

# Applying the interactive approach to improve English reading comprehension skills of the first-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

Van Thi Quynh Hoa<sup>1</sup>, Nguyen Lan Huong<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Vietnam

## ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension skill is always considered an obstacle for most learners at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, Thai Nguyen University. It is shown more clearly in the reading comprehension skill learning process. Therefore, the main purpose of the thesis is to improve the reading comprehension skills of the first-year students.

The survey questionnaires, pretest, and posttest were used as the major instruments to collect data. The subjects involved in the study were 45 students in class K55 Land Management. They participated in the survey questionnaire, pretest, and posttest to help the researcher do better in this research. The results of the study showed that the interactive reading approach has a positive influence on the development of students' reading comprehension skills and has the potential to help students deal with some challenges that they may encounter in reading lessons.

Based on the findings, some suggestions were given to both students and teachers to cooperate to improve the students' reading comprehension skills.

**Key words:** interactive reading approach, reading comprehension skills, improve, students, Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

## INTRODUCTION

The most crucial component of human contact is language. People use language to engage and communicate with one another. English has evolved into an international language in a large population. The majority of people in the globe use English to interact with those who speak other languages. As a result, it is crucial for teacher as well as students in teaching and learning English.

According to the goals of the general education program in 2018, after completing high school English, students can achieve English level 3 of the 6-level Foreign Language Competency Framework for Vietnam. It means specifically that: "students can understand the main ideas of a clear, standard paragraph or speech on familiar topics in work, school, leisure, etc. Students also can handle most situations that occur where the language is spoken. Learners are able to write simple passages related to familiar topics or of personal interest. In addition, learners can describe experiences, events, dreams, hopes and ambitions, and briefly state reasons, explanations, opinions and plans". In such a situation, Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry fulfill the above requirement, all English teachers need to help learners develop their own ability. Therefore, students must be taught four skills comprehensively as listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In the process of teaching English, the researcher found that the students of Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry always encounter difficulties in learning, especially reading, and the students cannot get a

good mark on the reading comprehension test. The current teaching and learning of English have revealed many limitations, although the teachers have applied new teaching methods and used modern techniques such as projectors and active whiteboards when teaching the reading comprehension skills.

Reading is a process of self-discovery. Readers engage with textual materials throughout this process by exerting cognitive and metacognitive effort to break down new information in order to create or infer meaning. Reading comprehension might be viewed as the end result from this perspective [1]. Reading is typically a passive activity, but it needs to be active. Reading is such a secret process, that it frequently goes unrecognized in language classrooms. Teachers frequently think that reading instruction should be teacher-centered. [2].

Additionally, teachers must emphasize reading method practice in addition to language growth, linguistic issues appear to be the most common cause of reading difficulties experienced by EFL learners at the intermediate level. As a result, we must concentrate on both language issues and reading skills [3]. It is the fact that some pupils find reading to be a boring topic. The way individuals act after being given a chapter to read provides evidence of this. As a rule, teachers in many schools only instruct their students to read and translate the passage. As a result, the teachers must devote a lot of time to piquing their interest in reading.

In all areas of learning, including learning a language, reading comprehension is crucial. Students must read books, articles, and other materials in order to grasp any subject matter they study, and whether they are reading in their first or second language, they must have high reading comprehension skills to do so. Students won't be able to obtain a high achievement level if they struggle to understand their reading material. Thus, it is essential that learners become adept at reading comprehension. [4]. Furthermore, one of the techniques used to assist students in locating the main concept of a book, obtaining specific information, understanding the reading passage, and comprehending the terminology, references, and inferences, among other things, is teaching reading comprehension.

It seems that current reading comprehension teaching methods and strategies are not particularly successful in helping students develop their reading skills. When teaching reading, teachers typically have their students read the book aloud while looking up any new words in dictionaries. To assess their understanding, students are then given questions based on the content they just read. Additionally, because the Curriculum only allots 50 minutes for each topic, including English, the students frequently do not have enough time to practice reading. As a result, not every student has the opportunity to learn the language. This study was motivated by the need to determine the optimum strategy for enhancing the reading comprehension skills of the first-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry.

