



**DIFFICULTIES IN READING COMPREHENSION  
OF ENGLISH MAJORED SOPHOMORES  
AT TAY DO UNIVERSITY, CANTHO, VIETNAM<sup>i</sup>**

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**Abstract:**

No one denied the important role of reading comprehension in learning reading because reading becomes meaningless without comprehending the texts. So, the research “Difficulties in reading comprehension of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University, Cantho, Vietnam” was conducted to help sophomores recognize their problems in reading. The participants of the study comprise 90 English majored sophomores from Bachelor of English 10 (2015-2019) at Tay Do University. All of them still have some difficulties in linguistic causes as vocabulary, grammar structures, background knowledge and in some strategies, such as guessing meaning from the context, skimming, scanning and also in psychological causes as attitude and motivation. The research was divided into 2 stages. The former was delivering questionnaire to participants. Then, students were chosen to do interview paper. The paper also finds out some obstacles to help students to get over their difficulties.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension, difficulties, English majored sophomore, university

**Abstract:**

Không ai phủ nhận vai trò quan trọng của đọc hiểu đối với học môn đọc hiểu vì việc đọc sẽ trở nên vô nghĩa nếu không hiểu nội dung. Vì vậy, nghiên cứu “Khó khăn khi học môn đọc hiểu của sinh viên năm thứ hai chuyên ngành Ngôn Ngữ Anh tại Trường Đại học Tây Đô, Thành phố Cần Thơ, Việt Nam” được thực hiện nhằm giúp sinh viên năm hai nhận ra vấn đề của họ khi học môn đọc hiểu. Đối tượng nghiên cứu bao gồm 90 sinh viên năm thứ hai Cử nhân tiếng Anh khóa 10 (năm học 2015-2019) tại Trường Đại học Tây Đô. Tất cả sinh viên gặp một số khó khăn về ngôn ngữ như từ vựng, cấu trúc ngữ pháp, kiến thức cơ bản và một số chiến lược đọc hiểu như đoán nghĩa từ theo ngữ cảnh, đọc lướt,

<sup>i</sup> KHÓ KHĂN KHI HỌC MÔN ĐỌC HIỂU CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ HAI CHUYÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC TÂY ĐÔ, THÀNH PHỐ CẦN THƠ, VIỆT NAM

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đọc lấy ý chi tiết và cả nguyên nhân tâm lý như thái độ và động lực học tập. Nghiên cứu được chia thành 2 giai đoạn. Đầu tiên là gửi bảng câu hỏi cho những người tham gia. Sau đó, chọn người tham gia trả lời phỏng vấn trên giấy. Bài nghiên cứu cũng tìm ra một số trở ngại để giúp sinh viên vượt qua khó khăn khi học môn đọc hiểu.

**Keywords:** đọc hiểu, khó khăn, sinh viên năm hai chuyên Anh ngữ, đại học

## 1. Introduction

This chapter mentions the rationale, the aim, the significance and the organization of the research.

### 1.1 The rationale

All students and professionals over the world feel a need to learn English to be competitive in studies and careers because it popularizes rapid globalization. In addition, we are living the age of specializations. People are experts in different fields of knowledge; the best way to obtain such knowledge is through being familiar with different languages, especially English, the most commonly used languages around the world. According to Butler-Pascoe (2009:80) *"Today with the emergence of English as the prominent language in our increasingly technological and global society, especially in countries that are attempting to restructure the manner in which students learn and perform English."*

Among four skills in language, reading has a key role which is a basics means to improve other skills. Without reading, it is difficult for students to further their advanced education in higher levels. Moreover, reading is a skill that human beings need both in their daily and academics lives. Barnett (1989) maintains that reading has always held an important place in foreign and second languages, with the possible exception of the periods when audio-lingual methodology dominated in American classes, in the early 1960s. She adds that reading is now seen in a different light *"as communication, as a mental process, as the reader's active participation in the creation of meaning, as a manipulation of strategies, as a receptive rather than a positive skill"*. Byrnes (1985:78) and Barnett (1989:2), regard reading as a source of *"comprehensible input"*. Reading becomes valuable in the communication class, especially when authentic materials can serve dual purpose to develop reading, literacy skills and cultural understanding. Barnett goes further to list other reasons for developing reading skills as an important part of the second language curriculum. Obviously, students get benefits from reading when they meet all the requirements. This means that when students are engaged in reading, their knowledge will be expanded through a variety of topics in reading process.

It does not surprise to know that learning a foreign language is not easy at all. English obviously has no exception. In the past English was taught in the curriculum for the first year of secondary school. But now, English is taught to students in primary school and even kindergarten children in some areas in Vietnam are also learning English. The background of pupils and students in remote areas were simply taught and acquired

to learn grammar, vocabulary and reading with paragraphs just as basic level. In contrast, the ones studying in major cities like Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City, were approached all of English skills. Now many students at the universities face difficult problems in reading comprehension, they somehow consider it a rough “package” or “hot mess”. English majored sophomores at Tay Do University find it difficult to approach reading comprehension. As a matter of fact, they are not confident in reading, they usually get common problems in linguistic causes, psychological causes and in lacking of strategies. For those problems, the study *“Difficulties in reading comprehension of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University, Cantho, Vietnam”* is conducted to figure out these issues more deeply. We hope that sophomores are able to avoid some difficulties and improve their reading skill.

### **1.2 The aim**

This research aims to investigate some common problems causing difficulties in reading comprehension of sophomores majoring in English at Tay Do University then help them realize their difficulties and learn better. This study is conducted to figure out the answers for these following questions:

- What are some difficulties in reading comprehension of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University?
- What are some factors affecting reading skill?

### **1.3 The organization**

This research consists of five chapters including:

Chapter One is the introduction of the study which states the rationale, the aim and the organization of the research.

Chapter Two includes the definitions and the importance of reading. The next part indicates the difficulties of sophomores in reading.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology which consists of design, participants, and instruments.

Chapter Four is the results and discussion.

Chapter Five includes conclusions, implications and recommendations.

## **2. Literature review**

This chapter reviews the literature related to the concepts: the definition of reading comprehension, its importance and some difficulties affecting reading skill.

### **2.1 The definition of reading**

Over the past decades, various attempts have been made to define reading comprehension. Here are some typical definitions of famous researchers. *“Reading comprehension is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text”* considered by Van den Broek

& Espin (2012:315). Reading has an important role in teaching and learning a language. In view of the researchers, it is the ability to capture information from the text accurately and effectively. There are three factors that affect the reading process: text, background knowledge of the reader and the context in which the text is to be understood.

Comprehension depends not only on the characteristics of the reader such as knowledge and working memory but also on language processes as basic reading skills, decoding, vocabulary, text structure, convention, and motivation. *“Comprehension also requires effective use of strategic processes such as metacognition and comprehension monitoring. As readers mature in their comprehension skills, they are able to progress efficiently from the stage of learning to read to the ultimate goal of reading to learn”* said Yovanoff, Duesbery, Alonzo, & Tindal (2005:4-12). Reading is a skill that people need both in their daily lives and in their learning. According to Rumelhart (1997:575) *“reading, whether in a first or second language context, involves the reader, the text, and the interaction between the reader and the text”*. Literally, the standard definition of reading is to silently look or read out the words and understand their meanings. The other authors like Sinatra, Brown, & Reynolds (2002:62) state that research on reading comprehension and comprehension instruction has produced a menu of cognitive strategies, including, but not limited to: a) visualizing, b) predicting, c) summarizing, d) asking questions, e) monitoring comprehension, and f) determining important information. These strategies have been referred to as *“goal-directed cognitive operations”* taught through teacher-directed instruction that typically includes two components; direct explanation and scaffolding. Reading skills mean how well we read, how well we understand the words, how well we understand the grammar, and how well we understand the meaning of the whole article that we read.

In sum, reading is understanding the text. In this process, background knowledge, vocabulary, grammar knowledge, experience with text and strategies are keys to understand written texts. This is also a thinking process where students combine different skills and strategies to achieve success when they practice it in a non-native environment.

