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## **Reading Comprehension Strategy Use and Related Difficulties among English-Majored Students at Thu Dau Mot University**

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**Abstract.** Reading comprehension strategies play a crucial role in helping English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners process texts effectively and achieve deeper understanding. However, many university students still encounter difficulties in using these strategies appropriately. This study investigates the use of reading comprehension strategies and related difficulties among English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University in Vietnam. A mixed-method design was employed, combining questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with both students and teachers. Quantitative data were collected from 129 English-major students and 19 English lecturers and analyzed using descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA, while qualitative data were used to provide further explanation of the quantitative findings. The results indicate that although students reported using a range of reading and comprehension strategies, many of them relied on less effective practices. In particular, students tended to begin reading immediately without sufficient planning, showed limited use of previewing, and depended heavily on underlining or highlighting rather than more elaborative note-taking strategies. In addition, many students relied on dictionaries rather than contextual guessing, frequently translated and remembered texts in Vietnamese, and experienced difficulty summarizing what they had read. Freshmen were found to experience more problems than more advanced students in several areas of strategy use. The study highlights the need for more explicit and sustained instruction in reading strategies to help English-majored students become more effective, strategic, and independent readers in EFL contexts.

**Keywords.** reading comprehension, metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), higher education, Vietnam

### **1. Introduction**

Reading comprehension is widely recognized as one of the most essential skills in second and foreign language learning because it enables learners to access academic knowledge, develop language proficiency, and engage critically with written texts. However, reading comprehension is not simply a matter of decoding words and sentences. Rather, it is a complex cognitive and metacognitive process that requires readers to construct meaning, connect textual information with prior knowledge, monitor comprehension, and apply appropriate strategies to achieve understanding (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Hudson, 2007; Cain, 2010).

A substantial body of research has shown that the successful use of reading comprehension strategies plays an important role in improving learners' reading performance. Strategies such as skimming, scanning, predicting, inferencing, previewing, monitoring, and evaluating help readers approach texts more purposefully and efficiently (Harmer, 2002; Anderson, 2008; Ahmadi et al., 2013). In contrast, learners who lack strategic awareness often read word by word, rely excessively on dictionaries, translate into their first language, and struggle to identify main ideas or summarize texts effectively. As a result, strategy use has frequently been associated with successful reading comprehension in EFL settings (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2012; Dabarera et al., 2014; Semtin & Maniam, 2015).

Despite the acknowledged importance of reading strategies, many EFL learners at the tertiary level continue to experience considerable difficulties in using them effectively. In many instructional contexts, reading lessons still place stronger emphasis on vocabulary explanation, text completion, and answering comprehension questions than on the explicit teaching of strategic reading. Consequently, students may know some reading strategies in theory but fail to apply them appropriately while reading. This issue is particularly important in English-major programs, where students are expected to engage with increasingly demanding academic texts and demonstrate a higher degree of reading autonomy.

In the Vietnamese context, reading remains a core component of English language learning, yet many university students still encounter persistent comprehension difficulties. Previous local studies at Thu Dau Mot University have reported challenges in reading comprehension among English-majored students (Bui, 2020; Thai, 2020; Tran, 2019; Tran, 2021). However, limited attention has been given specifically to how students use reading comprehension strategies and what difficulties they experience in applying those strategies in actual reading situations.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the reading comprehension strategies used by English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University, with particular attention to both reading strategies and comprehension strategies, as well as the difficulties associated with their use. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute pedagogical insights into how reading instruction can better support strategic reading development in the EFL classroom.

## **2. Reading Comprehension Strategies**

In reading, it can be said that comprehension, the purpose of reading, is a complex process because it requires the readers to have the ability to understand not only what is written in the text but also what is behind the text. It is, therefore, true that the readers have to use various reading comprehension strategies to achieve satisfactory understanding because researchers such as Grabe and Stoller (2002), Machado (2010) and Karasakaloglu (2012) emphasize that without reading strategies, learners will struggle and continually focus on decoding letters and words instead of focusing on meaning and understanding. Thus, a successful and efficient reader is a reader that can use all or most of the reading comprehension strategies.

According to Harmer (2002), strategies for reading comprehension consist of: predicting, guessing word meaning, reading for specific information, scanning, skimming, reading for general comprehension, inferring from texts, interpreting texts, surveying text organization, and critically evaluating texts. In addition to this list of reading comprehension strategies, Madhumathi and Ghosh (2012) suggest other reading strategies such as: using mental images, envisaging, asking questions and monitoring comprehension. From this, there are many strategies for the readers to use in comprehending the text, but should they use all, most, some,

or just one of these strategies to comprehend the text? In fact, it is hard to answer this question. However, Anderson (2008) suggests that the readers should use different strategies for different text types; for example, the readers use skimming and scanning while reading the orientated texts like newspapers and messages, or they use inferring, guessing and interpreting while reading to evaluate literary texts. Below are two commonly used sets of reading comprehension strategies that are noted by different linguists:

### **2.1. Cognitive Strategies**

In reading, cognitive strategies are directly related to the readers' target language and world of knowledge, which allow them to construct meaning from text and to perform the given task. These strategies assist and guide the students to understand the reading content through skimming, scanning, analyzing and summarizing. They also include the use of the readers' first language to produce ideas. In addition, cognitive strategies are connected with comprehending strategies (i.e., using dictionary, translating, predicting, inferencing (using context clues to ascertain the meaning)), memory strategies (i.e., underlining and highlighting information, visualizing read information) and retrieval strategies (i.e., previewing text before reading, recognizing text organization, using prior knowledge) (Semtin & Maniam, 2015). Below is a review of key cognitive strategies.

#### *2.1.1. Skimming*

Nuttall (2005) defines skimming as "glancing rapidly through a text to determine its gist" (p. 49). In keeping with this definition, skimming is a reading technique helping the readers easily find out general information or main points by first looking through the introduction or conclusion paragraph or the topic sentence in each paragraph. In this response, skimming helps people save time when they read for general information. Besides, skimming seems to be an important skill for reading comprehension because it facilitates getting a general understanding of the text quickly (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

#### *2.1.2. Scanning*

Different from skimming, scanning is a reading technique used to look for specific information in a text (Patesan et al., 2014). According to Nuttall (2005), scanning is "glancing rapidly through a text either to search for a specific piece of information (e.g. a name, a date) ... or to get an initial impression of whether the text is suitable for a given purpose" (p. 49). It involves looking for specific words/phrases, figures, names or dates of a particular event. When a reader is good at scanning, it will be easy for him/her to dismiss any unneeded information, which saves time and effort. Scanning appears to be easier to apply than some other reading skills and it can help students to pass their exams but it does not guarantee full understanding of a text.