## **SUBJECTS AND RESEARCH METHODS**

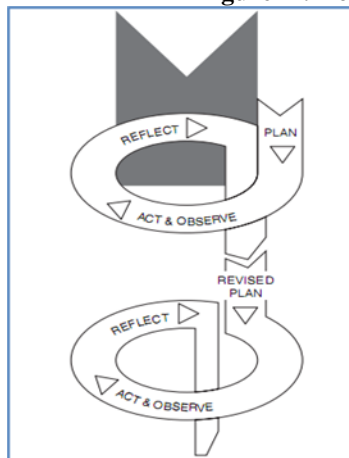
### **Subjects of the Study**

The researcher teaches 5 classes at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry, but she only selected class K55 Land Management as the participant because of the limitation of time to conduct the study. The class has 45 students and they were subjected to the interactive strategies such as the modern techniques. These students were not good at English as well as reading comprehension skills. Most of them had no tendency towards taking English after leaving upper secondary. They seem to just focus on their tests, grammar and vocabulary in written form, rather than mastering four basic communicative skills. Consequently, reading comprehension skills is likely to be a challenging one for their learning English. They seem not to spend much time practicing their reading, especially in class. As a result, their reading performance is limited though they may be good at other skills when they do the tasks passively with pens and papers.

### **Research methods**

This study employed action research. Action research is a research method that aims to simultaneously investigate and solve an issue. In other words, as its name suggests, action research conducts research and takes action at the same time [5]. In order to achieve the research objective and answer research questions, both qualitative and quantitative research methodology is used. There are two research instruments: questionnaires and tests. The data collected through the questionnaire and the two tests were analyzed using Microsoft Excel application. The results were analyzed with the support of figures, tables, and charts.

So far, a number of action research models have been proposed by various researchers. Action research has number of cycles, each cycle of an action research often involves the planning of a change, the acting and observation of the process and the consequences of the change, and the reflection on these processes and consequences. After a cycle ends, the new cycle begins, following the same steps. An illustration of action research's cycles is presented in the following figures.

**Figure -1: Action research spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000:564)**

The figure outlines four steps in action, the transition from one essential phase to another and how the progress can be done through the system. It can be clearly seen that in an action research study, the researcher does not stop after receiving the results from his actions. He must evaluate the effectiveness of his actions as well as the limitations of the methods. After that, he should modify the plan, make some changes and do it again for better results. These stages are inseparable but embedded in action and reflection.

In this study, the researcher underwent the following action research framework:

- ✓ Planning the action
- ✓ Implementing the action
- ✓ Observing the action
- ✓ Reflecting the action

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Analysis of the information collected from pretest and posttest

The reading test had a total of 20 questions, the score for each question was 0.5 and the wrong answer was zero. The test results were processed by SPSS software with Cronbach alpha. 642 reliability, proving that the scale was eligible to use the survey. One sample t-test was done to check the overall GPA and the difference between pretest and posttest.

#### 1.1. Distribution of Pretest Scores

**Table 1: Distribution of Pretest Scores**

Score	Frequency	Percent
0	0	0
2.5	1	2.22
3	3	6.66
3.5	2	4.44
4	4	8.90
4.5	4	8.90
5	6	13.33
5.5	2	4.44
6	4	8.90
6.5	3	6.66
7	7	15.55
7.5	2	4.44
8	4	8.90
8.5	2	6.66
<b>Average mark: 5.10</b>	<b>Total: 45</b>	<b>Total: 100%</b>

In table 1, we can see the average score is 5.10. None of the students scored 9 or 10. There were four students (8.90%) who got 8. The average number of students (5, 5.5, 6, 6.5) was 15 (33.33%). The rest with scores below average (2.5, 3, 3.5, 4, 4.5) are 14 students (31.11%). The number of students with high scores is less than the number of students with average score. It is not surprising because most of the students only focus on learning English grammar and neglect to improve their vocabulary, and they do not like to read English and do not have the skills to solve the reading passages, so their scores are low.

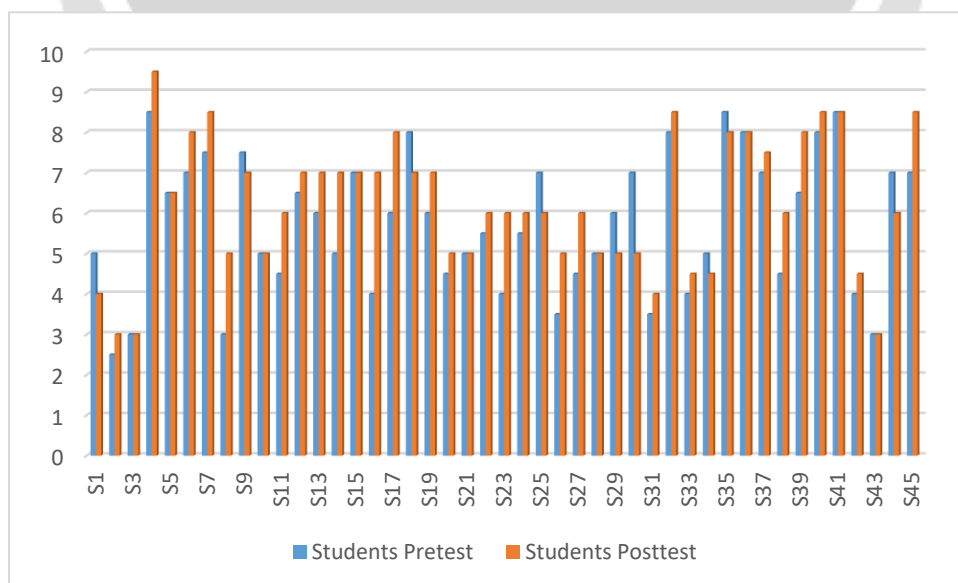
**1.2. Distribution of Posttest Scores**