## **2.2 The importance of reading**

Reading comprehension is important for understanding the content that is actually being read; otherwise, readers cannot make sense of what they read and have problems in succeeding academics. Having strong reading comprehension skill is necessary for passing academic achievement tests and for being able to read effectively for a career. Having poor reading skill makes it difficult for readers to understand the text they read, identify topics in the story, link what they read with knowledge, and capture the main points of the text. Reading comprehension skills can be taught. This process involves teaching students to actively read and use strategies such as learning new vocabulary, reading for the purpose, telling what they read in their own language, and asking questions as they read. Reading is very necessary for Vietnamese students to absorb information and understand the culture of others. According to Carrell (1984:50) *“Reading is by far the most important of the four macro skills, particularly in English as foreign language”*.

It not only provides important and sufficient language input for the reader, but is also the foundation for further development in listening, speaking and writing. Inability to read effectively, opportunities for personal accomplishment and job success inevitably will be lost. Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson, (1985:40) stated: *“Reading is a basic lifelong skill used both at school and throughout life. It is a cornerstone for a students’ success at universities and, indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, the opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success will inevitably be lost”*. The attitude of the students relative to the purpose of reading also has an attractive influence to read. If students want to receive most of the material they are assigned, they must learn to read critically. In fact, reading is an important skill in finding a good job. Many high-paying jobs require reading as part of the job. There are reports and memos that must be read and answered. Poor reading skill increases the time it takes to absorb and reacts at work. A person has a limit on what they can achieve without good reading and understanding skills.

This review discusses several factors that contribute to a reader reading of a text that focuses on top-down handling and related interventions and finally culminates with a description of an underutilized empirically supported comprehension strategy.

## **2.3 Some difficulties affecting reading skill**

### **2.3.1 Linguistic causes**

From the above disclosure, sophomores of Tay Do University also cannot read English well because of some difficulties in linguistic causes including background knowledge, vocabulary and grammatical structure.

#### **2.3.1.1 Background knowledge**

The most important factor to determine how much readers understand and how the writer can communicate on a certain subject is their level of understanding of the subject. The importance of prior knowledge is understood and communicated in most modern theories of reading. According to Robert Mazano, *“What students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information related to the content”* (2004:1). Jonh Gurthrie (2000:26) considered comprehension impossible without prior knowledge stated definitely, *“All learning involves transfer from previous experience. Even initial learning involves transfer that is based on previous experience and prior knowledge”* and *“Background knowledge, often called prior knowledge, is a collection of “abstracted residue”* (2000:33). As it goes, there is no room for doubt that background knowledge is an essential ingredient in learning as it helps students understand new ideas and experiences. In an attempt to understand a text, they rely on their background knowledge to link what they already know to the text they are reading.

Furthermore, English majored sophomores have faced many unfamiliar topics from the high school such as Education and student life, Business and Money, Jobs, Language and Communication in the World. These are academic topics, not daily life topic, so they meet difficulties in reading. They do not have any experience and do not have enough knowledge to know about all of topics. To sum up, students have difficulties

causing by lacking of background knowledge to link what they already know to the text they are reading.

### **2.3.1.2 Vocabulary**

It is still said that reading is a great way to learn vocabulary. This view is not wrong. But imagine a read that up to 70% of new words are called readable or not? Every time reading a new word, and using word-by-word dictionary, both time consuming and ineffective. *“The ability to infer meaning in text is positively influenced by the level of vocabulary and background knowledge the learner has”* announced Tarchi (2009:30). Vocabulary is one indicator of background knowledge. If a student understands a word, he or she probably has an understanding of the concepts related to the word. A study of reading comprehension found that background knowledge and vocabulary were the strongest predictors of comprehension and indirectly influenced whether a student would apply problem-solving strategies when meaning breaks down (Cromley & Azevedo, 2007). Vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in reading performance. The importance of vocabulary in language acquisition is not disputable. It is clear that vocabulary is indispensable for successful communication in any language. Vocabulary as *“the building block of language”* informed Schmitt, Schmitt, & Clapham (2001:53). Vocabulary is also considered by some to be *“the single most important aspect of foreign language learning”* (Knight, 1994). Yolanda Fontanez-Coleman (2007:14) used to formulate: *“Vocabulary development refers to understanding words and their meanings. It is undeniable that individuals with a wider vocabulary can interpret the meaning of reading passages faster and more thoroughly than individuals who must guess at the meanings of unfamiliar words based on context clue”*. Vocabulary development is extremely important in all areas of content and is closely linked with comprehension skills. Moreover, vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in reading achievement. Besides, Huckin and Coady (1999) also state that incidental vocabulary learning is the key to vocabulary acquisition for reading performance of students.

English majored sophomores lack of vocabulary leading great difficulties in effectively comprehending textbooks and in acquiring knowledge in the worldwide. For example, the word “jam” has many meanings make them embarrassed. The noun jam means a sweet paste made out of fruit. It is also called jelly. The verb jam means to put something into a space that is too small for it. For example, *‘You would jam a week’s worth of clothes into a small backpack’*. *‘A traffic jam is when the cars on the road are very slow or stopped’*. So, they do not understand the meaning that used for the unit of study at a university. This makes that vocabulary has an impact throughout the life span. In fact, English vocabulary size affects deeply on how much students understand a reading lesson. When they see so many words in a reading text, they cannot understand it, they do not know well about the reading topics, they usually read word by word so they cannot understand exactly what the writer wanted to say in the text. In the course of reading, the students often have difficulty in the form of exercises in vocabulary as previewing vocabulary, getting meaning, and understanding parts of speech. Vocabulary

size is not only the factor that influences reading comprehension, it is accepted that readers have to rely on their range of vocabulary to interpret reading passages and obtain information.

### **2.3.1.3 Grammatical structure**

Grammar is a main component of any language in the world. Without grammar, students cannot understand, for example, the time of action whether it happened in the past or in the present. It can be said that grammar is abstract in the mind and it becomes concrete in the use. There is a lot of evidence showing the importance of grammar in reading comprehension. Studies over the years have shown a clear relationship between syntactic or grammatical sophistication and reading comprehension; that is, as students learn to employ more complex sentences in their oral and written language, their ability to make sense of what they read increases. Students have difficulty in pursuing ideas that are presented or using academic vocabulary but how sentences are constructed. Some writers tend to use long and complex sentences, which can interfere with the reader's understanding of the text. *"Grammatical structures become one of the most serious problems in English reading for academic purposes"* stated Rose. J. (2006:60). They have identified many difficulties in reading related to the use of complex grammatical structures in academic articles, as they lack knowledge of reading topics.

Furthermore, English majored sophomores have faced to find out the main idea or the purpose of the text because of very long and complicated sentences, many ideas the author conveys are usually presented in academic text. They find it difficult to read structure complicated sentences. And they cannot understand the entire text due to the complexity of the sentence structure. As mentioned above, the complexity of the sentence structure is the main problem when reading in English academic texts. Students think that grammatical structure is a problem in reading because they are not good at grammar. In fact, the biggest problem is that students find the grammatical lesson so difficult and bored. Moreover, English prepositions are a problem because different languages use different prepositions to express the same ideas, in English, word order is more important than it is in many other languages, therefore they do not know how to classify the type of each word that is also their problems to do exercise as filling in the blank. While each chapter has also a form of this exercise, which makes them increasingly bored in reading.

### **2.3.2 Lack of strategies**

The second difficulties in reading are lack of strategies. This part consists of guessing meaning from context, skimming and scanning.