#### *2.1.3. Prediction*

According to Ahmadi and Ismail (2012), predicting is a technique of making assumptions that are related to the writer's message by making the connection among their background knowledge, new information from the passage, and the passage's construction. As Nuttall (2005) points out, prediction involves activating readers' schemata and thinking along with the writer by using their own experience. This means that prediction occurs when the readers bring their own knowledge and experience to the text, which makes it easy and smooth for them to make out the meaning of the text. Johnson (2001) also points out that the previous knowledge or experience of a reader helps them to predict what the writer is going to say next. Moreover, Grellet (2010) indicates that using grammatical, lexical and cultural clues also helps readers predict what is to come next.

According to Nuttall (2005), a successful reader depends largely on prediction because he/she does not have to go through each and every line in the text. She also points out that prediction often begins with the title of a text and continues throughout the whole process of reading. As a matter of the dark side, sometimes prediction may be wrong, yet it makes the reader think about the topic as prediction is useful even when it is not successful (Nuttall, 2005). Efficient readers always depend on their ability to predict what comes next. They use minimum clues from the text in order to reach the appropriate meaning of the text. As a matter of practice, Grellet (2010) and Cuperman (2014) suggest that teachers should make their students think about the topic, use key words of the text and ask themselves questions about the various ways the text may develop. When it is applicable, using pictures is one way to help students predict what is coming next (Harmer, 2002). On the other hand, Johnson (2001) suggests that using cloze exercises, in which learners are given a text with some words missing, can help learners develop predictive skills. Therefore, from the viewpoint of the researcher of the current study, prediction is considered as a warm-up activity that can be easily enhanced by teachers. It works really well in engaging the students in the reading activity. This means that the students will be more interested in reading to check whether their prediction is right or wrong.

#### *2.1.4. Inferencing*

It can be said that inferencing is an important technique in reading comprehension because it helps make assumptions and logical deductions from concrete ideas (Cuperman, 2014). This technique is needed when a text does not state something directly and then it is the reader's responsibility to infer this information. Thus, inferencing is linked to the process of reconstructing the writer's unstated ideas. Readers can make use of syntactic, logical and cultural clues to discover the meaning of these unknown elements (Grellet, 2010). Accordingly, the purpose of inferencing is to help readers to fill in the gaps in information and go beyond the literal meaning of words in a text to create a fully comprehensive image (Hogan et al., 2011). In addition, Nuttall (2005) indicates that readers can use their inferencing skills to draw a certain conclusion from facts or points in an argument, etc. that a text mentions. However, as Snowling and Hulme (2005) point out, it is difficult for readers to make inferences while reading if their comprehension is limited.

In order to enhance students' inferencing skill in reading class, teachers should use key or clue words and raise inferential questions. Four factors that can help learners in inferencing are: knowledge of word meaning, drawing inferences from the content, finding answers to questions answered explicitly or in paraphrase in the passage and weaving together ideas in the content, and drawing inferences about the meaning of a word from context (Hudson, 2007). However, the most important thing should be noted that inferencing is not necessarily a certainty. It is about probabilities. But these possibilities may gradually turn into certainties when the reader meets a word more frequently and understands it more explicitly. According to Nuttall (2005), inferencing affects the interpretation of a text to a large extent, helps the students to read texts more quickly and makes reading more enjoyable because of its problem-solving character which appeals to most people and which challenges students to make use of their intelligence. In order to infer a piece of information from a given text effectively, students should make use of common sense, power of reasoning, knowledge of the world and other cultures. However, cultural differences should be taught to students to avoid mis-inferencing.

#### *2.1.5. Previewing*

Previewing is defined as "a pre-reading activity that introduces students to key features of a text" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 263). Through previewing, students can establish their expectations about what and how information is organized. If the reader wants to find out where

the information is from, he/she should use this quick technique (Grellet, 2010). This technique requires the reader to read the title of a text, the table of contents, the index, the appendix, the preface of the author or publisher, headings or subtitles of chapters and paragraphs, information in the back cover, abstracts of journal articles, acknowledgement etc. (Gavin et al., 2001). Thus, this useful skill saves students time in leading them towards intended and specific information that they look for. For example, instead of spending a long time reading a whole book to locate specific information, the students can check the table of contents or the text on the back cover to decide whether they need that book or not.

#### *2.1.6. Recognizing Text Organization*

Recognizing text organization is also an important reading technique for successful readers because through the internal structure of sentences and texts, they may predict the likely values of sentences and in turn interpret difficult texts. According to Lo, Yeh, and Sung (2013, p. 413), text structure “refers to the way the writers organize information in text” which is classified into two types: content information and structural information. To construct the meaning of content information, the readers can use structural information. Thus, knowledge of text structure is important for comprehension (Hudson, 2007; Cain, 2010). The identification of how the text and ideas are organized makes it easier to interpret difficult sentences (Nuttall, 2005). In other words, a reading text will probably be like a puzzle to the readers who are unable to recognize how it is organized and how the ideas in a text are structured.

In order to recognize text organization, the readers must identify cohesive ties in the text because according to Mobalegh and Saljooghian (2012), cohesion is one of the aspects that show how well-organized a passage is. Five kinds of cohesive ties identified by them include: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. Reference means interpreting something in a text by referring to something else; substitution is replacing an item by another; ellipsis is omitting an item which is not key in a text; conjunctions are devices that express certain meanings; and lexical cohesion is related to selecting vocabulary. Thus, readers’ consistency of thinking and knowledge of text structure and organization are helpful in facilitating their reading comprehension.

#### **2.2. Meta-cognitive Strategies**

In reading, Semtin and Maniam (2015) describe the metacognitive strategy as a technique that requires “planning for learning, thinking about the learning process that takes place, monitoring one’s comprehension, and evaluating learning after completion of a task” (p. 55). Thus, metacognitive strategies can facilitate students’ reading comprehension (Ahmadi et al., 2013) and enable them to cope with the reading difficulties encountered and make necessary adjustments (Dabarera et al., 2014). In other words, metacognitive strategies direct the ways readers arrange their interaction with the text and what strategies to use to achieve effective reading comprehension (Ahmadi et al., 2013). Moreover, these metacognitive strategies assist the language teachers to better understand their students’ different reading styles and identify the most impactful reading strategies to be taught in the language classroom.

From what has been discussed above, it can be concluded that metacognitive reading strategies are crucial in facilitating students’ reading comprehension and improving students’ reading skills. But, the teachers must take responsibility to enhance their students’ reading strategies because when students are not good enough at reading skills, teachers should teach them how to use meta-cognitive strategies effectively in order to avoid focusing only on words rather than the meaning of the whole text (Ahmadi & Gilakjani, 2012). Out of the metacognitive reading strategies, planning, monitoring and evaluation are the main strategies in reading comprehension. Planning takes place before reading, monitoring is a while-reading strategy to

check understanding during reading and evaluation is activated after reading to assess the reading experience (Dabarera et al., 2014). Below are brief descriptions of these strategies.