**Table 2: Distribution of Posttest Scores**

Score	Frequency	Percent
0	0	0
3	3	6.66
4	2	4.46
4.5	3	6.66
5	8	17.78
6	8	17.78
6.5	1	2.22
7	8	17.78
7.5	1	2.22
8	5	11.11
8.5	5	11.11
9.5	1	2.22
<b>Average mark: 6.31</b>	<b>Total: 45</b>	<b>Total: 100%</b>

As we can see in table 2 after applying the interactive approach in reading lessons, the students seemed to get improvement in reading skills and get better marks in the post-test. It can be seen that students' results in the posttest were partly improved. There were no students who got a mark of 2,5 compared with the pretest results although there were still three students (6.66%) get the lowest mark (mark 3). The total number of the students who got marks below-average mark (3, 3.5, 4, 4.5) was eight students (17.77%), much less in compared with that of the Pretest. The number of students gaining marks 5, 6 and 6.5 increased from 15 to 17 students (38.71%). Whereas, there were 08 students achieving mark 07 (17.77%). However, surprisingly, there were 5 students getting marks 8 and 06 students getting marks 8,5 and 9.5, which were significantly gone up in compared with the result of the Pretest.

**1.3. Comparison of Data on the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Students**



**Chart 1. Distribution of Pretest and Posttest Scores**

Chart 1 shows the distribution of the pretest scores and posttest scores of the students. It is evident from the chart that the scores in the posttest have increased as compared with the scores in the pretest. The highest score which used to be 8 has increased to 9 and lowest score which used to be 2 has also increased to 3. This indicates that the students have acquired learning based on the interactive reading approach.

#### 1.4. Test of Difference between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Students

**Table 3: Test of Difference between the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the students**

Students	Mean Average Scores	Mean Difference	t <sub>computed</sub>	t <sub>tabulated</sub>	Remarks
Pretest	5.7	0.05	3.2	2.01	Significant
Posttest	6.2				

Table 3 shows the comparison of the mean score of students in the pretest and posttest. The difference between the means in the pretest and posttest using the interactive reading approach is significant when tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The computed value of t is equal to 3.2 which is higher than the tabulated t-value which is equal to 2.01. Therefore, with a 95% level of confidence, it can be implied that the mean score of students in the pre-test is lower than the post-test using the interactive reading approach or there is a significant difference between the mean scores of students in the pretest and post-test using the interactive reading approach  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This indicates that the students have gained mastery of the subject matter when exposed to this modern instruction.

The increased level of performance of the students in the post-test scores also shows that there are improvements in the amount of learning and retention. The concepts of verbs were not only re-learned, moreover, using the interactive reading approach, but the students were also able to practice and rehearse the application of the principles through the drill activities. In this method, the students relearned the principles, acquired information, and learned the application of the concepts of verbs, thus, an increase in the level of language performance.

#### 2. Analysis of the information collected from the survey questionnaires

**Table 4: Teacher's way of teaching helped me to understand the passage very well.**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	0	0.00
Disagree	0	0.00
Neutral	9	20.00
Agree	14	31.11
Strongly agree	22	48.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 shows that 0% out of total sample frame representing three respondents strongly disagreed that Teacher's way of teaching helped students to understand the passage very well, 0% out of total retrieved sample frame representing zero respondents disagreed, 20% out of retrieved sample frame representing nine respondents were undecided, 31.11% out of retrieved sample frame representing fourteen respondents were agreed while 48.89% out of retrieved sample frame representing twenty two respondents were strongly agreed.