#### **2.3.2.1 Guessing meaning from context**

Guessing is one of the important strategies in reading skill. When students read, they do not need to look up the meaning of all new words in a dictionary. They can often get the meanings of many new words from the context - in other words - in the sentences of the paragraph. Students need this skill when they do not understand a word or phrase in the

reading text. It allows accurate guessing of the meaning of the word based on the clues given to them from other parts of the text, such as the title, the other paragraphs, and the mystery word. Also, guessing has been advocated instead of using the dictionary because it stopped to use a dictionary to interrupt the flow of the read. Presenting vocabulary in context will allow students to enhance their vocabulary. Memorizing can be as good and useful as a temporary technique for tests but not for learning a foreign language because students simply remember words that are often difficult to applying information in the definitions and often make mistakes in meaning. The meaning of vocabulary learning is unquestionable. A useful strategy of learning vocabulary is through context. Learning from context has long been desired by teachers and many teachers have found learning context effective. As stated by Gray and Holmes (1938:38) *"We know from experience that practically all students acquire many meanings from the context with little or no help from teachers"*.

Many linguists in their study emphasize the effectiveness of learning words from the context. Prince (1996:489) listed the three benefits of learning from context: First, evaluate the meaning of a word in a context that forces learners to develop strategies, such as predictions and inferences, become increasingly beneficial. Leap when learning progresses because they master an attitude of self-control. Second, having a system that responds to new words in context is the actual basis that words are actually used in the presentation for communication purposes. Finally, the context provides a way to use words. Thornbury (2002:53) states that students will see how the new item (a new word) operating in grammar and context helps to make this item more memorable and help maintain it. Words in context increase the opportunity for learners to appreciate not only their meaning but their typical environment, such as their associated collocations or grammatical structure. Scott Thornbury (2002:148) also argues that *"guessing from context is probably one of the most useful skills students can acquire and apply both inside and outside the classroom. It seems to be one that can be taught and implemented relatively easily. It is also one that they all already use-perhaps unconsciously-when reading and listening in our mother tongue"*. Decarrico (2001:288) highlights the importance of learning new words in context and states that new words should not be presented independently and should not be learned by simple memorization. It is important that new vocabulary be presented in meaningful contexts and students are more exposed to what they should learn.

However, guessing meaning from the context appears in many exercises such as summary, multiple choice, recognizing the main idea or detail, getting meaning of vocabulary from context, using part of speech to understand vocabulary. These exercises need students to find out the main points and important details, so they have to understand about the topics clearly thanks to guessing the word. Moreover, English majored sophomore usually finds the meanings of words from dictionary, they do not know that they can find it from the context. The context is the other words in the sentences. Words in context increases the chances of learners appreciating not only their meaning but their typical environments, such as their associated collocations or grammatical. To facilitate the understanding of text, vocabulary knowledge is extremely important. If



students do not understand the meaning of the words they encounter in a context, their understanding of the context may not be successful.

To develop a smooth reading and increase the predictive efficiency of predicting the meaning of words from context is a significant benefit. Newly presented words are difficult but the terms in context help the learner to derive meaning from the context and the learner sees how the new words are used in grammar in the sentence. To continue reading without interruption, guessing the meaning of words in context is a useful skill.

### **2.3.2.2 Skimming**

*“By skimming, we mean glancing rapidly through a text to determine whether a research paper is relevant to our own work or in order to keep ourselves superficially informed about matters that are not of great importance to us”* (Nuttall (1982:36). When students want to find only important ideas and not all details, they often skim a text. Skimming means passing or gliding lightly or superficially. Many students may think that their main problem when reading is not having enough vocabulary. Students encounter a word that they cannot explain for the first time can ask what it means, as long as an informant is available, but not practical as the basis for research dependence. Then, most students switch to dictionaries. This is very natural and in some cases recommended. But in fact, one of the first things to be said about the dictionary is "Do not use too much". Students who continue to work on new words do not read efficiently. Every time breaking off to consult a dictionary, it slows down reading and interrupt thinking. It would be idiotic to prohibit the use of dictionaries. Therefore, skimming is a more thorough activity which requires an overall view of the text and implies a definite reading competence. Skimming is used to quickly identify the main ideas of a text. When reading the newspaper, we are probably not reading it word-by-word, instead of skimming the text. Skimming is done at a speed three to four times faster than normal reading. Some students read the first and last paragraphs using headings, summarizes and other organizers as they move down the page or screen. They might read the title, subtitles, subheading, and illustrations. Consider reading the first sentence of each paragraph, this technique is useful when they are seeking information rather than reading for comprehension.

However, English majored sophomores make the mistake in reading. Students often read everything without paying attention to the headlines or attention to the strategies of the types of exercise to apply so they face serious difficulties in reading comprehension. Kinds of exercise for skimming such as answer the questions, identify the main idea, discussing the reading. Skimming helps to locate the information quickly while making sure they use your time wisely. It will also increase the amount of usable material they obtain for your research. Suppose they have an exam in a few days. They need to review the materials, but they do not want to reread everything. By skimming, they can quickly locate the information they have not mastered yet and study only that material. If they pick and choose carefully what they skim and skip, they are pleasantly surprised at the large amount of information they can get through in a short period of time. It is very useful to pay attention to the organization of the text. The main ideas are

found in the first sentence of each passage and in the first and last paragraphs. In skimming, students must work to build the meaning of the text in what they are reading.

### **2.3.2.3 Scanning**

*“Scanning is a quickly searching for some particular piece of information in a text, scanning exercises may ask students to look for name or dates, to find a definition of key concept, or to list a certain number of supporting details. The purpose of scanning is to extract specific information without reading through the whole text”* (Brown (2001:308)). Unlike skimming, when scanning, we look only for a specific fact or piece of information without reading everything. It is a quick read of a quick article for the purpose of finding the data, the specific information needed to answer the question. Scanning is extremely important in the reading test because sometimes through skimming students get to grasp the main idea but to answer the reading question, they need to pay attention to the use of words. Scanning is applied to articles such as True - False - Not given, multiple choices, complete the summary. To be successful scanning, students need to understand the structure of the material as well as understand what they read, so that they can identify the specific information. Scanning also allows students to find quickly the detailed information. Scanning may be like a reading approach that provides little information, but scanning is the first important step in reading comprehension. Scanning before reading can help them understand the main points of the article. It can be especially beneficial for students to take the standardized tests, who can scan the entire paper and standardized test questions before reading it in earnest. Scanning an article helps them understand the main points of the article before they dive into the article. This may make it easier to critically read the pieces and to develop questions. It can also help them decide if there are any unfamiliar terms or terms that they need to study before they read that article. Sometimes it may take several pages, scanning lets understand what the author is building when they sit down to read the entire content.

Furthermore, if students do not know how to apply strategy for each exercise, they are bored and get difficulties in reading comprehension. Besides, they meet difficult about finding the main point in reading exercise. They probably scanned without knowing what they were doing it. Now with the information provided in this section, they can use scanning more intentionally and frequently. The more they practice, the more effective scanning they can get. Finally, the most important benefit of scanning is to help a student become a more flexible reader. Scanning adds another high gear to reading.

In sum, with regular practice, learners can improve their skills and start to enjoy reading for its own sake rather than to meet a specific end, as taking a reading test. This in turn will have a positive impact on linguistic competence.

### **2.3.3 Psychological causes**

The last difficult in reading is psychological causes. It concludes attitudes and motivation.

#### **2.3.3.1 Attitude**

Reading attitude seems to emanate from perceptions acquired from reading history and experience. Day and Bamford (1998:65) argue that *“a learner’s experience of reading in the first language influences the learner’s attitude to reading”*. Furthermore, it seems that cultural beliefs are another cradle for the incubation of negative or positive attitudes towards reading (McKenna, 1995:28). *“A culture where reading is viewed in a negative light by people whose approval a learner seeks, may not encourage positive reading attitudes. This argument underscores the role of teachers, parents and communities in the development of positive reading attitudes”* (McKenna, 2001:80). It can be seen that attitudes are the effective factors that are connected to us like or dislike, positive or negative. In fact, when students have a positive attitude of success, attitudes are strengthened. However, it is known that negative attitudes towards foreign languages can interfere with reading English. Students are easy to feel anxious and lazy when reading and then they will not play the motivational role of a larger effort to achieve language learning goals.

