastest and simplest way to raise people's educational level. Reading is like opening of understandings to humans' past. Besides, reading also stimulates the development of brain cells, reinforces language skills, enhances organizational abilities, and improves one's temperament and poise. In short, reading is the best way of enabling humans to absorb new experience and replace old views.

In addition, reading is not only one of basic skills in our life but also very important to many people whose different works involving in reading such as translators, editors, critics, etc. To students, reading knowledge helps them to get jobs in the future. According to Grabe (1991): "Reading is not merely a receptive process of picking up information from the page in a word-by-word manner." Rather, it is a complex process which is not simple involving in reading and translating the words into their mother language to understand the written texts. The efficiency of reading is being read in a group of words and try to understand some of the sentences but not all of the information.

Goodman (1976) and Smith (1973) indicate that, "Reading is a language process, not merely the sum of various decoding and comprehension sub skills." Moreover, Paran (1996) says that, "Reading as an activity involving constant guesses that are later rejected or confirmed." The sentence above means that learners should not read all the sentences in reading but they find some cues or words to get the idea of the text.

To sum up, reading is the process of reconstructing the writer's idea and information. It is a complex process in which readers have to decode the written or printed material in order to get writer's message.

Definition of reading comprehension

There are many definitions of reading comprehension defined by different researchers over the world. According to Grellet (1981), reading comprehension as "understanding a written

text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible.” Meanwhile, Mayer (2003) points out that reading comprehension is a “technique for improving students' success in extracting useful knowledge from text.” Through the written texts, learners not only understand of the content, but also have the opportunities to develop knowledge, vocabulary and study skills. In brief, in reading skill, readers not only read the reading texts but also have an ability or intelligence to comprehend the texts, so that they get accuracy information and understand the content in the written texts.

Along with these definitions, Singer (1983) has suggested that, “Reading comprehension defined as construction of meaning from a printed or a written message is a two-way process between reader and author.” This shows that reading comprehension means a way of discovering and understanding the information accurately through the interaction between the reader and author.

Based on some above listed definitions, reading comprehension is about understanding a written text. A complex activity involves both perception and thought. Reading consists of two related process as word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to the process of perceiving how written symbol correspondent to one spoken language. And comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. The readers interact with the text and employ their experience and previous knowledge to get the intended meaning in an interactive skill.

Types of reading

There are two well-known types of reading, namely intensive reading and extensive reading. The following are the detailed overview of the two types.

Intensive reading

This type of reading includes reading shorter texts in order to extract specific information. Grellet (1996) terms it as "an accuracy activity" that involves reading in detail. Besides, Hamdan (1991) also explains that the emphasis in intensive reading is on details that support the main points picked out at the skimming level. In addition, Christina (2005) says “In intensive reading, the students should extract specific information from the reading texts.” This kind of reading is an activity involving reading for details. The objective of intensive reading is developing the ability to decode meanings or messages by syntactical and lexical clues.

Thus, the aim of intensive reading, according to Nuttall (1996) is to arrive at an understanding, not only of what the text means, but of how the meaning is produced. In short, this type of reading leads learners to better reading in details with specific information. Hence, they may search for specific names, dates, places, or numbers.

Extensive reading

In relation to this type of reading, many definitions have emerged in the field. Williams (1984) describes it as the "relatively rapid reading of long texts". Along with this definition, Day and Bamford (2004) define extensive reading by saying "in extensive reading, language learners read a large quantity of books and other materials that are within the learner's linguistic competence." Extensive reading is the materials that the learners read out the classroom to increase their reading skill. Besides, the materials have a deepening knowledge of life, expressions and pictures that make readers feel interested in the reading sectors. Therefore, through extensive reading, learners can develop the knowledge of vocabulary by reading them in the context.

Richard (1991) also shares that the extensive reading generally requires a slower speed and a high degree of understanding. Reading is in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits. The building up knowledge of vocabulary and structure also encourage a like for reading. From these various definitions, extensive reading includes reading for main ideas, not for specific details, reading for interest and pleasure, and it develops the learners' reading habit.

Generally, both intensive and extensive readings are important and necessary for effective reading, and they are complementary to each other. To be an effective reader, one must carry on both these two types. Williams (1986) suggests, "For every hour of intensive reading, learners should be doing at least another hour of extensive reading."

Some common types of reading comprehension exercises

Multiple choice exercise

Multiple choice exercise is defined as a very flexible assessment format that can be used to measure knowledge, skills, abilities, values, thinking skills, etc. Multiple choice test is an effectively way to broad and even deep coverage of content in the reading text. Besides, it is a common test format in exam papers. To solve this type of exercise, usually it requires that students look back and scan for information. The item general follows the order of appearance, so when students take the test, they should look for the answer to the first question at the beginning of the reading. Continue through the other items in that way. Multiple choice exercise is an efficient and effective way to assess a wide range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities for students. Hence, multiple choice exercise is still one of the most commonly reading assessment tests.

Matching exercise

Matching is stated as "Read the compound words in column A. Draw a line between the two words of each compound word. Then match the compound words with the definitions in column B." Matching is the popular exercise in reading comprehension that students often

meet. Reading texts usually require students to match terms to their definitions. In addition, there are many formats in matching exercises such as matching a series of stems to a synonym or antonym, functions or statements, and so on.

True/False exercise

True/false question is defined as a specialized form of the multiple choice format in which there are only two possible alternatives that are true or false. True/false question is a very efficient method of testing a wide range of material in a short period. Students use information from the text to decide whether the sentences are true or false. However, they should read carefully the sentences in exercises to choose right decision. Because this type of exercise usually has some words that causing wrong answers such as quite, almost, none, never, always, etc. These words may contain contrastive ideas with the information in the reading texts.

Filling in the blank exercise

Filling in the blank question consists of a phrase, sentence or paragraph with a blank space indicating the place where students should provide the missing word or words". In brief, filling in the blank is a type of question or phrase with one or more words replaced with a blank line, giving the students the chance to add the missing words. This type of exercise requires students to use contextual and grammatical clues to complete a reading text or summary by choosing suitable word (given in the box, brackets, etc.) for each blank. The words are usually related to parts of speech or tenses.

