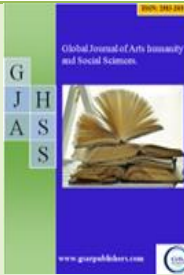
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## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING READING ALOUD STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EFL STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION: A CASE STUDY AT DONG NAI UNIVERSITY

BY

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### Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of reading-aloud strategies in enhancing reading comprehension among second-year English major students at DNU. Using a qualitative approach, pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed alongside survey responses from 45 participants. The results revealed a significant improvement in reading comprehension within the experimental group that employed reading-aloud techniques, with a computed t-value of 2.921, exceeding the tabulated value of 2.046. Students reported high satisfaction with these strategies, indicating they not only improved reading performance but also enhanced pronunciation and overall engagement with reading. The findings support the integration of reading-aloud strategies in language instruction.

**Keywords:** Reading comprehension, reading aloud strategies, EFL students

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a critical component of English language acquisition, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It is crucial for academic success and overall language proficiency. As EFL learners encounter challenges such as unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures, educators have sought effective methods to enhance reading comprehension skills. One such method is the use of reading-aloud strategies.

Reading aloud has been acknowledged as an effective pedagogical approach to improve reading comprehension. This strategy provides learners with an opportunity to hear the correct pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm of the language, thereby aiding in their understanding of texts. According to Chen and Liu (2022), reading aloud helps students develop a better grasp of sentence structure and vocabulary, ultimately enhancing their comprehension. Additionally, reading aloud encourages active engagement, allowing learners to focus on the meaning and fluency of the text (Kang & Park, 2021).

Furthermore, the benefits of reading aloud extend beyond comprehension. It has been found to boost students' motivation and confidence in reading (Zhang, 2023). By involving students in interactive reading sessions, they become more involved in the learning process and gain exposure to authentic language use. This is particularly beneficial for EFL students, who often face anxiety related to reading in a second language.

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of reading-aloud strategies in improving the reading comprehension of EFL students at Dong Nai University. The findings of this research may offer insights into how reading aloud can be incorporated into classroom practice to enhance students' reading skills and overall language proficiency.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of reading comprehension in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) cannot be overstated. It is crucial for academic achievement and for acquiring information that supports overall language proficiency (Nation, 2022). Consequently, various instructional approaches have been developed to improve students'



reading comprehension skills. One such approach is reading aloud, which has been extensively studied for its effectiveness in facilitating comprehension, vocabulary development, and overall language learning.

#### ***Reading Aloud as an Instructional Strategy***

Reading aloud is an instructional strategy in which a teacher or student reads text aloud, often with emphasis on intonation, stress, and rhythm. This approach not only helps learners hear how the text should sound, but also supports comprehension by focusing on phrasing, punctuation, and the structure of sentences. According to Rasinski (2020), reading aloud can significantly enhance students' fluency, which in turn positively affects their ability to comprehend texts. This aligns with Samuels' (2002) automaticity theory, which posits that fluency is a key element of reading comprehension because it frees cognitive resources for understanding the text rather than decoding individual words.

#### ***The Role of Reading Aloud in EFL Settings***

In the context of EFL learners, reading aloud serves several key functions. First, it provides an auditory model of English pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm, which is often lacking in EFL environments (Taguchi et al., 2019). This exposure can help learners internalize the sounds and structures of the language, which is crucial for improving reading comprehension. For example, Hashemi and Azizinezhad (2018) found that students who participated in reading-aloud activities showed significant improvement in both pronunciation and understanding of the text.

Second, reading aloud has been associated with enhanced vocabulary acquisition. When students hear unfamiliar words in context, they are better able to infer meanings and remember these words compared to reading silently (Nation & Webb, 2020). This has a direct impact on reading comprehension, as vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of comprehension ability (Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2018).

Moreover, reading aloud has been found to reduce anxiety and increase motivation among EFL learners. According to Zhang (2022), reading aloud in a classroom setting can create a supportive environment, where learners feel more comfortable experimenting with pronunciation and asking questions about meaning. This interaction is crucial for fostering a sense of community and active engagement, both of which contribute to improved comprehension outcomes.