#### *2.2.1. Planning*

Planning, as a reading skill helping readers to select the appropriate strategies while reading, is “the process of thinking about and organizing the activities required to achieve a desired goal” (Ahmadi et al., 2013, p. 237). This requires the readers to be aware of a reading purpose before and while reading (Cogmen & Saracaloglu, 2009). This helps readers to be selective and focused on the desired information.

#### *2.2.2. Monitoring*

Monitoring, the strategy of analyzing information, is defined as “the ability to know what has been done right or wrong and to integrate new information with prior existing knowledge” (Yang, 2002, p. 19). Grabe and Stoller (2002) emphasize that readers should monitor their reading behavior to find out whether they understand the information in a text appropriately and interpret it meaningfully or not. As a matter of consequences, Snowling and Hulme (2005) associate low reading comprehension with low monitoring performance because the purpose of monitoring is to keep the work on track and to better control while reading (Ahmadi et al., 2013). So, readers should develop and practice this strategy when reading texts because if they lack it, their reading comprehension will be negatively affected and they may lose confidence because they have no solutions to achieve comprehension. Teachers can help their students monitor themselves in reading classes through error detection activities, self-questioning training, and questioning the author. Training students in generating their own comprehension questions was highly recommended by Baleghizadeh (2011).

#### *2.2.3. Evaluation*

After reading, the readers need to make an evaluation, defined as “appraising the conclusion and regulatory processes of an individual’s learning” (Ahmadi et al., 2013, p. 238) to facilitate their reading comprehension. Teachers can promote their students’ evaluation skills by informing them about the mistakes they commit, making them aware about the difficulties they encounter and identifying the areas of challenge to students in reading comprehension (Akyol et al., 2014).

### **2.3. Effective Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension Skills**

From the review, it is found that every strategy has different roles in assisting the readers in comprehending the texts. So, which strategies should be most recommended for the readers? This is a tough question. It means that it is hard to tell exactly which strategies should be used because according to Matsumoto et al. (2013), reading comprehension is a complex task that involves many different cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Also, Ahmadi and Ismail (2012) state that “reading comprehension is a combination of the reader’s cognitive and meta-cognitive processes” (p. 159). This is also confirmed by Staden (2011) who lays emphasis on the effectiveness of using reading comprehension strategies in combination. Hence, it is noteworthy that readers should combine these strategies to achieve competence in reading. Kang (2014) also supports this view and thinks that using appropriate meta-cognitive reading skills is beneficial in making students fluent readers. Moreover, Egbert and Petrie (2008) emphasize the value of the learner’s conscious choice and application of the appropriate strategy to a certain learning task. They claim that this issue can make the difference between effective and less effective language learners. Good readers demonstrate adeptness at matching the strategies to the task they are working on whereas the less successful readers lack the meta-cognitive knowledge about task requirements that help in selecting the appropriate strategies. Therefore, due to the fact that reading comprehension strategies play an important role in

comprehending the reading text, the researcher of the current study tries to investigate whether English majors at Thu Dau Mot University have any problems about strategies they currently use to comprehend the reading text.

### 3. Methodology

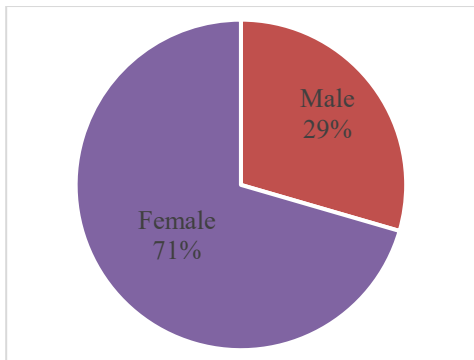
#### 3.1. Research design

To collect the data, the researchers employed a mixed-method design using questionnaires and interviews with both students and teachers to investigate English-majored students' use of reading comprehension strategies and the difficulties they encounter in applying these strategies. The questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data from a relatively large number of participants, thereby allowing the researchers to identify general patterns in students' strategy use and reported difficulties (Dörnyei, 2007; Snape & Spencer, 2003). In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain deeper insights into students' and teachers' perspectives on the issue under investigation. In this way, the combination of questionnaires and interviews helped enhance the comprehensiveness and trustworthiness of the findings.

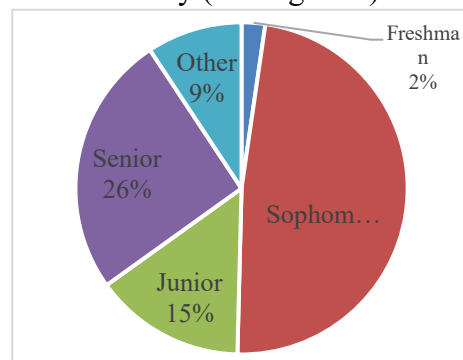
#### 3.2. Participants

##### 3.2.1. Students

To ensure validity and reliability of the study, all of the English majors at the university were invited to answer the student questionnaire. After 20 days of questionnaire distribution, 206 questionnaires were returned, but 77 of them were invalid because the answers to the questions of the same meaning (purposed-designed) are inconsistent. Therefore, the data from 129 valid questionnaires were used and analyzed for the current study. Out of the total number of students who returned valid questionnaires, 29% are males and 71% are females (see Figure 1). The reason why there is such a difference in participants' gender is that the number of female English majors is much higher than male ones. In addition, out of the total number of 129 participants, 2% are freshmen, 48% are sophomores, 15% are juniors, 26% are seniors, and 9% are students who have studied for more than 4 years at the university (see Figure 2).



**Figure 1** Students' gender



**Figure 2** Students' academic levels

##### 3.2.2. Teachers

Similarly, all of the 22 lecturers of English in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the university were invited to take part in the survey. After 14 days of data collection, all 22 lecturers answered the questionnaires, but three of them were invalid because the answers to the questions of the same meaning (purposed-designed) are inconsistent. Therefore, the data from 19 valid questionnaires were used and analyzed for the current study.

#### 3.3. Data collection instruments

The instruments used to collect data for this study were questionnaires and interviews administered to both students and teachers.