Figuring out the topic exercise

Figuring out the topic is defined as "Read the paragraphs below. As you read, mark the topic, main idea, and important details of each paragraph. Do not use dictionary. When you finish, write the topic and the main idea of each paragraph." For this type of exercise, students need to use skimming skill to glide the whole paragraph or essay. From that, students can figure out the topic in an exact way.

Some strategies to do reading comprehension exercises effectively

In this section, some reading comprehension strategies are clearly explained. The strategies are scanning, skimming, guessing and finding clues in the context. Besides, the importance of reading strategies are also represented.

The importance of reading comprehension strategy

Rebecca (1990) emphasizes the value and the importance of reading strategies. Reading strategies can motivate students to learn reading better. Actually, it is the best way to identify at unfamiliar words in a text by drawing the inferences from the rest of the text rather than looking it up in a dictionary. According to Duffy (1993), reading strategies refers to the plans

for readers to solve problems encountered in constructing meaning from texts. Because reading strategies are controllable by readers, they are cognitive tools that can be used selectively and flexibly. In short, reading strategies are deliberate, conscious techniques that readers employ to enhance their comprehension of the textual information.

Besides, D’Arcangelo (2002) indicate that, “Reading strategies are the tools which allowed reader to be more actively involved while reading.” In addition, according to Pressley (1989), “Reading strategies were conscious, instantiated, and flexible plans that readers applied and adapted to a variety of texts and tasks.” In general, reading strategies play an important role in reading performance and are tools that allow readers to be more actively involved in reading.

For the study, reading comprehension strategies are mainly focused and are seen as comprehension processes that enable readers to construct meaning from the printed page effectively. In short, students should expose to multiple reading strategies as well as the appropriate use of those strategies for better results. In addition, students should be taught to become more aware of their own reading behavior and the process involved in reading.

Some reading strategies to do reading comprehension exercises

Skimming skill

Skimming is one of the important strategies to do reading comprehension exercises. It helps students gather the important information quickly. Skimming is a type of rapid reading which is used when the reader wants to get the main idea or ideas from a passage (Richards, 1992). By skimming, readers go through the reading material quickly to get the gist, or an idea of the tone of writers’ intentions (Grellet, 1981). With skimming, students’ overall understanding is reduced because they do not read everything. They only read what is important to their purpose. Skimming takes place while reading and allows readers to look for important pieces of information.

To sum up, skimming is a useful tool for students to study reading comprehension better. By using this strategy, students can find out the main ideas of a reading passage without wasting time. Especially, when using skimming, they can skip unimportant information and can remember necessary ones in the whole reading texts. Thus, they can improve reading speed. Besides, skimming helps to locate the information quickly as well as increase the amount of usable material.

Scanning skill

Scanning is another useful tool for speed reading. When scanning, students can look for specific information without reading everything. According to Grellet (1986), “When scanning, readers need to move their eyes quickly across the passages for particular words or

phrases.” Scanning information involves a cursory glance over the text features of a book, article or other written material.

Richard (1991) states that, “Scanning is type of speed reading technique which is used when the reader wants to locate a particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the rest of a text or passage and the reader can study the text in more detail. Reading more slowly and carefully and looking for specific information that they are interested.” When using scanning, students can find the detail without reading all words in reading text. Hence, reading skill will be upgraded.

Guessing

Guessing is one of the most important strategies for learning reading comprehension subject. It helps students to predict what the unfamiliar words mean without using the dictionary. Smith (1994) says, “The best way to find the meaning of new words is to draw inferences from the context rather than using a dictionary.”

According to Clarke and Nation (1980) “Guessing is the ability to guess the meaning of a word without referring to a dictionary and it allows the reader to continue reading without interruption.” In order to facilitate the comprehension of a text, vocabulary knowledge is extremely important. If students do not understand the meanings of the words that they encounter in a context, their comprehension of the context is likely to fail. Thus, guessing skill is probably one of the most useful skills that students can apply in understanding the unfamiliar words’ meaning when doing reading exercises.

Finding clues in the context

Clues have an important role in dealing with reading comprehension and they are the important factors for comprehending a text broadly and learning new words specifically. Kiani (2011) stipulates, “Context clues have a powerful effect on students’ comprehension of words and sentences. Knowledge and skill of using words in different contexts play an important role in the comprehension of new concepts, ideas and principles.”

Contextual clue is a useful tool in learning reading comprehension. It is usually words or phrases in the sentence or paragraph that help students figure out the meaning of the unknown word. There are four common types of clues that can support students’ ability in reading comprehension: (1) synonyms, (2) antonyms and contrast, (3) definitions and examples, and (4) general knowledge.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research questions

With the aims mentioned, the study is conducted to deal with the two following questions:

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1. What strategies do English majored juniors at Tay Do University use to do reading comprehension exercises effectively?
2. What should students do to study reading comprehension better?

Finding out the suitable strategies to do some common types of reading comprehension exercises effectively and giving some suggestions to help students to study reading comprehension better are the main reasons of this study. Thus, it is undertaken to clarify the questions above.

Participants

The population is forty juniors who are English majored juniors of English at Tay Do University. Among forty juniors, five of them are males and thirty-five students are females. Their ages range from 21 to 23. They have studied English about 9 to 12 years. All of the juniors speak Vietnamese as their mother language and English is considered as a foreign language. Their English skills are nearly at the same level. Six semesters are the time that all forty juniors have studied reading comprehension. Interaction 1 and Interaction 2 (Silver Edition, by Elaine Kirn and Pamela Hartmann, McGraw-Hill Higher Education), and Mosaic 1 textbook (Silver Edition, by Brenda Wegmann and Miki Knezevic, McGraw-Hill Higher Education) were chosen as their reading material books.

Research design

This study was presented to answer the research questions. It was mainly based on the questionnaire and the reading test. They were asked to do reading comprehension exercises as Multiple choice, Filling in the blank, Matching, True/False, and Figuring out the topic by applying the suitable strategies for each type of exercise.