Moreover, they think English does not help them in research, employment and so on. Attitude is an essential role that makes it difficult to read English. If students love to read and take the time to read the English language, gradually they will get the champion of the target language. In fact, the psychological issues of the learner involve a lack of passion, purpose and tiredness of reading. In addition, motivational attitudes are evidence that students with negative attitudes toward a language cannot encourage them and have evidence to support the correlation between positive attitudes toward language and high achievement. Although most students are aware of the importance and necessity of the subject, they still do not appreciate the significance of reading skill in improving their specialized knowledge.

#### **2.3.3.2 Motivation**

Motivation plays an important role in learning a language. Language teachers cannot effectively teach a language if they do not understand the relationship between the motivation and its impact on language learning. The heart of the motive is what can be called passion, related to inner goal and desire. Successful learners know their preferences, strengths and weaknesses, and know how to effectively use strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Learning a language of success involves the passion of the learner. Motivation has long been known as an important element of many different purposes. When reading English, if students have the strength and motivation, they are sure to be able to overcome difficulties in reading easily. However, they feel confused and do not believe in their abilities, they will not attempt to achieve the goals and their motivation may be reduced. Ushida (1994:17) used to assert: *“Motivated students are more satisfied and rewarded for their class participation throughout the duration of the course than other students”*.

In learning English, one should set a purpose and try to achieve it. Learner motivation is considered to be the core of success in learning a language. When people want to do something, they will do it perfectly and enthusiastically. Qin Xiaoqing (2002) claimed: *“Motivation is a significant factor which determines the success or failure in second language since motivation can directly affect the frequency of using learning strategies of learning and persistence in learning”*. If students have a strong will and enthusiasm to read, they will surely overcome the difficulties easily. However, many students feel sleepy, depressed and passive to overcome difficulties, laziness and frustration. To be successful in learning English, students need to be motivated. Motivation also gives the mind a reward for success so it is another half of the reading. For this regard, it seems logical to conclude that motivation plays a major role in learning a language while subsequent attributes are acquired contexts that play a supporting role at different levels.

### **3. Research methodology**

This chapter shows the process of the study. It consists of the design, participants, and instruments.

#### **3.1 Design**

The design of the research was based on research questions to find out the difficulties of English majored sophomores in reading comprehension at Tay Do University, in Cantho, Vietnam. Subsequently, the questionnaires were used to collect the information. To check the correctness of the answers, students were randomly selected to complete the interviews. This survey was the combination between quantitative and qualitative research.

#### **3.2 Participants**

This research was conducted on 90 sophomores majoring in English of school years 2015-2019 at Tay Do University. Most of them have been studying English from 8 years to 12 years. When studying at Tay Do University, they were in the same education in an environment but the readability of them now are different, they do not know how to use the strategies as well as measures for the improvement their reading ability. Although they have been learning reading in high school, they just study about some simple topics.

For this reason, they met difficulties when learning reading skill at university because they have to face many strange and academic topics. This semester is the last time they are engaging in reading subject as well and they have been approaching the final section.

#### **3.3 Instruments**

Questionnaires and interviews were instrument of this research. The role of questionnaires was to investigate difficulties of students in English reading comprehension of English majored sophomores and helps them to understand and aware

their difficulties. Besides, the interview was used to compare the information in questionnaires and get more details. This instrument was very helpful, it is useful to collect the number of data and it can save much time.

### 3.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire has 7 questions and 28 statements. The first part is about some personal information of the participants. Statements were featured the five-degree scale including strongly agree, agree, no ideas, disagree and strongly disagree. Students could circle the number they think that is suitable to their opinion. In general, the questionnaire was classified into the following sections.

**Table 1:** The gist of questionnaires

Question/Statement	Summary of the question's/statement's content
a. Question 1 to 4	Attitude towards reading
b. Question 5 to 7	Difficulties in reading
c. Statement 8 to 35	Factors affecting reading comprehension

### 3.3.2 Interview

After finishing questionnaires, 15 out of 90 students were chosen to complete the interview papers designed to get information from participants about difficulties in reading skill. Each interview paper comprised 4 questions which were about how they like reading, how they perceive their ability to read, the difficulties they face when they learn to read and the way they cover them.

## 4. Result and discussion

Chapter 4 indicates the results of the research basing on the information collected in the questionnaire and interview papers. The results show the statistical evidence that highlights the difficulties in reading comprehension of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University. Then, the discussion will follow to wrap up this chapter.

### 4.1 Results

This section shows the results of questionnaires and interviews. The final results are drawn to analyze the data that were collected from 90 English majored sophomores mentioned in the previous chapter. The results of the research are based on the results of questionnaires, and interview papers.

#### 4.1.1 The result from the questionnaire

Thanks to the questionnaire, a lot of valuable and reliable information from the participants were received. The results of the questionnaires were divided into four sections, including the student's background of studying English, student's attitudes and student's evaluation on reading, and reading comprehension difficulties.

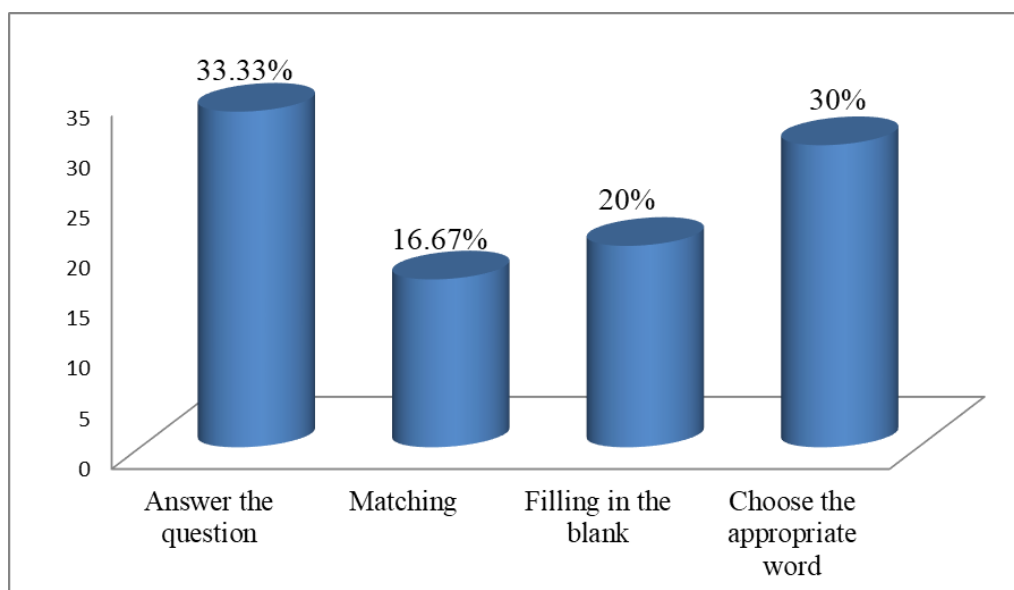
#### 4.1.1.1 Background of studying English

Question one gets information about the years of studying English. Most participants have learned English from grade 6. This means that they have had seven years of English before going to university. Therefore, they must have basic knowledge of English. However, the number of years of study in English has varied so far, partly to clarify the fact that their level is certainly different even though they are currently in the same educational environment at Tay Do University. Obviously, the more year students studied English before entering college, the more knowledge and learning methods they reached the approach.

Question two, students gave their opinions on the most difficult English skill. The percentage indicates that, Listening is considered to be the most difficult skill for sophomores with 33.33% of the agreement. Reading goes second with 26.67%. The remaining skills are speaking and writing rank third and fourth with 23.33% and 16.67%. Taking up the second place of the term, it is thought that students are frightened whenever they follow their reading process.

Question three, 18 in the total of 90 students said that reading was very important, making up 20%. Most of students informed that reading was important, accounting for 80%. In general, the data show that the majority of participants have recognized the importance of reading in English. It leads to the fact that they look for effective strategies to be able to improve their reading ability to the higher level.