**Questionnaires:** The student questionnaire was designed to investigate English-major students' use of reading comprehension strategies and the difficulties they encounter in applying these strategies. It consisted of three parts. Part One collected demographic information about the participants, including gender and academic level. Part Two focused on students' use of reading strategies, particularly strategies related to skimming, scanning, and note-taking. Part Three examined students' use of comprehension strategies, including vocabulary meaning inference, background knowledge activation, remembering information, and summarizing texts. Similarly, the teacher questionnaire was designed to explore teachers' perspectives on students' use of reading comprehension strategies and the instructional support provided in reading classes. It consisted of two parts. Part One gathered background information about the teachers. Part Two focused on teachers' observations and perceptions regarding students' strategy use, common difficulties, and classroom practices related to reading instruction. For the Likert-type items in both questionnaires, a five-point scale was used, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. In addition, some items were presented in multiple-choice format, allowing respondents to select one or more appropriate options depending on the nature of the question.

**Interviews:** The student interview consisted of open-ended questions designed to gain deeper insights into students' use of reading comprehension strategies and the difficulties they experience while reading English texts. In particular, the interview explored students' practices related to skimming, scanning, note-taking, vocabulary processing, remembering information, and summarizing texts. Similarly, the teacher interview included open-ended questions aimed at exploring teachers' perspectives on students' reading comprehension strategy use, the common problems students face, and the ways in which teachers support students in developing more effective reading habits and strategies. The interview data were expected to complement and enrich the findings obtained from the questionnaires.

#### ***3.4. Data collection procedure***

After designing the questionnaires to collect data from the students and teachers, the links of the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents (both students and teachers) through Zalo groups and emails. It took 20 days to collect data from the students and 14 days from the teachers. This period was long enough to ensure that the respondents took the questionnaire items into consideration so as to give their valuable answers. In addition to the research purposes, explanations, as well as "thank you" presented in the questionnaires, the participants were also provided with this kind of information in Zalo groups and emails. This was to expect that the respondents would take time to send their valuable answers to the questionnaires. After the time of questionnaire-based data collection, a total of 10 students and 5 lecturers were selected for the interview on a voluntary basis. After choosing participants for the interviews, the researchers made discussions with students to set up the appropriate time to meet them. For the convenience, for each student, the researchers made a Zalo video call to interview him/her. It took three days to interview all of ten students. However, for each teacher, the researchers met him/her in person because the researchers and the teachers all work at the university. Because of the teachers' busy jobs, it took the researchers two weeks to interview them. As a basis for data analysis, the interviews were recorded with all interviewees' agreement using an audio recorder.

### 3.5. Data analysis procedures

After eliminating invalid questionnaires and coding, data were entered into SPSS Statistics 22 software to make necessary descriptive statistics, such as the mean, SD (standard deviation), the range, variance, maximum and minimum values, correlation coefficient, compare mean (one-way ANOVA), etc., for summarizing, presenting, and analyzing the findings. For the interview data, the researchers listened to the recordings and transcribed all of the interviewee's words. After transcribed, all interview data were organized according to the interview questions for the purpose of generalization. Then, the researchers identified pertinent themes for the analysis.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Problems About Reading Strategies

It is undeniable that the use of reading strategies surely enhances readers' reading comprehension because many researchers such as Grabe and Stoller (2002), Machado (2010) and Karasakaloglu (2012) emphasize that without reading strategies, readers will struggle and continually focus on decoding letters and words instead of focusing on meaning and understanding. Thus, a successful and efficient reader is a reader that can use all or most of the reading strategies. In this regard, are English majors at TDMU successful and efficient readers? In other words, do they employ reading strategies when they read? To answer these questions, the researcher conducted a survey on English majors' use of reading strategies, focusing on finding out problems that students may have about skimming, scanning, and note-taking. The researcher focused on these features because skimming, scanning, and note-taking are always considered key techniques in reading skills and used popularly. Through the survey, the answer to these two questions is that English majors at TDMU are not actually successful and efficient readers. In other words, many English majors at TDMU are struggling to employ reading strategies when they work on reading activities.

**Table 1.** Students' Use of Reading Strategies According to Their Academic Levels

Activities students often do in reading	Responses %	Groups according to academic levels					Total
		Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Other	
I start to read right after my teacher gives me a text and asks me to read.	Responses %	3	35	10	21	7	<b>76</b>
	100.00 %	56.50 %	52.60 %	63.60 %	58.30 %	<b>58.90 %</b>	
I read the text in detail from the beginning till end.	Responses %	1	25	10	13	3	<b>52</b>
	33.30 %	40.30 %	52.60 %	39.40 %	25.00 %	<b>40.30 %</b>	
I skim the text for topics and main ideas.	Responses %	1	33	10	19	10	<b>73</b>
	33.30 %	53.20 %	52.60 %	57.60 %	83.30 %	<b>56.60 %</b>	
I scan the text for specific details.	Responses %	2	28	9	18	5	<b>62</b>
	66.70 %	45.20 %	47.40 %	54.50 %	41.70 %	<b>48.10 %</b>	

I always preview the text structure before I read.	Responses %	1 33.30%	15 24.20%	7 36.80%	7 21.20%	4 33.30%	<b>34</b> <b>26.40%</b>
I always try to find key nouns in the text before/while I read.	Responses %	0 0.00%	30 48.40%	9 47.40%	16 48.50%	4 33.30%	<b>59</b> <b>45.70%</b>
I take note of the main points of the text on separate piece of paper while reading.	Responses %	1 33.30%	16 25.80%	7 36.80%	12 36.40%	6 50.00%	<b>42</b> <b>32.60%</b>
I underline or highlight the main points of the text while reading.	Responses %	2 66.70%	41 66.10%	15 78.90%	25 75.80%	9 75.00%	<b>92</b> <b>71.30%</b>
I create a mind map of the main points of the text.	Responses %	2 66.70%	12 19.40%	3 15.80%	7 21.20%	2 16.70%	<b>26</b> <b>20.20%</b>
<b>Total</b>	Responses %	<b>3</b> <b>2%</b>	<b>62</b> <b>48%</b>	<b>19</b> <b>15%</b>	<b>33</b> <b>26%</b>	<b>12</b> <b>9%</b>	<b>129</b> <b>100%</b>

Table 1 shows that up to 76 (58.9%) out of 129 participants start to read right after their teacher gives them a text and asks them to read. This can infer that only more than 40% of participants may think about how to work with the reading text after they are given a text and asked to read. To get a true picture of this issue, the researcher conducted another survey on what students often do when reading from teachers' observations. And, the results show the same findings. In particular, 14 (73.7%) out of 19 teachers reported that their students often start to read right after they are given a text and asked to read. Unfortunately, despite being thought of as good readers who use all or most of the reading comprehension strategies, up to 21 (63.6%, the highest) out of 33 seniors also start to read right after their teacher gives them a text and asks them to read. These findings indicate that a large number of English majors at TDMU currently do not know how to approach reading because they work on reading without thinking about strategies. When interviewed, some students also said that they do nothing before they read the text. For example, Student 1 said "Read the title or do nothing", Student 2 "If in class I listen to my teacher. If at home I just read", Student 3 "Maybe nothing, I just start to read", Student 4 "I usually read the requirements of the article first and then read the text. If it was just a mood post, I would read it.", and Student 5 "I often read questions before I read the text". These findings indicate that many students do not know how to approach the reading text. They act as passive readers. The cause of this problem partly comes from the teachers because when asked "before you start a reading lesson, how do you introduce the reading text?", they shared: "I just ask them to read the text and try to remember information in the text", by Teacher 1 and "the first thing I do is write the difficult words and their meanings on the board", by

Teacher 2. Through these findings, it can be seen that the ways the teachers teach make students passive readers.