Research instruments

Reading test

The reading test was chosen to evaluate the juniors' reading ability as well as to emphasize the importance of reading strategies in doing the exercises. The reading text included five parts with the topic as "Bill Gates and his philosophy" (to survey students' skills such as scanning, skimming, guessing, finding clues in the context). And all of the exercises were extracted from "Pre-Essence Reading 3" by Ho Chi Minh City General Publisher (Lee, 2010). Forty juniors had 30 minutes to finish the test. After doing the reading test, the juniors began to answer the questionnaire. The following were the detailed overview in the reading text.

The text named "Bill Gates and his Philosophy". The text introduces Bill Gates – the richest man in the world as well as his philosophy in the business. It was used as the reference for getting information to do exercises.

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Exercise 1 was Multiple-choice. It had four questions that juniors answered by choosing A, B, C or D to the questions.

Exercise 2 was Matching. There were four sentences about matching words with its definition on the right. The words and the definition are in two different columns. The juniors had to match the words to the correct definitions by writing the letters (A, B, C, or D).

Exercise 3 was True/False. There were four sentences. The juniors used information from the text to decide if the sentences were true or false by writing the letter (T or F) on each line.

Exercise 4 was Filling in the blank. There were four words listing in the box and four blanks in the summary about “Bill Gates and His Philosophy”. The juniors had to read the paragraph in the exercise and write the most appropriate word from the box in each of the blank.

Exercise 5 was Figuring out the topic which had two paragraphs about “Bill Gates and His Philosophy”. In this part of exercise, the juniors had to find the topic and the main idea from two paragraphs by looking for the information in the paragraph.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was another mean chosen to collect data from the juniors. It was used to get real information from the juniors about their attitude toward reading comprehension as well as some strategies to do reading exercises. Besides, some suggestions to study reading comprehension better were also offered clearly from the English majored juniors. There are three parts as the following.

Table 1: The gist of questionnaire

Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
From 1 to 6	Students' background
From 7 to 10	Reading strategies
From 11 to 15	Strategies to do exercises
From 16 to 17	Some suggestions

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part aimed to report the result of data collection based on the questionnaire and the reading test. The results showed the statistical evidence on the strategy to do reading comprehension exercises effectively.

The juniors' back ground

The juniors' attitude toward reading comprehension subject

The survey showed that the juniors were interested in learning reading. Firstly, 75% of the juniors spent one to two hours to read per day. This showed the juniors considered reading comprehension as a useful subject (80% of juniors voted). Secondly, 25% of the juniors spent about half an hour to read per day and 12.5% of them thought that reading comprehension was only normal subject and 67.5% thought that reading comprehension was interesting. Generally, juniors had different ideas about reading comprehension subject, the majority of juniors considered reading as a useful and interesting subject. They realized the importance of learning reading, so they had a very positive attitude toward reading studying.

The importance of reading comprehension subject

100% of the juniors agreed that reading was an important subject because reading was one of the most important and compulsory subject for English majored students. Through reading, juniors could expand their knowledge in many fields. Especially, they could get more vocabulary and grammatical structures of English language that helped them to build their own vocabulary and to understand many books written in English. Thus, their knowledge about social life and other fields as well as vocabulary and grammatical structure would be enlarged. In addition, reading was a studying tool helped the juniors to get more ideas for writing and speaking skills. Thus, they could be more confident to solve different topics. In short, reading was an important subject for English majored students.

The purpose of reading

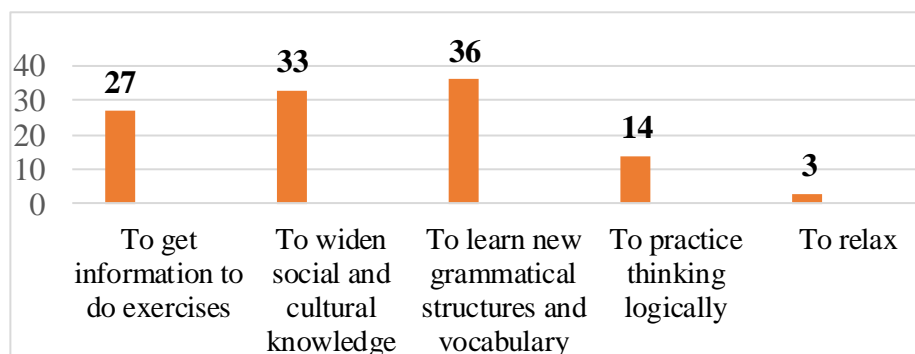


Figure 1: The purpose of reading

As seen in the above figure, there were 113 choices made by the juniors on the main purpose of reading. The greatest number of choices (36 choices) was made on the purpose which was for learning new grammatical structures and vocabulary. In studying process, the juniors only understood the individual sentences and the grammatical structures of a piece of writing. Through reading, they were covered to a wide vocabulary and grammatical structures that helped them to build their own vocabulary and grammatical structures as well as to improve their understanding when they read. 33 choices were for widening social and culture knowledge. The juniors supposed that reading was a vast amount of material resource about the world around. Through reading, they began to have a greater understand about many things. They exposed themselves to new things, new information. Thus, their social and culture knowledge would be enlarged. Besides, there were 27 choices for getting information to do the exercises. And for the fourth purpose – to practice thinking more logically had 14 choices. They supposed that reading was a subject to practice their thinking more logically when they found many unfamiliar words. And only 3 students chose the last purpose – to relax. These choices showed that the juniors did not really consider reading as a subject to relax after a stressfully studying. They only studied reading for getting knowledge about vocabulary and grammar or widening social and culture knowledge or getting information to do their tasks or practicing their thinking more logically.