#### ***Types of Reading Aloud Strategies***

There are several different types of reading-aloud strategies used in EFL classrooms, each with its own unique benefits. One of the most common approaches is *teacher read-alouds*, where the teacher reads a passage to the students while they follow along (Kang & Chang, 2021). This method is particularly effective for introducing new texts, as it allows students to hear a fluent reader model the correct pronunciation and rhythm of the language. Kang and Chang (2021) found that students who participated in teacher read-aloud sessions showed higher comprehension scores than those who did not, particularly for texts with complex structures.

Another strategy is *choral reading*, in which students read aloud together. Choral reading has been found to build confidence in students, especially those who may be reluctant to read aloud individually (Reeves, 2021). When students read in unison, they are less likely to feel self-conscious about making mistakes, which helps reduce anxiety and promotes a focus on comprehension rather than accuracy.

Finally, *paired reading*, where students take turns reading aloud to a partner, has also been shown to be effective in improving reading comprehension (Topping, 2019). This strategy provides a more intimate setting for learners to practice their reading skills, and it allows for immediate feedback and correction from their partner. According to Topping (2019), paired reading fosters a collaborative learning environment that supports both the reader and the listener in improving their comprehension skills.

#### ***Challenges and Limitations of Reading Aloud in EFL Classrooms***

Despite the benefits of reading aloud, there are also challenges and limitations to its use in EFL classrooms. One challenge is the time-consuming nature of reading aloud activities, especially in large classes. Teachers may find it difficult to give every student the opportunity to read aloud and receive feedback, which can limit the effectiveness of this strategy (Cho & Choi, 2020).

Another limitation is the varying proficiency levels of students within a classroom. More advanced students may find reading aloud activities to be too simple, while less proficient students may struggle to keep up, leading to frustration or disengagement (Gibbons, 2020). Therefore, it is essential for teachers to differentiate instruction and provide appropriate levels of support to ensure that all students benefit from reading aloud activities.

#### ***Empirical Evidence of Reading Aloud Effectiveness***

Several studies have examined the impact of reading aloud on EFL learners' reading comprehension. Taguchi, Gorsuch, and Sasamoto (2019) conducted a study in which EFL learners participated in extensive reading aloud sessions over a 12-week period. The results indicated significant gains in reading comprehension and fluency compared to a control group that did not engage in reading aloud. Similarly, a study by Liu and Chen (2021) demonstrated that students who regularly engaged in reading aloud activities showed improvements in comprehension, particularly in their ability to understand complex grammatical structures and infer meanings from context.

In summary, the literature suggests that reading aloud is an effective strategy for improving EFL students' reading comprehension. It provides auditory support, enhances vocabulary acquisition, reduces anxiety, and increases motivation, all of which are critical factors for successful language learning. However, the challenges associated with implementing reading aloud in EFL classrooms, such as time constraints and varying proficiency levels, must be carefully managed to maximize its effectiveness. The present study aims to build on this existing body of research by investigating the impact of reading aloud strategies on the reading comprehension of EFL students at Dong Nai University.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this study, a qualitative approach was utilized to explore the use of reading aloud strategies in teaching English and their impact on enhancing reading comprehension among students at DNU. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of these strategies by conducting pre-tests and post-tests. This approach evaluated whether reading aloud was an effective method for improving students' reading comprehension, and whether it also helped to increase their interest in reading as part of their English learning process.

The researcher aimed to determine the level of reading performance among students using reading aloud strategies in an experimental group compared to a control group taught by traditional methods. Additionally, the study examined the significant differences in students' reading abilities between the groups, as well as the relationship between pre-test and post-test performance within each group.

The participants of the study were 45 English major students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at DNU, consisting of 30 females and 15 males from two different classes in the 2023-2024 academic year. These students, all majoring in English, were enrolled in the second semester of an English course, specifically "Reading 3." The participants ranged from 19 years old and above, with varying levels of English proficiency, having studied the language for 7 to 9 years. While some students demonstrated strong English skills, others were less proficient.