**Table 5: The way the teacher taught increased my interest in English lesson.**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	2	4.45
Neutral	10	22.22
Agree	15	33.33
Strongly agree	18	40.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5 shows that 4.45% out of total retrieved sample frame representing two respondents disagreed that the way the teacher taught increased students' interest in English lesson, 22.22% out of retrieved sample frame representing ten respondents were undecided, 33.33% out of retrieved sample frame representing fifteen respondents were agreed while 40.00% out of retrieved sample frame representing eighteen respondents were strongly agreed.

**Table 6: The way the teacher taught made lesson more enjoyable and more interesting.**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	1	2.22
Disagree	4	8.90
Neutral	7	15.60
Agree	18	40.0
strongly agree	15	33.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 6 shows that 2.22% out of total sample frame representing one respondents strongly disagreed that the way the teacher taught students using interactive method made lesson more enjoyable and more interesting, 8.90% out of total retrieved sample frame representing four respondents disagreed, 15.60% out of total retrieved sample frame representing seven respondents were undecided, 40.0% out of retrieved sample frame representing eighteen respondents were agreed while 33.33% out of retrieved sample frame representing fifteen respondents were strongly agreed.

**Table 7: The way the teacher taught made me to contribute and participate in the lesson.**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	5	11.10
Neutral	7	15.56
Agree	17	37.78
strongly agree	16	35.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 7 shows that 11.10% out of total sample frame representing two respondents disagreed that the way the teacher taught made students to contribute and participate in the lesson, 15.56% out of retrieved sample frame representing seven respondents were undecided, 37.78% out of retrieved sample frame representing seventeen respondents were agreed while 35.56% out of retrieved sample frame representing twenty six respondents were strongly agreed.

**Table 8: The teacher's way of teaching made it easier for me to remember what I learned in the lesson**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	2	4.45
Neutral	13	28.89
Agree	18	40.0
Strongly agree	12	26.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 8 shows that 4.45% out of total sample frame representing seven respondents disagreed that the teacher's way of teaching made it easier for me to remember what I learned in the lesson, 28.89% out of retrieved sample frame representing thirteen respondents were undecided, 40.0% out of retrieved sample frame representing thirty eight respondents were agreed while 26.66% out of retrieved sample frame representing twelve respondents were strongly agreed.

**Table 9: I enjoyed the lesson, because I shared ideas with the other students and teachers.**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	1	2.22
Disagree	4	8.90
Neutral	8	17.77
Agree	13	28.89
Strongly agree	19	42.22
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 9 shows that 2.22% out of total sample frame representing one respondent strongly disagreed that students enjoyed the lesson, because they shared ideas with the other students and teachers, 8.90% out of total retrieved sample frame representing four respondents disagreed, 17.77% out of total retrieved sample frame representing eight respondents were undecided, 28.89% out of retrieved sample frame representing thirteen respondents were agreed. while 42.22% out of retrieved sample frame representing nineteen respondents were strongly agreed.

**Table 10: The teacher way of teaching aided my understanding and summary of the passage content very well.**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	5	11.11
Neutral	15	33.33
Agree	12	26.67
Strongly agree	13	28.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 10 shows that 11.11% out of total sample frame representing two respondents disagreed that the teacher way of teaching aided students understanding and summary of the passage content very well, 33.33% out of retrieved sample frame representing fifteen respondents were undecided, 26.67% out of retrieved sample frame representing twelve respondents were agreed while 28.89% out of retrieved sample frame representing thirteen respondents were strongly agreed.

**Table 11: I found the opportunity to learn from my class mates with positive atmosphere created by the teacher's method of teaching.**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	3	6.67
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	10	22.22
Agree	32	71.11
Strongly agree	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 11 shows that 6.67% out of total sample frame representing three respondents strongly disagreed that student found the opportunity to learn from their class mates with their teacher method of teaching. 22.22% out of retrieved sample frame representing ten respondents were undecided, 71.11% out of retrieved sample frame representing thirty- two respondents were agreed.

**Table 12: I preferred lessons to be taught in the teacher's way of teaching**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	8	17.77
Agree	20	44.44
Strongly agree	17	37.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 12 shows that 17.77% out of total sample frame representing eight respondents were undecided that students preferred lessons to be taught in interactive approach method of teaching, 44.44% out of retrieved sample frame representing twenty respondents were agreed while 37.79% out of retrieved sample frame representing seventeen respondents were strongly agreed.