The ideas about reading comprehension exercises in the textbook

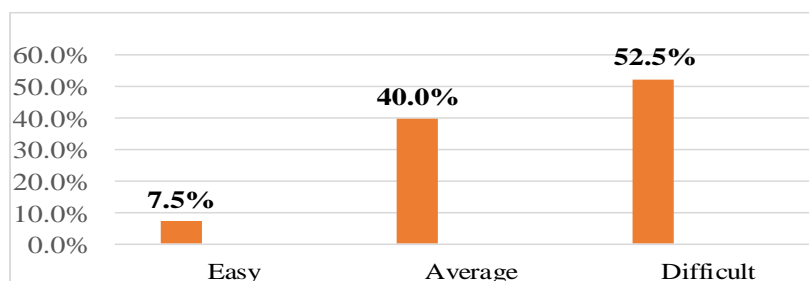


Figure 2: The ideas about reading comprehension exercises in the textbook

The juniors thought about the level of reading comprehension exercises in textbook differently. 7.5% of the juniors stated that the exercises in textbook were easy for them to do. While 40% answered that the exercises were on average level. The last 52.5% stated that the exercises were difficult. Through the juniors' ideas, it could be seen that the exercises in the textbook were difficult and unreasonable for the juniors' level. For these reasons, the juniors should have the specific methods to solve the reading exercises in textbook in particular and to get good results in reading subject in general such as applying the reading strategies for the exercises, having the specific activity before doing exercises, and so on.

The activities before doing reading comprehension exercises.

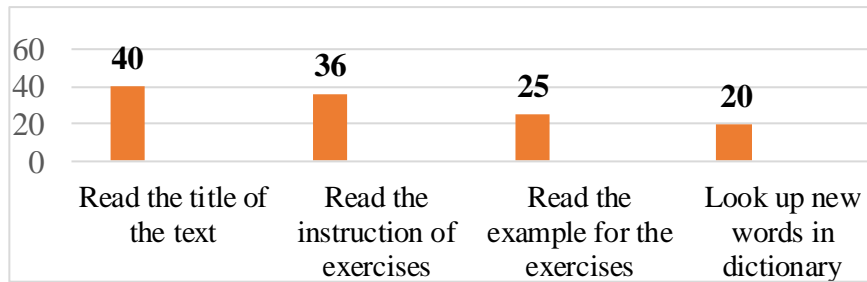


Figure 3: The activities before doing reading comprehension exercises

There were 121 choices the juniors did before doing reading comprehension exercises to get a good result and their explanation would be clearly showed.

Firstly, there were 40 choices for reading the title of the text. The juniors thought it helped them understand the content of the reading text so that they felt more confident when doing the exercises and they could finish the exercises easily. In addition, the juniors could predict the information of reading text to know some necessary details and to summarize the topic. Thus, they could do exercises faster.

Secondly, there were 36 choices for reading the instruction of exercises. The juniors believed that they could know the exercises’ requirement clearly. Thus, it helped juniors to apply suitable reading skills to find out the information and to do the exercises quickly.

Thirdly, there were 25 choices on reading the example for the exercises. Choosing to read the example was the way that they could know clearly information that the exercises needed and finished their tasks better. In addition, the juniors could save a lot of time while thinking about the requirements of the exercises as well as the methods to solve the exercises.

The last one, there were 20 choices on using dictionary to look up new words. The juniors often used dictionary to understand new words before doing the exercises. That was the way helped them to understand the content of reading text and to solve the exercises easily. However, using the dictionary took them too much time while they only did the exercises in the short time. This activity could not get a high result.

In short, there were many methods before doing reading comprehension exercises. It could be seen that most of the juniors knew clearly what they should do before doing reading comprehension exercises as well as had good ways to do the exercises. From the results above, the juniors chose many methods together because these helped them to solve the exercises effectively. Especially, the juniors should try to guess the word meaning rather than use dictionary when doing exercises because they do not allow use the dictionary to look up of new words when doing the test. If the juniors themselves read at home, they can use the

dictionary to look up of new words; however, this takes them too much time. In addition, it is not a good habit if they depend too much on the dictionary, then they are not confident themselves in guessing the word meaning through contextual clues.

The juniors' ideas about the strategies in reading comprehension

The ideas about scanning and skimming skills

Scanning and skimming are very useful reading comprehension strategies for English majored students. Two these terms may seem synonymous at first glance; they are two distinctly different procedures that students use to help them to comprehend the written material quickly and accurately. When students cover a vast amount of material and they do not read all in a limited amount of time. Therefore, scanning and skimming skills help them to gain the information from the reading text. Scanning helps students to find out details while skimming helps them to find out main ideas in the reading text. Students should apply these skills when doing reading exercises besides other necessary ones.

In the questionnaire, 100% of the juniors agreed that scanning and skimming were important skills to do reading comprehension exercises. They suggested many reasons for this statement. Firstly, if the juniors applied these skills, they would get the information quickly without wasting time. Therefore, they could concentrate on the topic and do the exercises quickly and accurately. Secondly, almost of reading comprehension exercises related to these skills, so the juniors should apply these skills to do the exercises. Finally, and the most important benefit of scanning and skimming skills was to help juniors become flexible readers. They did not read everything; they only read what was important to their purpose. That helped juniors to skip the unimportant information so they could recognize the necessary information in doing exercises effectively.

The ideas about guessing skill

Guessing is a very important reading comprehension skill for English majored students. These enable students to cover a large amount of material, due to they have a vast amount of vocabulary to understand the whole content from the materials. Since vocabulary is an indispensable part of a language. It is vitally needed to express meaning. Limiting vocabulary knowledge prevents students from understanding a text. Therefore, guessing the word meaning strategy has the effect on reading comprehension in general and reading comprehension exercises in particular.

The survey of the questionnaire showed that 100% of the juniors agreed the guessing the meaning of the unknown words from the context was a very important strategy. There were many reasons to consider this agreement. Firstly, if the juniors did not understand the meaning of the words that they encountered in a reading text, their comprehension of this reading text was likely to fail. Therefore, they had to base on the context to guess the words' meaning to complete well the reading comprehension exercises. Secondly, guessing word

meaning from the context could help juniors to remember the words meaning for a long time and they did not depend on the dictionary. Finally, the juniors could save a lot of time while looking up all of new words by using the dictionary. Especially, they could also practice their thinking more logically.