With regard to skills in finding out some kinds of information in the text, it can be said that many English majors at TDMU are good at it. As shown in Table 1, the majority (56.6% and 48.1%) of the participants could employ skimming and scanning skills to get topics or main ideas and get specific details, respectively. This result is proved by the finding that up to 59 (45.70%) out of 129 participants (see Table 1) always try to find key nouns in the text before/while they read in order to grasp the topic. These findings indicate that many English majors at TDMU understand the function of skimming and scanning. However, only six (31.6%) out of 19 teachers reported that their students skim the text for topics and main ideas; seven (36.8%) out of them shared that their students scan the text for specific details; and only six (31.6%) out of 19 teachers reported that their students always try to find key nouns in the text before/while they read. Through these findings, it is seen that there is a difference in skimming and scanning from teachers' observations and what students reported. Yet, which is true? To answer, let us take a more detailed look at what students often do while reading. The result is that not always previewing the text structure before reading is a problem that over 73% (=100% - 26.4%) of students who participated in the study currently have (see Table 1). Meanwhile, the statistical result from the teacher survey also shows the same thing when only six (31.6%) out of 19 teachers see that their students preview the text structure before they read. In other words, many of their students do not preview the text structure before they read. With regard to academic level, seniors do not show a difference in skimming from other students when only seven (21.20%) out of 33 seniors always preview the text structure before they read. These findings indicate that many English majors at TDMU know the functions of skimming and scanning techniques, but they are still struggling to use them. This conclusion is clarified by the answer the interviewed students shared to the question "*what do you often do while you read the text?*". That is "*I scan for the main idea and then carefully read the ideas I wanted to gather information about*", by Student 4. This infers that students do not know the function of skimming and scanning techniques. But, what may cause this problem? Maybe, this is partly from teachers. In particular, when asked "*Do you usually teach students the reading skills and how to use them? Why?*", two teachers shared that: "*If they are freshmen, I teach them because I think they didn't know before. But not, I just ask them to scan or skim because they have learned already.*", by Teacher 1 and "*No, because they know already.*", by Teacher 2. These data indicate that students' poor use of reading skills (skimming and scanning) is kind of due to their teachers' objectiveness.

Moreover, in terms of note-taking skill, the statistical result (see Table 1) remarkably shows that a very large number (71.3%) of the participants take notes on key information by traditionally underlining or highlighting the main points of the text while reading, which is considered less effective in synthesizing and summarizing the information later on, whereas only 32.6% of the participants take note of the main points of the text on separate piece of paper and 20.2% of the participants create a mind map of the main points of the text. Similarly, the findings from the teacher survey show the same result. 13 (68.4%) out of 19 teachers see that their students often underline or highlight the main points of the text while reading; at the same time, only six (31.6%) out of them reported that their students take note of the main points of the text on separate piece of paper, and just five (26.3%) out of them see their students creating a mind map of the main points of the text while reading. Moreover, the most outstanding finding from the student interview is that most students take notes by highlighting or underlining key nouns, main points, or new words. For example, Student 3 said "*Underline new words,*

*information I think is important, check dictionary” and Student 5 said “I underline the main idea in the body of each paragraph. Sometimes there are some words I will underline to look up in the dictionary”.* However, one student shared *“I take note of the main points of the text on separate piece of paper while reading”*, by Student 7.

In terms of reading experience, even for seniors, they also do the same in note-taking. In particular, up to 25 (75.80%) out of 33 seniors take notes on key information by underlining or highlighting the main points of the text while reading. At the same time, only 12 (36.40%) and 7 (21.20%) out of 33 seniors take note of the main points of the text on separate pieces of paper and create a mind map of the main points of the text, respectively. The findings show that the way the participants take note of key information is not varied because they cannot create a mind map of the main points of the text or at least take notes on separate pieces of paper, hindering them from summarizing the text later on.

All in all, from what has been discussed in this section, a conclusion is drawn that the majority of English majors at TDMU are currently facing a problem in terms of the use of reading strategies. Specifically, they do not know how to approach the reading because they work on reading without thinking about strategies; instead, they start to read right after their teacher gives them a text and asks them to read. Moreover, they know the functions of skimming and scanning techniques, but they are still struggling to use them. In addition, they just use highlighting or underlining techniques to take note of key information in the text, which is considered less effective in synthesizing and summarizing the information in a logical and understandable way. Moreover, the survey also shows that despite being thought of as good readers, seniors do not show any differences in the use of reading strategies from other students. From this result, the researcher recommends that teachers should assist their students more in utilizing skimming, scanning, and note-taking skills. Moreover, teachers should create more opportunities for students to practice using skimming, scanning, and note-taking skills as 68.4% of teachers suggested that students should practice reading strategies more frequently.

#### **4.2. Problems About Comprehension Strategies**

If reading strategies mainly direct readers to how to read the text efficiently to obtain the kinds of information they want, comprehension strategies assist them in constructing the meaning from text and understanding the meaning of the message that the writers try to convey. Therefore, how much the readers may comprehend the text partly depends on the extent to which comprehension strategies are used for comprehending the text. Seeing the wrong or inappropriate use of comprehension strategies as a problem of reading skills, the researcher of the current study cannot help wondering whether English majors at TDMU have any problem about the use of comprehension strategies to boost their comprehension. If yes, what are those problems? To ease this concern, the researcher conducted a survey on English majors’ use of comprehension strategies, focusing on finding out problems that students may have about the ways of finding out vocabulary meaning, comprehending and remembering the text. These focuses were established because the ways of finding out vocabulary meaning, comprehending and remembering the text contribute considerably to the readers’ comprehension. Then, as a matter of result, the descriptive statistics (see Table 2) generally show that the majority of participants reported that they make use of comprehension strategies while reading, but they also face some problems.