Question four, it shows that the amount of participants having “average” reading skill was the highest with 70%. The next was “good” with 23.33%. Besides, the amount of participants obtaining “very good” reading skill making up 6.67%. And no one admitted that their reading ability was bad. Basically, only one-third of students feel confident in reading in class or taking the tests and examinations. This means that the rest is still struggling to improve their ability. Let’s take a glance at the figure about how difficult in doing reading exercises below.



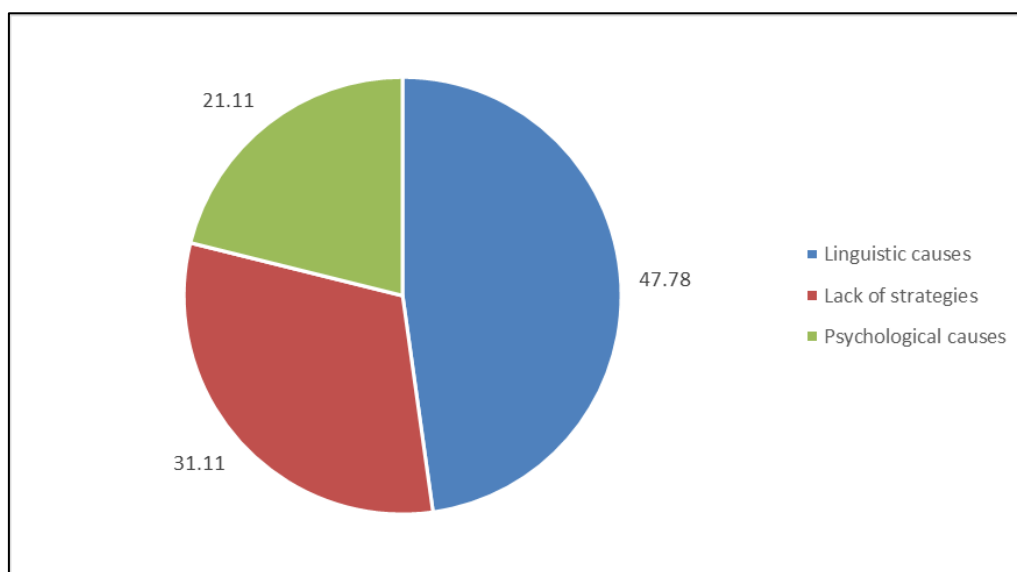
**Figure 1:** The difficult exercises in reading

As the figure presented, the percentage of students having difficulty in answer the question exercise was the highest, accounting for 33.33%. It can be seen that in the answer exercise it requires students to make good use of strategies to read and understand new words in order to understand the content of the reading. Background knowledge also contributes significantly to understanding the readings that the author refers to.

Ranked at the second position is the exercise of choosing the appropriate word with 30%. This type of exercise requires students to have a wide vocabulary and use the correct preposition or word form to fill in the blank of the sentence. Results show that vocabulary is still a top difficulty for students in reading.

Filling in the blank exercise is the third place followed by 20% of students. It difficult to choose the right words and to fill in the blanks. The difficulty here is that in terms of vocabulary, this exercise requires students to grasp the meaning of words as well as the word form to be able to fill in correctly. The fact shows that difficulty of grammar and vocabulary is still quite intense for the sophomores.

Finally, matching exercise was 16.67%. Hence, with matching exercises, from the student's appreciation, they do not account for a difficulty. Let's move to the difficulties in reading comprehension.



**Figure 2:** Difficulties in reading comprehension

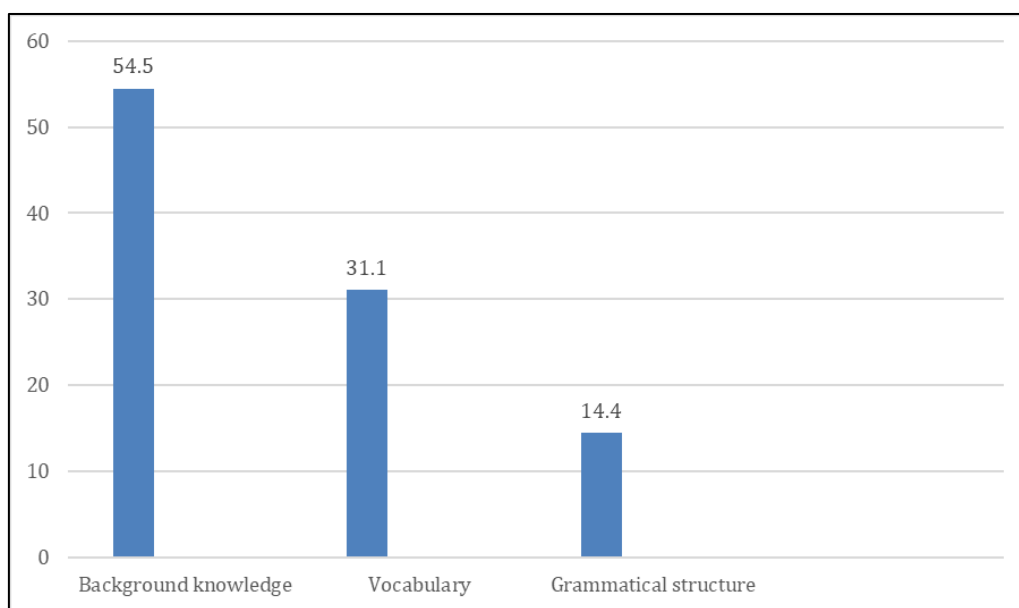
In Figure 2, students have difficulties in reading learning. 'Linguistic causes' is considered the most difficult with 47.77%. They always feel embarrassed about meeting new words, grammatical structures, and background knowledge. About 31.11% participants often meet difficult in 'Lack of strategy'. Scanning, skimming and guessing meaning from context are three major strategies. And 'Psychological causes' goes next with 21.11%, including attitude and motivation.

#### 4.1.1.2 Difficulties in reading comprehension

##### A. Linguistic causes

Background knowledge is an essential ingredient in learning especially in doing reading exercise as it helps students understand new ideas and experiences. In an attempt to understand a text, they rely on their background knowledge to link what they already know to the text they are reading.

As can be seen in Figure 3, it shows that the percentage of students choosing the background knowledge that makes them difficult is the highest, with 54.5%. This demonstrates that background knowledge is an important element in reading assignments.



**Figure 3:** Difficulties in linguistic causes

**Table 2:** Difficulties in background knowledge

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8. Background knowledge plays an important role in general language and in particular learning reading.	30%	63.33%	6.67%	0%	0%
9. You meet difficulties when you reading strange topics.	6.67%	63.33%	23.33%	6.67%	0%
10. You feel embarrassed because you do not have enough background knowledge to understand some topics.	6.67%	56.66%	26.67%	10%	0%

Moving to the first statement, the percentage of students who strongly agree with background knowledge plays an important role in reading, which accounts for 30%. Followed by the rate of 63.33%. With ratios above, students realize the fact that background knowledge plays a significant role in reading comprehension.



Similarly, the highest percentage 63.33% of students agree that they have difficulty when meeting strange topics. In addition, when being asked for the idea “*You feel embarrassed because you do not have enough background knowledge to understand some topics*” nearly 60% of students agree with this statement. There are 6.67% students strongly agree with this idea. Through these ideas, it is possible to see that most students give optimistic opinions about the importance of background knowledge in reading. From the above three statements, it can be seen that the number of students evaluating the importance of background knowledge is quite high.

**Table 3: Difficulties in vocabulary**

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. Sometimes, it is very hard for you to learn new word.	0%	60%	26.67%	13.33%	0%
12. When you see so many words in a reading text, you cannot understand them.	0%	56.67%	36.67%	6.66%	0%
13. You usually read word by word so you cannot understand exactly what the writer wants to say in the text.	0%	50%	33.33%	16.67%	0%
14. You often have difficulty in the form of exercises relating to vocabulary.	0%	43.33%	46.67%	10%	0%
15. You feel confused because one word can have different meanings.	6.67%	70%	16.66%	6.67%	0%
16. You cannot choose the right word form.	0%	46.66%	36.67%	16.67%	0%

In table three, another difficulty is vocabulary, vocabulary is considered to be one of the most difficult of reading, as the number of new words that students learn is increasing, they have difficulty in memorizing new words as well as understanding what they are reading.