The ideas about using clues in the context

Clues have an important role in dealing with reading comprehension and they are the important factors for comprehending a text broadly and learning new words specifically. Almost of juniors (100%) agreed that using the contextual clues brought many benefits for English majored students. Firstly, when juniors found the unfamiliar words, the contextual clues helped them to explain the meanings of difficult words by giving explanation in the preceding or next sentences in simple language. Secondly, students could know the information relating to the topic in which the words are embedded. Since then, students could guess the situation in the context and doing the exercises better. Lastly, students could save a lot of time for doing reading comprehension exercises through the context.

The strategy to do some common types of reading comprehension exercises effectively.

This part would show some types of reading comprehension exercises and the results. Some types were Multiple choice, Matching, True/false, Fill in the blank, and Figure out the topic. Each type of exercise had the specific strategies to complete it.

Multiple choice exercise

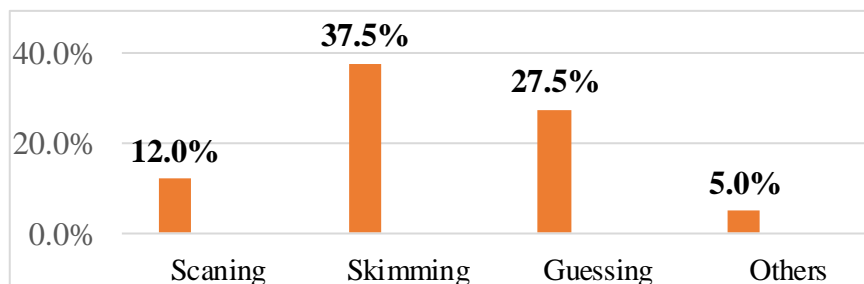


Figure 4: The strategies to do Multiple choice exercise from the questionnaire

As seen in the above figure, 12% of the juniors used scanning skill to do Multiple choice exercise. While skimming skill had 37.5%, 27.5% used guessing skill and the remaining 5% had other skills. The result expressed that the juniors applied many strategies to solve this type of exercise. They did not have certain ways to do it. They applied other skills to do this type of exercise such as predicting, using key words, and using judgments. That had a great influence to the results.

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For Multiple choice exercise, the juniors have to understand the content of the reading text and to find out the detail information to answer the questions. Therefore, scanning skill is the best strategy to solve this exercise.

Multiple choice exercise had four questions. Figure 5 would show the results.

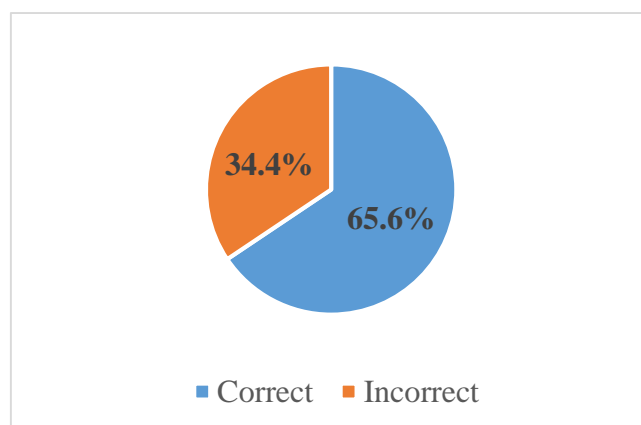


Figure 5: The result of doing Multiple choice exercise

From questionnaire, 30% of the juniors knew how to use scanning to solve this exercise. The figure above showed that 65.6% juniors had the correct answer. The reason could be they knew how to apply scanning skill for this exercise since scanning is used to find the details for the questions. Some students did these exercises thanks to their luck or feeling. 34.4% of the remaining juniors did not have correct answer. Because they did not use scanning skill or they did not read carefully about the information in the exercise or had some mistakes while doing.

Matching exercise

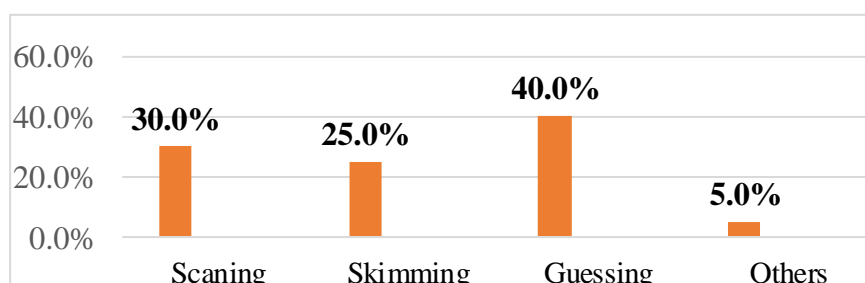


Figure 6: The strategies to do Matching exercise from the questionnaire

For this exercise, 40% of the juniors guessed directly word meaning to match words with the definition, 30% used scanning skill, skimming skill was 25% and the rest 5% had other skills

to do this exercise such as inference, reference, synonym, antonym, definition, and clues in the context. These ideas could affect to get the results in the exercise, because they were also other common types of clue that could support the juniors' ability in guessing the word meaning.

In fact, the juniors should use guessing skill to do well Matching exercise. This type of exercise usually requires juniors to match words to their definitions. To do this, juniors have to guess the word meaning. Therefore, guessing skill is the best strategy to match the words with their definitions.

Matching exercise had four sentences about matching words with their definitions. Figure 7 would show the results.