**Table 2.** Students' Use of Comprehension Strategies

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
45. I use dictionary to find out the meaning of every new vocabulary.	129	1.0	5.0	3.845	1.0190
46. I always try to guess the meaning of vocabulary from the context.	129	1.0	5.0	3.589	.9238
47. I activate my background knowledge to comprehend the text while I read.	129	1.0	5.0	3.744	.7529
48. I read, translate and remember the text in Vietnamese.	129	1.0	5.0	3.395	1.0489
49. I read and remember the text in English.	129	1.0	5.0	3.465	.9190
50. When I read the last part of the text, I often forget the previous parts.	129	1.0	5.0	3.264	1.0118
51. I often forget where the information comes from in the text.	129	1.0	5.0	3.202	1.0337
52. I find it hard to summarize the text.	129	1.0	5.0	3.434	1.0595

**Scale:** 1. Strongly disagree    2. Disagree    3. Not decided    4. Agree    5. Strongly agree

As shown in Table 2, the majority of participants reported that they make use of comprehension strategies in order to understand and remember the text while reading. In detail, from Q46's average score=3.589, which is nearly equal to the point 4.0 "agree", it can be seen that the majority of participants obtain the meaning of vocabulary by guessing from context. In the interview, when asked "*What do you often do when you meet new words? Why?*", only two students said that they guessed the meanings of new words. For example, Student 6 said "*I always try to guess the meaning of vocabulary because I don't have enough time*" and Student 10 said "*I will try to guess the meaning and new dictionary based on the text*". Such findings tell us that the strategy students use to get the meanings of new words is guessing, but they do not use this strategy appropriately, that is guessing from contextual clues. This refers to students having problems with guessing. Also, in order to comprehend the text, they often activate their background knowledge while they read (see Q47's mean = 3.744 in Table 2). In addition, they also read and remember the text in English (see Q49's mean = 3.465 in Table 2). However, these findings are considerably different from what the teachers who participated in the study reported. In particular, only eight (42.1%) and three (15.8%) out of 19 teachers reported that their students try to guess the meaning of vocabulary from the context and read and remember the text in English, respectively. Yet, which is true, findings from students or teachers? To answer, let us take a look at the other side that both students and teachers reported.

As noticed most remarkably in Table 2, Q45's average score = 3.845, the highest, reveals that the way which a large number of participants use to understand the meaning of new words is using a dictionary. Similarly, a finding from the teacher survey also shows that 12 (63.2%) out of 19 teachers reported that their students use a dictionary to find out the meaning of every new vocabulary. These findings prove the fact that students mostly find out the meaning of new words by using a dictionary more than by guessing from the context. In the interview, when asked "*What do you often do while you read the text?*", many students answered that they use a dictionary to check the meaning of new words. For example, Student 1 said "*I often underline new words, check dictionary after that*", Student 2 shared "*Check*

dictionary, and I think just it”, Student 3 said “Underline new words, information I think important, check dictionary”, Student 10 said “I usually take note of new words and then look up the dictionary to get more vocabulary”. Moreover, when asked “What do you often do when you meet new words? Why?”, most of the ten students shared that they get the meanings of new words by mainly using dictionary. Student 4 said “I’m trying to guess the meaning of words. If I can’t guess I often check the meaning in dictionary”, Students 5 said “Of course, I will guess the meaning based on the context of the lesson, then I look up the dictionary to check my judgment because I find this method very effective”, and Student 9 said “I guess after that I will check the meaning in the dictionary. Because I think if I guess I can remember its longer”. These findings reveal that most students use a dictionary to check the meaning of new words despite the fact that they make an effort in guessing the meaning from context, but they are not so sure. So, they have to use the dictionary to check again. As a matter of consequences, many participants use dictionary to find out the meaning of new words partly because their vocabulary is poor and limited. Furthermore, the conclusion becomes more obvious because if the reader may infer the meaning of an unknown word by using linguistic clues, he or she is required to have a certain amount of vocabulary. In addition, this problem kind of stems from teachers because when interviewed, most teachers said that they often advise their students to use a dictionary or they translate new words into Vietnamese. For example, when asked “When your students come across unfamiliar words, how do you support them? Tell them the meaning, ask them to guess the meaning by using clues from the context, advise them to consult a dictionary, or else? Why?”, Teacher 1 said that:

*“I usually advise the students to use an English-English Oxford Dictionary to get many benefits. First, they can learn the pronunciation from the transcription provided. Second, it tells them what type of word it is: a verb, a noun, an adjective ...etc. Third, students can enrich their vocabulary when they learn the meaning in English. Fourth, it can improve their English in general as it gives some examples for using words in different contexts”*

Teacher 2 also said “To save time, I translate new words into Vietnamese”, and Teacher 4 “I give explanations, synonyms, antonyms and sometimes facial or body gestures. However, for abstract words, I usually use translation”. Therefore, these valuable findings indicate that using a dictionary is a favorite means of getting the meanings of new words used by both students and teachers at TDMU.

In addition, instead of reading and remembering the text in English, about half of the participants (see Q48’s mean = 3.395 in Table 2) translated and remembered the text in Vietnamese. However, not many, just 36.8% of the teachers who participated in the study reported that their students read, translate and remember the text in Vietnamese. This ratio is not high enough to conclude from the teacher survey that most students read, translate and remember the text in Vietnamese because up to 94% of teacher say that most of their students read silently, resulting in that the teachers are hard to recognize whether their students read, translate and remember the text in Vietnamese or not. However, this way of remembering the text may be true because it stems from the problem of poor vocabulary that the majority of participants are facing. In order to remember the text in English, it requires the students to have enough English vocabulary. If the students do not have enough vocabulary, but they still want to remember the text in English, they have to remember vocabulary first. In this case, because of the lack of vocabulary, it forces the students to translate and remember the text in Vietnamese, which they consider as the best way for remembering the text. Moreover, when studying in high school, students were very familiar with the grammar-translation teaching method, contributing to students’ habit of translating while reading.

Some other findings from the student survey (see Table 2) shows some problems that a large number of participants encounter. When students read the last part of the text, I often forget the previous parts (M=3.264); they often forget where the information comes from in the text (M=3.202); and they find it hard to summarize the text (M=3.434). Out of these findings, being hard to summarize the text is the most notable problem that many students face now. That many students cannot summarize the text is mainly because they just take notes by underlining or highlighting key information.

Generally, the analysis of the above statistical result reveals that, on the one hand, the majority of English majors at TDMU make use of comprehension strategies while reading; on the other hand, they also face some problems when they almost use dictionary to find out the meaning of every new vocabulary, which is considered time-consuming and less effective in enhancing reading comprehension skills because according to Hosenfeld (1977, as cited in Rubin, 1987, p. 21), “successful readers use some form of contextual guessing – based on the process of inductive reasoning”. In addition, in order to remember the text for post-reading purposes such as summary, they often translate and remember the text in Vietnamese, which is considered a helpful strategy early in language learning if it is used with care.