Glimpsing the Figure 3, it can be clearly seen that the percentage of students who choose the vocabulary is 31.1%. In the statement 11, there are 60% of students agreeing that it is hard to learn new word and 13.33% disagree, suggesting that learning new words is easy for students to read. About the next statement, 56.67% of students agree that “*When you see so many words in a reading text, you cannot understand them*”. With regard to the supposition “*You usually read word by word so you cannot understand exactly what the writer wants to say in the text*” a half of class (50%) agree with this idea. The statement 14 has 43.33% for agreement. Most of the exercises in the tests require students to master the vocabulary, many students cannot get high points in the vocabulary exercises, which is true for the percentage of choice in statement 14. Besides, 46.67% of the students also struggle with this idea. For statement 15, along with 70% of participants give approvals. A word with many meanings also hinders students from reading the text. They must rely

on the context as well as the subject of the reading to infer the meaning of the word and know the exact meaning of the word. The questionnaire shows that 63/90 students agree with this view. In succession, there are 46.66% students agreeing with the last statement. Specifically, in statement 16, 42/90 students agree that they cannot pick the correct word for the assignment. It means that vocabulary is still on the top of today's toughest reading problems.

Accordingly, students are having difficulty remembering vocabulary as well as verifying the meaning of the word. This makes it difficult for students to understand the subject of the reading. The above proves that the vocabulary most problematic for English majored sophomores at Tay Do University.

**Table 4:** Difficulties in grammatical structure

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
17. You often get difficulties in the complex sentence to find main idea.	0%	10%	36.67%	53.33%	0%
18. You get difficulties in prepositions order when you do reading exercises.	0%	0%	53.33%	46.67%	0%
19. You do not know how to classify the type of each word that is also your problems when doing exercise.	6.67%	6.67%	43.33%	43.33%	0%

Not only vocabulary but grammar is also a barrier of students. Grammar is also an important tool in reading. The grammatical structure hinders the students from correctly understanding the meaning of noun phrases or verbs in a sentence. Sophomores have faced to find out the main idea or the purpose of the text because of very long and complicated sentences, many ideas the author conveys are usually presented in academic text.

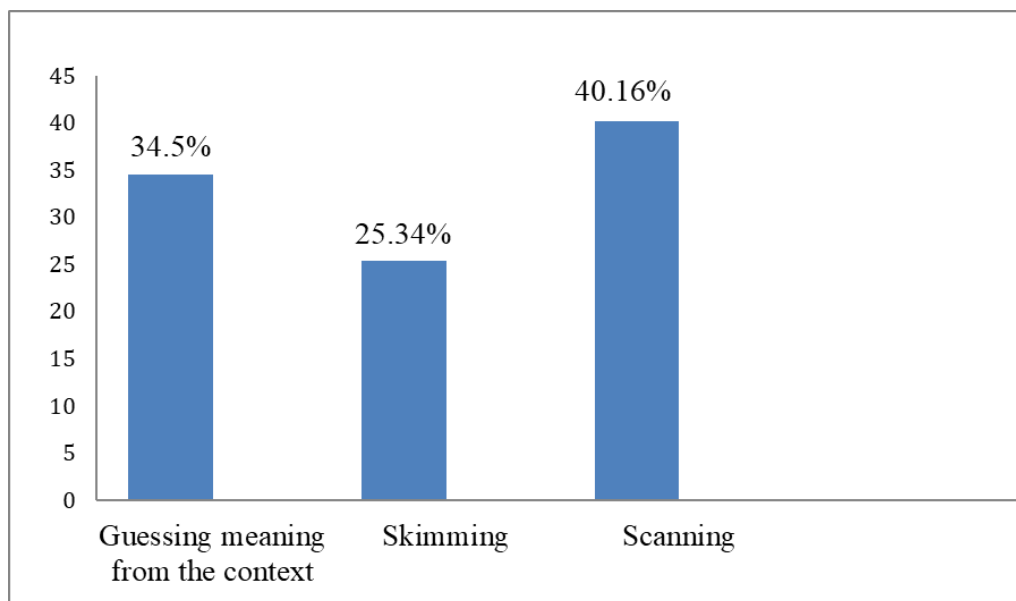
Looking at the Figure 3 above again, we can see that the percentage of students choosing the grammar difficulty is only 14.4%. The fact is that they rarely made a mistake in grammar exercises.

Looking at the Table 4, with the idea *“You often get difficulties in the complex sentences to find main idea”*, there are 53.33% disagreeing. In grammar reading it is not too difficult for students to do the comprehension task. Regarding finding the main idea of the article, they often have difficulty in vocabulary, not in grammar structure. In the statement 18, there is no disapproval and the ones giving no idea are 53.33%, with the concurrence of sophomores who get difficulties in preposition order. With the percentage of students with no idea as 53.33%, this proves that they have trouble choosing the right preposition in the filling in the blank exercises. The last statement, the ones giving strong agreement are only 6.67% and 43.33% have no idea that they do not know how to classify the type of word. This problem is most often seen in the fill-in-the-blank exercise, where students are confused when they cannot determine the form of word to choose. The final result shows that this assumption is not entirely accurate.

Finally, students who have difficulty in grammatical structure is not high. In fact, grammar does not have a lot of impact on the reading exercise, but it is difficult to do some rewriting or summarization exercises.

### B. Lack of strategies

Taking a quick look at Table 5 below, it shows about strategies in reading comprehension, 63.33% of agreement. The use of strategies in reading exercises are very useful for students. Similar to the above ideas, the students agree also very high, but in fact they still do not know how to apply strategies in doing exercises. Let's look at the tables below.



**Figure 4:** Difficulties in lack of strategies

**Table 5:** Difficulties in lack of strategies

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20. You applied reading strategy into your reading comprehension.	0%	63.33%	30%	6.67%	0%

**Table 6:** Guessing meaning from the context strategy

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21. It is very hard for you to guess word from context.	0%	46.67%	30%	23.33%	0%
22. You meet difficult when you want to find out the main points and important details.	6.67%	46.67%	26.66%	20%	0%
23. You usually find the meanings of words from dictionary, you do not know that they can find it from the context.	0%	60%	23.33%	16.67%	0%

24. You cannot guess the meaning of topic without the clues.	6.67%	50%	36.66%	6.67%	0%
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Guessing is one of the important strategies in reading skill. When students read, they do not need to look up the meaning of all new words in a dictionary. They can often get the meanings of many new words from the context - in other words - in the sentences of the paragraph.

Taking a quick look in Figure 4, it shows that approximately 34.5% agree that guessing meaning is a difficult strategy for students in reading. Glimpsing Table 6 above that comprises 4 statements, there are 23.33% disagree about “*It is very hard for you to guess word from context*”. Alternatively, 46.67% of them approve this supposition. The next one is statement 22 showing that approval is given by 46.67% and this statement includes 26.66% hesitation. In the reading comprehension exercise, students can successfully use this strategy to guess the meaning of the new vocabulary. Percentage in the questionnaire shows that they have difficulty finding the main idea in the article and finding the correct meaning of a word. Also, the similar results in the next 2 statements, students have difficulty in guessing the meaning from the context, as they do not know how to guess the meaning of words through context. In statements 23 and 24, as can be seen, the generality of respondent (60%) agree. Nevertheless, 23.33% stay in the middle while 16.67% disagreed. Down to statement 24, the number of students’ approval are a half of class (50%). Besides, 36.66% are the number of students’ hesitations. With the kind of guessing meaning from the context, it is also a form of vocabulary. Students must rely on the context of the sentence to guess the meaning of a word or phrase in the article to do the exercises.