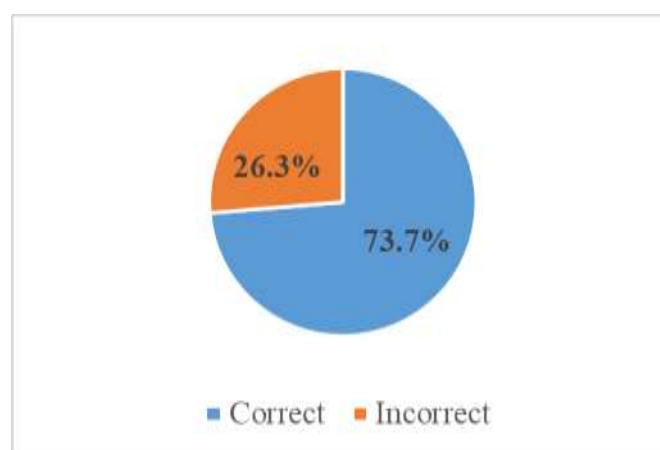


Figure 7: The result of doing Matching exercise

From questionnaire 50% of the juniors knew how to use guessing skill to do Matching exercise. While 73.7% completed well this type of exercise and the last 26.3% did not have correct answer. The survey showed that many juniors knew how to use guessing skill. In addition, they also used their knowledge, experience to analyze and find out the best answer to complete the exercise. Therefore, the results were fairly high (73.7%). However, the remaining juniors could not correct answer. Maybe they did not use guessing skill or had some misunderstanding about the information while doing exercise. Especially, the juniors should be careful if they get this type of exercise, because it usually requires juniors to match the words to their definitions; each word is correlative with its definition. If they do wrongly one sentence, it would affect another sentences.

True/False exercise

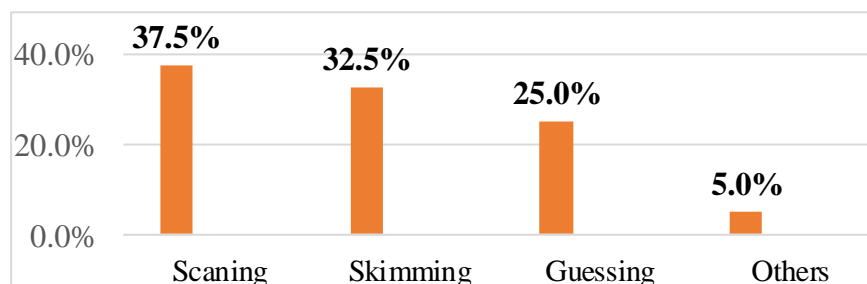


Figure 8: The strategies to do True/False exercise from the questionnaire

According to figure 8, it could be seen that 37.5% of the juniors used scanning skill, 32.5% chose skimming, 25% guessed the words' meaning to find the answer and the rest 5% had other skills. They did not have certain ways to do exercise effectively. There were some juniors knew how to use scanning skill, the remaining juniors used other ways to do this exercise such as key words, judgments and clues.

In fact, scanning is the best skill for True/false exercise. Juniors have to use the detail information from the reading texts to decide whether the sentences are true or false. So, scanning skill is a useful tool for students in looking for specific information to find the answers without necessarily understanding the rest of a text. This strategy also saves a lot of time instead of using the whole time to read the reading text.

True/False exercise had four sentences. Figure 9 would show the results.

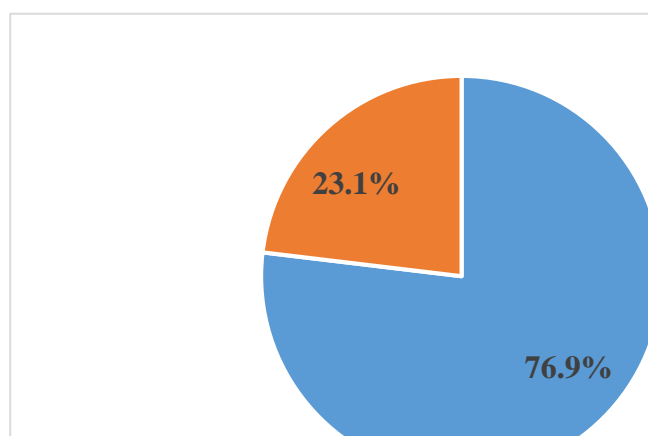


Figure 9: The result of doing True/False exercise

The survey showed that 76.9% of the juniors had the correct answer while the result from the questionnaire only had 42.5% knew how to use scanning skill. This showed that some juniors

knew how to use scanning skill effectively. Some others did exercise thanks to their feeling or they were lucky in doing exercises. Therefore, the results from the exercises were fairly high (76.9%). The remaining 23.1% did not have the good answer. Maybe they did not know the suitable strategies for this exercise or had some misunderstanding about the information in the exercise. Even they only made this exercise with a cursory glance. For this exercise, the best solution was that students should use scanning to find out the relative details to support and find the correct answer.

Filling in the blank exercise

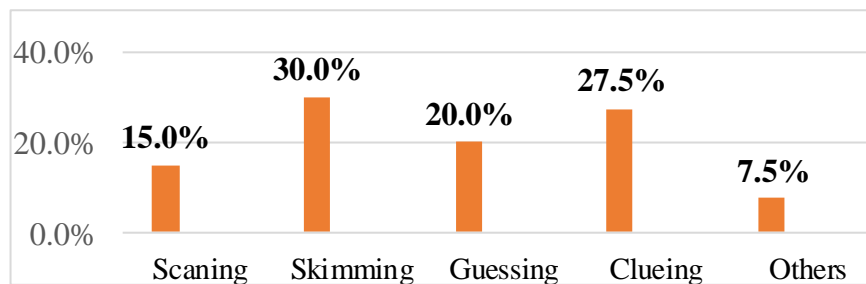


Figure 10: The strategies to do Filling in the blank exercise from the questionnaire

Figure 10 showed that 15% of the juniors used scanning skill to find out the answer, 30% used skimming, 20% used guessing and 27.5% used clues in the context to do exercise. The remaining 7.5% had other skills to solve this exercise such as using back ground knowledge, inference and summary.

When the students find this type of exercise, they should combine many strategies together. Especially, combining the clues in the context with guessing skill is the best way to solve Filling in the blank exercise. Because contextual clues support for guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar words rather than using the dictionary. Contextual clues include four common types such as definitions, synonym, antonym, and general knowledge. The students should notice the clues carefully to support for guessing the word meaning. This combination helps students to practice their thinking more logically, and to save a lot of time. Especially, this combination can get a high result in doing exercise.

Filling in the blank exercise had four words listing in the box and four blanks. Figure 11 would show the results.