However, as a matter of claim made by the researcher, using a dictionary to find out the meaning of new words or translating and remembering the reading text in Vietnamese while reading is a habit that has been formed long since the students started to learn English at high schools in Vietnam. However, when entering the new environment of learning English, in which students are required to learn and think more in English, this habit will be eroded from time to time. In other words, seniors who are thought of as readers with good use of comprehension strategies may be better than other students in the ways of finding out vocabulary meaning, comprehending and remembering the text. To explore this issue, a one-way Anova test was performed to examine the differences in the average scores among groups of participants divided according to their academic levels. According to descriptive statistics in Table 3, there is no significant difference in the average scores of Q46 among groups of participants divided according to their academic levels. In other words, there is no significant difference among freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors and even students having studied over four years, who participated in this study, in understanding the meaning of vocabulary by guessing from the context. However, there are significant differences between freshmen and seniors in the ways of finding out vocabulary meaning, comprehending and remembering the text.

**Table 3.** Use of Comprehension Strategies According to Students’ Academic Levels

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
45. I use dictionary to find out the meaning of every new vocabulary.	Freshman	3	4.667	.5774	.3333	3.232	6.101	4.0	5.0
	Sophomore	62	3.774	1.1076	.1407	3.493	4.055	1.0	5.0
	Junior	19	3.947	.9113	.2091	3.508	4.387	2.0	5.0
	Senior	33	3.879	.9924	.1728	3.527	4.231	2.0	5.0
	Other	12	3.750	.8660	.2500	3.200	4.300	2.0	5.0
Total	129	3.845	1.0190	.0897	3.667	4.022	1.0	5.0	

46. I always try to guess the meaning of vocabulary from the context.	Freshman	3	3.667	1.5275	.8819	-.128	7.461	2.0	5.0
	Sophomore	62	3.645	.8889	.1129	3.419	3.871	2.0	5.0
	Junior	19	3.526	.8412	.1930	3.121	3.932	2.0	5.0
	Senior	33	3.485	1.0344	.1801	3.118	3.852	1.0	5.0
	Other	12	3.667	.8876	.2562	3.103	4.231	2.0	5.0
	Total	129	3.589	.9238	.0813	3.428	3.750	1.0	5.0
47. I activate my background knowledge to comprehend the text while I read.	Freshman	3	4.333	.5774	.3333	2.899	5.768	4.0	5.0
	Sophomore	62	3.758	.7171	.0911	3.576	3.940	2.0	5.0
	Junior	19	3.579	.9612	.2205	3.116	4.042	1.0	5.0
	Senior	33	3.758	.7918	.1378	3.477	4.038	2.0	5.0
	Other	12	3.750	.4523	.1306	3.463	4.037	3.0	4.0
	Total	129	3.744	.7529	.0663	3.613	3.875	1.0	5.0
48. I read, translate and remember the text in Vietnamese.	Freshman	3	4.333	.5774	.3333	2.899	5.768	4.0	5.0
	Sophomore	62	3.387	1.0458	.1328	3.122	3.653	1.0	5.0
	Junior	19	3.263	1.0976	.2518	2.734	3.792	1.0	5.0
	Senior	33	3.333	1.0206	.1777	2.971	3.695	1.0	5.0
	Other	12	3.583	1.1645	.3362	2.843	4.323	1.0	5.0
	Total	129	3.395	1.0489	.0924	3.213	3.578	1.0	5.0
49. I read and remember the text in English.	Freshman	3	2.667	1.1547	.6667	-.202	5.535	2.0	4.0
	Sophomore	62	3.468	.8242	.1047	3.258	3.677	2.0	5.0
	Junior	19	3.526	1.0733	.2462	3.009	4.044	1.0	5.0
	Senior	33	3.545	.9384	.1634	3.213	3.878	2.0	5.0
	Other	12	3.333	1.0731	.3098	2.652	4.015	1.0	5.0
	Total	129	3.465	.9190	.0809	3.305	3.625	1.0	5.0
50. When I read the last part of the text, I often forget the previous parts.	Freshman	3	3.000	2.0000	1.1547	-1.968	7.968	1.0	5.0
	Sophomore	62	3.258	.9907	.1258	3.006	3.510	1.0	5.0
	Junior	19	3.211	.9763	.2240	2.740	3.681	1.0	5.0
	Senior	33	3.242	1.0317	.1796	2.877	3.608	1.0	5.0
	Other	12	3.500	1.0000	.2887	2.865	4.135	2.0	5.0
	Total	129	3.264	1.0118	.0891	3.087	3.440	1.0	5.0
51. I often forget where the information comes from in the text.	Freshman	3	4.000	1.0000	.5774	1.516	6.484	3.0	5.0
	Sophomore	62	3.161	1.0588	.1345	2.892	3.430	1.0	5.0
	Junior	19	3.211	1.0317	.2367	2.713	3.708	1.0	5.0
	Senior	33	3.212	1.0535	.1834	2.839	3.586	1.0	5.0
	Other	12	3.167	.9374	.2706	2.571	3.762	2.0	5.0
	Total	129	3.202	1.0337	.0910	3.021	3.382	1.0	5.0
52. I find it hard to summarize the text.	Freshman	3	4.000	1.0000	.5774	1.516	6.484	3.0	5.0
	Sophomore	62	3.435	1.0807	.1372	3.161	3.710	1.0	5.0
	Junior	19	3.316	1.1082	.2542	2.782	3.850	1.0	5.0
	Senior	33	3.545	1.0028	.1746	3.190	3.901	1.0	5.0
	Other	12	3.167	1.1146	.3218	2.458	3.875	1.0	5.0
	Total	129	3.434	1.0595	.0933	3.250	3.619	1.0	5.0

**Scale:** 1. Strongly disagree    2. Disagree    3. Not decided    4. Agree    5. Strongly agree

In particular, as shown in Table 3, freshmen (Q45's mean by freshmen = 4.667) use a dictionary to find out the meaning of every new vocabulary more frequently than seniors do (Q45's mean by seniors = 3.879). Additionally, the One-Way Anova test result also shows that freshmen (see Q48's mean by freshmen = 4.333) read, translate and remember the text in Vietnamese more frequently than seniors do (see Q48's mean by seniors = 3.333). Another remarkable finding from the One-Way Anova test is that freshmen (see Q49's mean by freshmen = 2.667) read and remember the text in English less frequently than seniors do (see Q49's mean by seniors = 3.545). Moreover, the One-Way Anova test result reveals that freshmen (see Q51's mean by freshmen = 4.000) often forget where the information comes from in the text more than seniors do (see Q51's mean by seniors = 3.212). As a result, because of reading, translating and remembering the text in Vietnamese and often forgetting where the information comes from in the text, freshmen (see Q52's mean by freshmen = 4.000) also find it hard to summarize the text more often than seniors do (see Q52's mean by seniors = 3.545). In sum, the One-Way Anova test results reveal that freshmen have more problems about the use of comprehension strategies, maybe because of the learning habits at high school than other students, especially seniors.