**Table 13: It was easier to draw students' attention when the teacher was teaching with interactive method.**

Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly disagree	1	2.22
Disagree	4	8.90
Neutral	0	0
Agree	11	24.44
Strongly agree	29	64.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 13 shows that 2.22% out of total sample frame representing one respondent strongly disagreed that students the teaching method used by the teacher made it easier to sustain students' attitude while teaching, 8.90% out of total retrieved sample frame representing four respondents disagreed, 24.44% out of retrieved sample frame representing eleven respondents were agreed while 64.44% out of retrieved sample frame representing twenty-nine respondents were strongly agreed.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The data collected from the T-test has clarified the impacts of the interactive reading approach on students' reading comprehension skills. The benefits were shown through the marks compared in T-test. Before applying the interactive reading approach, the low scores were much, the high scores were little. However, after applying interactive reading approach, the problem became different because of the increase of average marks and good marks and the decrease of bad marks. The implementation of interactive reading approach has proved to make positive.

According to the research results, students have received a lot of positive results from the interactive reading approach, providing interesting experiences, such as teacher-student interaction, material for pre-classroom reference, collaborative work, discussion, and teacher evaluation. It can be argued that being guided through the use of the interactive reading approach can help students learn English faster, especially with more time to study theory and practice revision exercises. and build for students the spirit of independent research in knowledge compared to normal classroom teaching methods.

In addition, teachers can create new, new, and personalized ways of doing things to increase the effectiveness of interactive reading approach in their classrooms and modify it to address situations, needs, and situation, students' interests. Therefore, the writer concludes that the interactive reading approach has a significant positive effect on the reading comprehension ability of students at Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry in the 2023-2024 school year. Through the survey with questions, the number of students who chose the answer agree and strongly agree accounted for a very large percentage. The remaining number of students who answered neutral or disagree was very small.



As shown in the results, the use of interactive reading approach in teaching reading comprehension helps greatly in determining students' predictive response to passage. This could be attributed to the fact that in interactive teaching, teacher tends to guide the students, rub mind with them and facilitate learning, promote active learners engagement as well as promote learning through interactive decision making thereby giving room to students to think critically on the task given and in turn come up with useful active prediction of what the writer's intention is all about.

The use of interactive reading approach in teaching reading comprehension helps students in developing positive attitude towards reading comprehension due to the fact that by involving students in the teaching and learning process they benefit a lot thereby makes their attitude towards learning become positive and see English language in general and comprehension in particular as a subject and topic that is simple to learn.

## Recommendations

There is need for teachers of English language to employ the interactive reading approach while teaching comprehension because, this method brings about comprehension and improves understanding, enhances interaction between teachers and students as well as facilitates learning and remembering etc. It is necessary for teachers to understand those interactive activities which are of benefit to learners' development and contribute to their interest in learning. To do this, it is recommended that teachers should attend workshop and training where they can rub minds with other colleagues and expert in this field. So as for them to learn more about different interactive teaching methods and activities

The use of the interactive approach in teaching comprehension is also a challenge to teachers. It is expected of them not only to teach students the nifty-gritty of reading comprehension but also to painstakingly create interactive classroom environment, to take time in giving them encouragement in the form of praises or prizes for every attempt made by the students so as to bring about self-confidence and motivation and positive attitudes.

It is also recommended that English language teachers should be available to students, answer their questions, and ask them questions by creating a learning community in the classroom which will not just focused on improving achievement and learning skills, but also helps them to grow mentally. Moreover, if interactive method is used in teaching comprehension in the classroom the ultimate goals that all educators strive toward will be accomplished, to the benefit of the students.

The interactive reading approach in reading comprehension classes may be beneficial for them as it helps to provide knowledge before class. It can be seen from the post-test scores of the students that there is a significant increase in their learning outcomes. Therefore, it can be supposed that students' reading performance in similar high school contexts may profit to some extent.

Students should be given additional time to practice reading at home as well as at school, and students should self – learning at home. Self-study in reading skills, according to various research, is the ability to do skillfully and effectively self-learning operations and actions using collected information about activities and self-study. Self-study enables people to organize their work and self-study activities scientifically and rationally, saving time and improving learning quality. Student's ability to learn and assimilate new information is greatly aided by self-study skills. Because each class is limited in time and the teacher cannot impart all of the information to students, self-study will assist them in deepening their understanding and so recalling more information. When self-studying, they'll have to put in the effort to understand new material, which will foster creative thinking. These characteristics will help the students learn and improve their English reading skills.

Researchers in future studies should take the time to delve deeper into the implementation of the interactive reading approach in all its aspects and consider its application using the various frameworks proposed by other experts to study. They can focus on different topics, abilities, and educational levels as well as conduct research more thoroughly in the future to investigate the effect of the interactive reading approach on other language skills such as writing, listening, and speaking.

Furthermore, workshop, seminars, conferences meeting etc should be organized by the Univer managements, Ministry of education where teachers will be put through on the need to teach comprehension and English Language in general interactively.

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