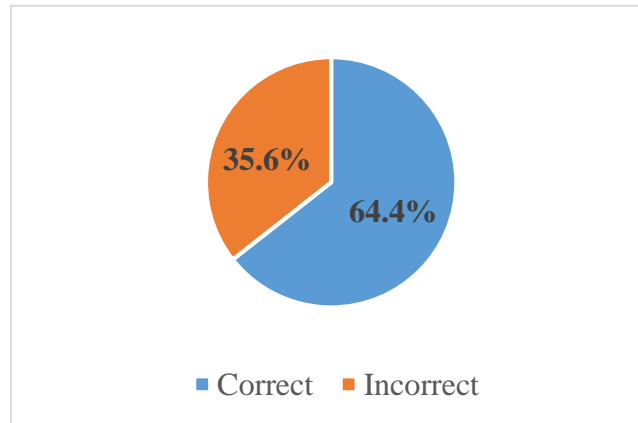


Figure 11: The result of doing Filling in the blank exercise

Figure 11 showed that 64.4% of the juniors had the correct answer because they knew how to do and choose suitable strategies. In fact, the juniors knew to combine many strategies together to get a high result. With this exercise, students also based on general knowledge to guess the meaning of the word. Besides, maybe some juniors got a high result in the exercises thanks to their luck, or they discussed together, etc. On the other hand, 35.6% of the remaining juniors did not have the exact answer. This showed that many juniors did not know how to combine guessing with clues in the context or had the misunderstanding about the word meaning, so that they did not get as high result as they thought. To sum up, the juniors should combine many ways together to complete this type of exercise. Especially, combining guessing and clues in the context is the best way to complete this exercise quickly.

Figuring out the topic exercise

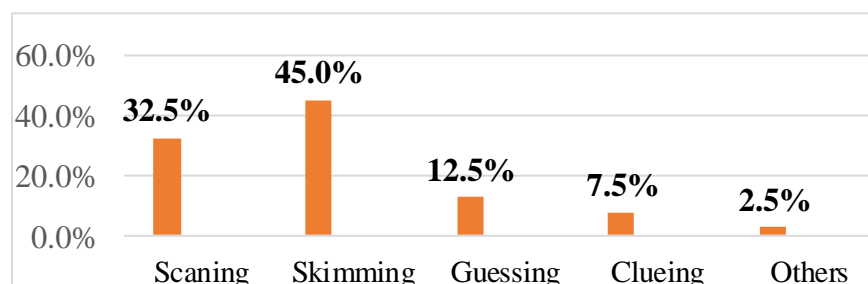


Figure 12: The strategies to do Figuring out the topic exercise from the questionnaire

As it could be seen from figure 12, 45% of the juniors used skimming skill to do Figuring out the topic exercise. 32.5% used scanning and 12.5% used guessing. The remaining 7.5% used clues in the context.

In fact, when juniors get this type of exercise, they should use skimming skill to find out the topic and the main idea. Skimming is a useful tool to glide the whole paragraph or essay quickly. Thus, the juniors can find out the main idea and topic of the reading text or skip unimportant information and remember necessary ones to complete well the exercise. The half of juniors knew how to use skimming skill to complete this exercise. The rest of juniors used other methods to deal with this exercise such as summarizing, predicting, etc., but the best skill was skimming.

Figuring out the topic exercise had two paragraphs. Figure 13 would show the results.

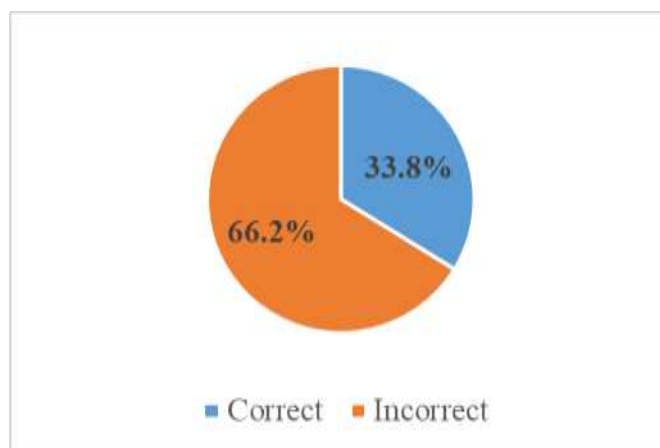


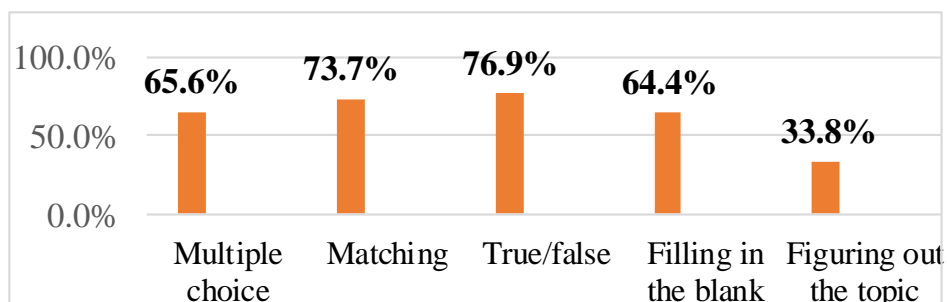
Figure 13: The result of doing Figuring out the topic exercise

The survey showed that most of the juniors got many difficulties in Figuring out the topic exercise. Comparing the survey result of the questionnaire and the exercises, basing on the questionnaire, there were 50% of the juniors knew how to use skimming skill for this exercise. But in fact only 33.8% did well this exercise. The reason could be they lacked of knowledge in some fields, or they did not have enough words because knowledge and vocabulary can support to predict the content of the reading text. Besides, maybe juniors were tired or did not enough time to do this exercise. The reading text only has 30 minutes to complete. While the juniors tried to do well 4 other types of exercise (Multiple choice, Matching, True/false, Filling in the blank). Therefore, the result of this exercise was not high (33.8%). The remaining 66.2% of juniors did not have the exact answer. Through the survey above, the juniors should apply skimming skill to skip unimportant information and to find out the main ideas or the topic of the reading text.