**Table 7: Skimming Strategy**

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
25. Skimming is an important strategy to do reading comprehension.	0%	76.67%	23.33%	0%	0%
26. Skimming helps you read faster.	0%	76.67%	23.33%	0%	0%
27. By skimming, you can quickly locate the information you have not mastered yet and study only that material.	0%	70%	30%	0%	0%
28. Skimming helps you get the topic and main idea of a paragraph.	3.33%	73.34%	20%	3.33%	0%

Skimming is also an important strategy to do reading comprehension exercise. When the paragraph is too long and time is limited. Skimming helps students to read the main content as well as the point that the author wants to mention in each paragraph.

From the finding of Figure 4, students have difficulty in applying scanning skill to do their assignments, with a percentage of 25.34% in the questionnaire. Most of students still confuse skimming and scanning.

Taking a quick look at Table 7 comprising 5 statements. It cannot be denied that skimming is a useful strategy for students to do reading tasks. Both statements 25 and 26 have the same percentage, with 76.67% of consent and 23.33% giving no opinion. Skimming is to skim through all the main ideas of the reading rather than going into the content of any paragraph. When the paragraph is too long and time is limited. That is why most students agree with this assumption. For the statement 27, particularly 70% of them approve and constituting 30% of respondents have no comment with the idea. As for the statement “*Skimming helps you get the topic and main idea of a paragraph*”, 73.34% of them concurred. 20% of them have no idea.

As mentioned above, skimming helps to find the gist of the article quickly. The number of students agreeing to all four comments is high. This shows that students have recognized the importance of this strategy.

**Table 8: Scanning strategy**

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
29. Scanning is another useful tool for speeding up your reading.	3.33%	56.67%	30%	10%	0%
30. Scanning before reading can help to understand the main points of the article.	10%	73.34%	13.33%	3.33%	0%
31. Scanning also allows you to find details and other information in a hurry.	6.67%	73.34%	3.33%	16.66%	0%
32. You do not know how to apply scanning for exercises.	0%	33.33%	36.67%	30%	0%
33. You do not practice scanning, so learning more details about scanning will be difficult.	0%	36.66%	26.68%	36.66%	0%

Scan is another tool for speeding up reading. Unlike skimming, when scanning, students find detail information or partial information without reading the entire article. But students still have difficulty using this strategy properly in doing exercises. Typically, they do not understand the definition of scanning and how they should be applied to the reading, which is time-consuming and ineffective.

Indeed, in Figure 4, scanning has the highest percentage of 40.16%. This is alarming, because of the fact that students have misread about scanning as well as how to use it. With the percentage of students making a mistake in the application of this strategy, this shows the seriousness of students not being well informed about the strategies, confusing and failing to achieve good results.

As in Table 8, with 56.67% agreement with “*Scanning is another useful tool for speeding up your reading*”. It is obvious that most students agree that scanning is one of the best way to read fast and effectively. As the statement “*Scanning before reading can help to understand the main points of the article*” receives extremely optimistic responses from

respondents. The majority of them 10% and 73.34% strongly agree and agree with the supposition. For statement 31, the amount of agreement is 73.34%. It means that scanning also helps students to find details and information quickly. The percentage of students agreeing to this is huge, suggesting that students are wrong in applying scanning to the exercise. Besides, there are 16.66% of students disagree with this idea. With the next statement, the percentage of students disagree more than the ones any statements analyzed thus far (30%). This shows that sophomores are able to apply good this skill in reading exercises. There are 33.33% of agreement and 36.67% people who did not take any side. The last statement, the number of students agreeing and disagreed is equal to 36.66%. There are (26.68%) emerging indecisive. The percentage of agreeing and disagreements is equal, indicating that it is not too concerned about whether the practice of scanning is performed or not. It is important that they know how to use them properly during exercises.

### C. Psychological causes

**Table 9:** Student’s attitudes and motivation

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
34. You feel interesting when doing reading exercise.	6.67%	66.66%	26.67%	0%	0%
35. Motivation plays a major role in learning a language.	6.67%	76.67%	16.66%	0%	0%

Psychological factors are also very important for students. If the reading comprehension is too long and time is not enough to cover all the reading exercises, it causes confusion for students and it brings bad results.

In the Table 9 above, it states that the importance of student’s attitudes and motivation affecting reading skill. Namely, 66.66% students concur, the rest makes up 26.67% of them giving no comment and 6.67% students entirely consented. Like statement 34, 6.67% participants strongly agree and 76.67% show their agreement with statement 35 emphasizing that motivation plays a major role in learning a language. Meanwhile, 16.66% who do not take any side and no one disagrees this idea.

Taking everything into consideration, the results from the questionnaires point out the fact that the majority of sophomores rate positive and show an optimistic attitude about reading English. Most notably, they recognize the importance and difficulties of reading comprehension. Although there are those who are accused of having negative thoughts or handling it in half, it must be optimistic that the number of participants having trouble reading does not necessarily too alarming. Therefore, as long as students spend a good amount of time practicing and improving on linguistic, strategic and psychological issues to avoid common problems in learning as well as doing reading tasks. Then again that their scores when performing tests and examinations become effective is obviously a matter of course.

#### 4.1.2 The result of interview papers

After analyzing the results of the interview and comparing it with the questionnaire, it can be seen that they fit quite well.

In the first question, when being asked “Do you like reading? Why or why not?”, all 15 out of 15 students say that they like reading. Three girls say that reading helps to improve their vocabulary, grammatical structure and some strategies. The other six men say that they like reading as it brings more knowledge and play an important role in their future job. Another boy frankly admits that he does not really like reading but does not really hate it. *“I don’t really like studying reading, but I also never hate it because sometimes it is hard for me to study but it is still an important skill that I have to improve for my future”*. After receiving positive answers about whether students enjoy reading, it is found that most students like reading and realize the importance of it. Few students do not really like reading because they have difficulties with vocabulary, grammar and some strategies.

Continuing with question two, when being suggested self-evaluating reading ability, only three students thought that they are really good about reading competence because they have the ability to analyze the matter very fast, easy to find the main idea, the auxiliary sentence, and their difficulty is only the vocabulary due to many new words that they do not know. Besides, 6 sophomores say that they just have average comprehension. *“My reading is just average because I lack of vocabulary and some strategies when doing reading exercises and I read so slowly”*, one girl adds. The other six are self-aware that their reading ability is good. They think they are good at reading; they can use effectively their skills to reading and they also do exercise very fast. For people with average reading rates, it can be seen that there are no overarching strategies and lack of vocabulary that is believed to be the leading causes of preventing them from becoming good readers. Recognizing that reading ability is not well-rounded, it is essential for students to find the right way to enhance it.

When being asked *“What difficulties do you often meet in reading learning?”* Most of students give various difficulties, most noticeably consisting of lack of vocabulary and strategies. Then, a girl mentions *“Lack of vocabulary and background knowledge. Sometimes I do not know how to scan, skim and summarize a paragraph”*. Another one states that the difficulties she often gets in learning reading are lack of vocabulary and grammatical structure. Through this question it is clear that most students have difficulty in vocabulary shortage, and realize that they have to practice more to improve their vocabulary and skills. By common consent, ten students usually have difficulties in finding main idea, summarizing main idea, choosing topic of the paragraph exercises. Another boy says that he confuses when he does exercises about skimming and filling in the blank because he lacks of strategies and gets difficult about word choice. Just like the question above, students encounter grammar, strategies and vocabulary problems in reading exercises.

The last question is *“What should you do to overcome your difficulties?”* Through this question, we want to know if the students have the appropriate remedial measures to improve his or her listening skills. A girl takes concrete steps to overcome her difficulties,

she says *"First of all, trying to do exercise before going to class. Secondly, reading English newspaper at least twice a day. Next, learning new words and remembering them then applying in daily life. Finally, learning more about grammatical structure"*. Others also have their own methods such as learning strategies, word types, word analysis, vocabulary expansion, practice more, good use of scan, skim strategies, mind maps.