All in all, the findings from the student and teacher survey in terms of students' use of comprehension strategies show that although English majors at TDMU make use of comprehension strategies to reach their comprehension while reading, the comprehension strategies they currently use are considered time-consuming and less effective in enhancing their reading comprehension skills. First of all, many English majors at TDMU are still using dictionaries to find out the meaning of new words rather than guessing from the context. Moreover, they read, translate and remember the text in Vietnamese more frequently than in English. Additionally, together with the use of traditional note-taking that is highlighting or underlining, they often forget where the information comes from in the text, resulting in feeling hard to summarize the text later on. In terms of academic levels, the One-Way Anova test results reveal that freshmen have more problems about the use of comprehension strategies, maybe because of the learning habits at high school than other students, especially seniors.

Therefore, the researcher suggests that students should practice other types of comprehension strategies, e.g., guessing new words from contextual clues, reading and remembering the text in English, creating mind maps of main ideas, supportive ideas, and facts/examples that the text contains. However, teachers are those who can successfully assist students in practicing these skills. In particular, teachers should design reading activities asking students not to use a dictionary to check the meaning of new words, or asking students to create a mind map of the text's main ideas.

## **5. Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that although English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University do employ a number of reading comprehension strategies, their overall strategy use remains limited, inconsistent, and in several cases ineffective for deeper text comprehension. More specifically, the findings suggest that many students are not yet strategic readers in the fuller academic sense, as their reading behavior is still characterized by immediate text engagement without sufficient planning, overreliance on surface-level techniques, and dependence on translation-based processing.

First, one of the most notable findings is that a large proportion of students begin reading immediately after receiving a text, without first previewing its structure or planning how to approach it. This suggests a weakness in metacognitive control, particularly in pre-

reading strategy use. Such a pattern is noteworthy because planning and previewing have been widely described as essential metacognitive reading behaviors that help readers focus on purpose, text organization, and relevant information (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Ahmadi et al., 2013; Dabarera et al., 2014).

Second, the findings reveal that many students continue to rely heavily on dictionaries when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, even though guessing meaning from context is generally considered a more efficient and strategic reading behavior. This suggests that many learners may still lack confidence in inferencing or may not possess sufficient vocabulary knowledge to rely on contextual clues. Previous literature has shown that successful readers tend to use contextual guessing and inferencing more effectively than less successful readers (Rubin, 1987; Grellet, 2010; Hudson, 2007). In the finding section, this issue is clearly reflected in the relatively high mean score for dictionary use and the interpretation that such a strategy may be time-consuming and less effective for fluent comprehension

Third, another important finding is that many students still process texts through Vietnamese rather than directly through English. Their tendency to read, translate, and remember the text in Vietnamese suggests that they have not yet developed sufficient automaticity in constructing meaning directly in the target language. Although translation can be useful as a temporary scaffold, overdependence on it may reduce reading efficiency and make it more difficult for learners to retain text organization and summarize information effectively. Students often forget where information comes from in the text and find summarization difficult, especially when they rely on translation and less elaborative note-taking techniques

Fourth, the findings regarding note-taking are also important. Most students reported relying mainly on underlining or highlighting rather than taking structured notes or constructing mind maps. While highlighting can draw attention to important details, it does not necessarily support deeper comprehension, synthesis, or recall unless combined with more elaborative strategies. In this study, the low frequency of note-taking on separate paper and mind-map construction appears to be linked to students' difficulty in summarizing texts.

Another notable finding is that even senior students did not demonstrate substantial advantages over other academic groups in several areas of strategy use. Although freshmen appeared to experience more difficulties in some aspects, the broader pattern suggests that strategic reading ability may not be developing systematically throughout the English-major program. This is a pedagogically significant finding because it implies that exposure to reading tasks alone may not be sufficient for strategic growth unless strategy instruction is made more explicit, continuous, and practice-oriented.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the reading difficulties experienced by English-majored students in this context are not simply linguistic in nature, but also strategic and pedagogical. Students do not necessarily lack awareness that reading strategies exist; rather, they appear to lack the procedural control and sustained guided practice necessary to use those strategies effectively in authentic reading tasks. Therefore, the findings highlight the importance of integrating explicit reading strategy instruction more systematically into EFL reading pedagogy.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study investigated the use of reading comprehension strategies among English-majored students at Thu Dau Mot University, with particular attention to the problems students encounter in applying both reading strategies and comprehension strategies. The findings

indicate that although students do use some strategies while reading, many of these strategies are employed in limited, inconsistent, or less effective ways. In particular, students were found to have difficulties in planning how to approach a text, previewing text structure, using skimming and scanning effectively, inferring word meaning from context, processing information directly in English, and summarizing texts meaningfully. Instead, many students tended to rely heavily on immediate reading, dictionary consultation, translation into Vietnamese, and basic highlighting or underlining.

These findings suggest that reading comprehension difficulties among English-major students are not only related to language proficiency but also to the quality of their strategic reading behavior. Although freshmen appeared to face greater challenges in several areas, the broader pattern across academic levels indicates that strategic reading ability may not be developing strongly enough throughout students' university study. This highlights the need for more systematic and sustained strategy instruction in reading classes.

Pedagogically, the study underscores the importance of helping students move beyond passive and translation-based reading habits toward more active, flexible, and metacognitively controlled reading practices. Teachers should therefore provide explicit instruction and repeated guided practice in strategies such as previewing, skimming, scanning, contextual guessing, note-taking, summarizing, and reading for meaning rather than word-by-word translation.

Finally, this study contributes to a better understanding of reading strategy use in a Vietnamese EFL university context and offers practical implications for improving reading instruction for English majors. Future research may build on these findings by examining the relationship between strategy use and actual reading performance, or by testing the effects of explicit strategy training on students' reading comprehension development.

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### **Ethical considerations**

This research adhered to ethical principles to ensure the integrity, confidentiality, and well-being of all participants. Prior to collecting data, participants were informed and gave their consent, ensuring that they understood the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected by anonymizing responses and securely storing data. Additionally, the research strived for objectivity, avoiding biases in data collection, analysis, and reporting.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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