To sum up, five exercises in reading text expressed that each kind of exercise has a particular skill to do. Therefore, students should know how to apply skills in a flexible and effective way to do well these types of exercises.

Conclusion of Some Common Types of English Reading Comprehension Exercises.

Figure 14: The result of doing types of exercises from the test



After surveying and analyzing the results collected from 40 juniors. It could be realized that most of the juniors completed the exercises well.

Two types of exercises Matching (73.7%) and True/false (76.9%) had the highest rate. Maybe these types were the common exercises that juniors usually did. And this was the reason that they got many advantages than other exercises. Therefore, the juniors did not find many difficulties while doing and the results were fairly good. Besides, the juniors also used many skills together to solve these types of exercise. As for Matching exercise, the juniors knew how to use guessing skill as well as scanning skill for True/false exercise.

The other two types were Multiple choice (65.6%) and Filling in the blank (64.4%). This showed that the juniors applied suitable strategies to do exercises. For Multiple choice exercise, the juniors knew to use scanning skill to find out the answers. Therefore, they could finish well this type of exercise. Likewise, when the juniors got Filling in the blank exercise, they knew to combine guessing skill with contextual clues to guess the word meaning, so that this type of exercise is got a fairly high result.

In contrast, the juniors found many difficulties in type of Figuring out the topic exercise. Nearly 34% of the juniors complete well this type of exercise. The majority of juniors could not get the good result (64%). Maybe this exercise was too hard for juniors or the reading text had many unknown words, so they could not understand the whole content of the paragraph. Consequently, they could not find out the topic and the main idea of the paragraphs.

The suggestion to study reading comprehension better

Reading comprehension is an important and compulsory subject. All of the English majored juniors at Tay do University have studied reading during six semesters. However, they find many difficulties in reading comprehension exercises. The following are some suggestions to help students study reading comprehension better.

Firstly, the juniors suggested that reading more and more the materials written in English such as newspapers, books, magazines, and so on. This helps them get much knowledge and

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enlarge vocabulary and grammatical structures so that they can do the exercises with many different topics better. Especially, juniors should read many different and favorite topics to avoid the boring.

Secondly, most of the juniors proposed applying the reading strategies to do the exercises such as scanning, skimming, guessing, clues in the context and so on. These strategies help them to do the exercises better and faster. Thus, they can save time and have good results in reading comprehension.

Moreover, the juniors also offered that trying to guess the words' meaning and limiting of using dictionary help them to understand the whole reading text without knowing all of new words. This helps to save a lot of time while looking up all of new words.

Additionally, some juniors suggested that doing extra exercises to practice reading strategies. This helps them to have much experience in types of reading comprehension exercises and to get high scores.

To sum up, reading comprehension is not an easy subject. So there are many suggestions to study reading comprehension better for English majored juniors such as reading many books, practicing more reading exercises, trying to guess words' meaning and applying the reading strategies in studying process. These can help students to get higher results. In addition, there are other ideas to study reading comprehension better such as learning new words, extensive reading and watching the English program on the television. Especially, to get the good result in reading subject, students have to practice the exercises as well as the reading strategies regularly. This helps them to broaden much knowledge and experience as well as have more confidence in different fields.

IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Implications

All of the students considered reading comprehension as one of the most important subjects in their major. However, reading is not an easy subject and some students find the difficulty in doing the exercises. Therefore, it is necessary to have the suitable strategies to do well reading comprehension exercises. The results showed that most of the juniors were confused in choosing the reading strategies to finish the exercises. They gave a lot of strategies to do exercises. The results showed that some types of exercises got fairly high. The typical ones to them are Matching and True/false. For these types of exercise, the juniors knew to apply guessing and scanning skills to finish them, so that they got the good results in these exercises. Moreover, two types of exercises, Multiple choice and Filling in the blanks had the equivalent rate. That showed some juniors knew to apply the suitable strategies for these exercises. Some juniors still were confused the strategies they used to solve two types of exercises. In contrary, the Figuring out the topic exercise did not get the high result. Although

the juniors knew to use skimming skill for this exercise, but the result was not high. This showed the students only knew suitable strategies for each type of exercise but they maybe did not apply them well. They should read many books and practice the extra exercises regularly. These help them to have much knowledge and experience for the types of reading comprehension exercises, so that they can be more confident to do the exercises with many different topics and get the high results in reading subject.

CONCLUSIONS

From the study, reading plays a very important role in our life. Reading comprehension is one of basic skills for university students who use reading skill to widen their knowledge or do the exercises for studying purpose. However, in learning process, students need to do many reading exercises accurately and quickly in limited time. So, students need to have the appreciate methods to solve these exercises. Using the strategies to do reading comprehension effectively is a general way of almost of juniors in reading subject.

After collecting data, the majority of juniors got trouble with reading comprehension exercises; they did not know the most effective strategy to solve the exercises. Each kind of exercise has a particular strategy. With Multiple choice and True/false exercises, scanning skill is the most suitable strategy. Besides, students should also apply skimming skill to do Figuring out the topic and guessing skill for Matching. However, there are some types of exercise requiring students to combine many strategies together to complete them as Filling in the blanks need to combine between guessing and clues in the context.

This study focuses mainly in four skills to do the exercises such as scanning, skimming, guessing and clues in the context. Thanks to these skills, students can improve their reading speed as well as get the necessary information for doing exercises quickly and effectively. Furthermore, they also suggest some activities that students should do before doing the exercises to get good results such as reading the title of the reading text, the instructions and the examples of the exercises. Hence, students should know to use these strategies effectively and suitably to get higher and higher scores in reading subject.

Hopefully, the students can find themselves the most suitable strategy to do reading comprehension exercises through the tests. Thus, they will have motivation in learning reading comprehension and become good readers.

Suggestions for further research

The further researches should conduct in a long time and they should employ more instruments such as the experimental with pretest and posttest. Besides, the researchers should also design perfect reading test. Through these tests, the researchers could find the defects that the participants encountered in reading to get more reliable results. Moreover, further studies should expand the number of participants to collect more data for analysis as well as more information that is necessary to complete the research better.

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