In short, the results of the questionnaire and interview reinforce the difficulties of sophomores in reading comprehension. This research not only helps them recognize significant difficulties but also has a positive attitude towards reading comprehension.

## 4.2 Discussion

As stated in chapter one, the difficulties in reading comprehension of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University, Viet Nam are the key of the whole research. In addition, students' attitudes towards reading skill are also taken into careful consideration.

There are many causes of reading difficulties and it is not easy to single out one factor as the major cause. The causes of reading difficulties are intertwined, and these include linguistic causes, lack of strategies and psychological factors. Results from this study corroborate with the literature which suggests that reading difficulties are not caused by a single factor.

Through questionnaire reflects the importance of reading skill and the difficulties of second-year students. It goes without saying that the part of the explanation lies in the following lines. The students' idea about the reading skill, with the highest percentage 80% of participant thought that reading is important, this demonstrates that students understand clearly about the role of reading skill. When students are asked to assess their reading skills, with 70% of those who choose "average" rate to their reading skill, 23.33% chose "good" and 6.67% chose "very good". Fortunately, no one admits that their reading skill is bad. Basically, the majority of students feel confident in reading skill in class or take the exam and test. This means that the rest is still struggling to improve their abilities. Through the data from the questionnaire, the results give the specific description of each mistake and its main reasons.

First and foremost, students get difficulties about linguistic causes. As in the questionnaire and interview papers analyzed, most students have difficulty in background knowledge with 54.5% of selections. They feel embarrassed because they do not have enough background knowledge to understand some topics in reading comprehension. Besides, vocabulary and grammatical structure are also difficult. The percentage of students who choose the vocabulary is very high, 31.1%. They have trouble remembering words and learning new words, many students are wrong in the vocabulary exercises. Suggesting that vocabulary is still on the top of today's toughest reading problems. The percentage of students choosing the grammar is 14.4%, the grammatical structure hinders the students from correctly understanding the meaning of noun phrases or verbs in a sentence. Sophomores have faced to find out the main idea or



the purpose of the text because of very long and complicated sentences, many ideas the author conveys are usually presented in academic text.

Secondly, students also get trouble with strategies. The role of strategies in reading are very useful for students, but they do not know how to apply it to their reading exercise. Guessing is one of the important strategies in reading skill, 34.5% students agree that guessing meaning is a difficult strategy. Most of them cannot guess the meaning of words without clues that is possible to guess the meaning of words basing on context without a dictionary. That is also the reason why students often lose time and get confused when they encounter noun phrases or verbs in the reading. Skimming is also an important strategy to do reading comprehension exercise. With a percentage of 25.34% in the questionnaire, most of students still confuse skimming and scanning into exercises. This makes it difficult for students to apply the right skill for appropriate time. Students still do not grasp the definition and how to skim. Scanning is another difficult for students, scanning has the highest percentage of 40.16%. Through the collection of questionnaires has shown that students apply the wrong way. Such as scanning before reading or misreading the definition of scans, this also takes time and is not effective.

Last but not least, English majored sophomore also gets difficult about psychological. If the reading comprehension is too long and time is not enough to understand, it causes confusion for students and it brings bad results. With the highest number 66.66% of students, the attitude of students when learning reading is very important. Information collected from the questionnaire shows that the majority of students are not positive, active in improving their knowledge as well as knowledge of language. While most students are aware of the importance and necessity of reading, many students still do not appreciate the importance of reading skills in improving their professional knowledge. In terms of students' motivation, this helps students get understanding their reading and improve it better. There are 33.34% students think that motivation is a difficult factor in learning reading. The students' learning style is passive, not self-aware, and sometimes they are too dependent on the teachers in instructions and requirements.

In conclusion, the research results indicate that sophomores face many difficulties in reading, but the results show that the ratio is not too serious on. Moreover, they have recognized the problems and find out the appropriate measures to improve their reading skill. It is encouraging that the researchers have found through the questionnaire and interview papers. This result gives a better understanding of the problems students are having, as well as answers to research questions and suggestions in the next chapter.

## **5. Conclusions, implication and recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

There is every chance that reading is one of the most important English skills which students need to meet the requirements for any hope that might have the capacity. Aware

of this, the researchers take the time to do a survey about the difficulties of second-year students in reading, to help them find their problem and overcome it.

After collecting and analyzing the data in the questionnaire and interview paper, obviously, the result is that reading difficulty affects notably the readability of second-year students at Tay Do University. Students have the opportunity to access the various supplementary skills needed during their reading process, many of which are difficult to access while attending high school. Specifically, they include three main types of mistakes: linguistic causes, lack of strategies and psychological causes.

The first problem is linguistic causes, students admit that most of them make some mistakes about background knowledge, vocabulary and grammatical structure. About background knowledge, they worry that they do not have enough knowledge to read the text about strange topics. Besides, vocabulary is also one of the difficulties of most students. Students are often embarrassed to see too many new words in a paragraph, or do not understand the meaning of the phrases in the paragraph. The last mistake is grammatical structure, many students are confused that they often get difficulties in the complex sentence to find the main idea, they often confuse the position of the word as well as the word form during the exercise.

Next, lacking strategies is also a serious concern for sophomores. They have difficulty in applying strategies appropriately to the exercise, such as guessing the meaning from the context, skimming and scanning. The first strategy is guessing meaning from the context, students still use the dictionary to look up new words instead of guessing the meaning of words from context. They are also confused when they cannot guess the meaning of the word without hinting. This takes time and trouble for students to find the main idea of the article. Besides, skimming and scanning is still difficult to differentiate between the uses and definitions of these two strategies. Thus, they are not applied properly, causing lost time and inefficiency. Most students assume that skimming and scanning are the two most troublesome skills for them.

Finally, students get issue about their psychological causes, their attitude and motivation are also important factors affecting to their reading skill. If they feel reading interesting and love it, this motivates them to improve their reading skill easily. It is important to remember that the learning outcomes of a student are determined in part by their motivation and attitudes.

All in all, though still a handful of sophomores give negative feedback alongside those who acknowledge their difficulties in reading. It is hoped that more and more students recognize their difficulties in order to overcome it in time and apply the best measures to bring good results in the future.

## **5.2 Implications**

Basing on the research results, there are two implications that the researchers would like to recommend. Firstly, English majored sophomores at Tay Do University must know the difficulties they are facing. In fact, they have approached them since their very first academic year. It can be seen that while students appreciate that reading is not the most

difficult subject in English skills, but the difficulties they encounter also indirectly affect other skills in general and reading in particular. Accordingly, students should follow the guidance of the teachers, as well as cultivate more skills about their linguistic, strategies and motivation. Second, the students' response to the questionnaire and interview papers prove that many students have average reading ability, some are worse. After realizing their own difficulties, they want to apply the solution in the best way for their reading ability. For this reason, it will be essential for students to be able to cultivate their reading competence better as well as to get fruitful achievements and to become readers with high qualification.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Understanding the importance and difficulty of reading comprehension, the researchers make some recommendations based on the results of the survey.

First and foremost, most students are able to read in the average which shows that they are difficult and feel depressed when learning to read. The good news is that students also think that reading is an important skill that is needed and related to their future work. That means they need to find the problems and fix them, all just a matter of time.

Secondly, teachers need to consider development and help students use strategies as well as ways to improve their reading ability. In addition, even though sophomore students have to learn by themselves in college, it will be much more helpful if teachers give their students a little bit more profound instruction and explanation to apply ways to improve their reading competence. As a result, improved measures help students gain better access to their reading as well as their understanding. A good case here is that the students will be in pairs or groups and are asked to explain themselves in a textbook or the teachers may also ask the second year students to write explanations for selected sentences in a text, in order to find the grammatical errors and readability of the students. These simple exercises can have important benefits, especially for those with low levels of access to the articles.

In short, for many students, recognizing their difficulties or using strategies can turn into differences in learning and vice versa. As a result, students should practice and apply day-to-day solutions to continuously improve their reading ability and be able to achieve the desired results.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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