The instrument used in this study was a survey questionnaire-checklist. A quantitative method was employed to gather data, which was collected from a questionnaire completed by 45 English major students at DNU and analyzed using SPSS. To ensure better comprehension, the questions were presented in Vietnamese. The respondents rated their answers on a five-point scale, as follows:

Scale	Numerical Value	Descriptive Value
5	4.50 – 5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.50 – 4.49	Agree
3	2.50 – 3.49	Maybe
2	1.50 – 2.49	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.49	Strongly Disagree

The average score that the teachers gave to the students after using some reading lessons was based on a five-point rating scale as follows:

Mark	Adjectival Description
9-10	Excellent
7-8.9	Good
5-6.9	Fair
3-4.9	Poor
0-2.9	Very poor

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

*Reading aloud Strategies used by English Teachers as Preferred by the Students on Reading Comprehension*

The table 1 summarizing the survey results shows the students' responses to the strategies used by teachers to motivate them for reading comprehension.

Table1. Respondents' Preference of Reading

Indicators	Grouped Median	Standard Deviation	Rank	Remarks
I feel happy when my teacher allows me to read aloud.	3.53	1.47	5	Agree
I feel happy when my teacher allows me to read for leisure.	4.04	1.19	3	Agree
I feel excited when my teacher allows me to spend free time reading a book.	4.67	0.56	1	Strongly Agree
I feel happy when my teacher gives me time for reading in class.	3.93	1.36	4	Agree
I feel happy when my teacher allows me to read a new book or story.	4.44	0.90	2	Agree
<b>Overall Grouped Median</b>		<b>4.12</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

The results for each question are reflected in the table above, with an overall grouped median of 4.12 (Agree). A strong majority of students expressed enjoyment in reading books, scoring 4.67, indicating that they are excited to read during their free time. Having time to read books is crucial for students. Clearly, many students develop a reading habit under their teacher's encouragement to enhance their literacy comprehension.

Students reported a score of 3.93, suggesting they feel happy when their teacher allocates time for reading during class, indicating that EFL learners value dedicated reading time for their own purposes. However, there is some hesitation among them regarding reading aloud, as reflected in a score of 3.53. This suggests that while they accept this strategy for improving their reading comprehension, they are not entirely comfortable with it.

The overall grouped median of 4.12 indicates that students generally agree with the reading aloud strategies implemented by their teacher to enhance reading comprehension in their learning environment. This suggests that students have developed positive



reading habits and are satisfied with their teacher's efforts to motivate them to improve their literacy skills effectively.

The standard deviation of 1.47 shows a good distribution of the students' ratings, with a range from 0.56 to 1.47, indicating varied preferences regarding reading. These results demonstrate a strong consensus on the positive impact of reading and the importance of spending free time reading for enjoyment.

*Pre-test and Post-test Scores*

Table 2. Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Group of Students	Statistic	Pre-test	Post-test
Control Group	Mean	6.50	6.60
	Std. Deviation	1.358	1.163
Experimental Group	Mean	7.20	7.67
	Std.	0.980	1.331

The results indicate that the higher mean score of the experimental group reflects better performance. Additionally, a lower standard deviation suggests a more consistent performance within this group. This aligns with the students' scores, where some achieved excellent marks, the majority performed well, and none received poor grades. This evidence supports the effectiveness of using reading aloud strategies to enhance reading comprehension among second-year English major students in college.

*Significant difference on the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Experimental Group*

Table 3 illustrates that the results of the t-test indicate a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group. To determine this significant difference, the degrees of freedom used were calculated as n-1.

Table3. Significant difference between Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Experimental Group

t (computed)	t (tabulated)	Remarks
2.921	2.046	There is significant difference.

Decision Rule:  $Reject H_0 \text{ if } t (comp) > t (tab)$

$Accept H_0 \text{ if } t (comp) < t (tab)$

The computed t-value is 2.921, while the tabulated t-value is 2.046. According to the decision rule, we reject the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the students after implementing reading aloud as a strategy for teaching English to improve reading comprehension in the classroom.

These results also suggest that reading aloud strategies significantly enhance students' reading comprehension. Importantly, these strategies not only help students improve their reading performance but also enhance their pronunciation. They serve not just as filler activities but also provide educational value that aids learners in acquiring the language.

Given these findings, the use of reading aloud strategies is strongly encouraged, as they have demonstrated a significant impact on the scores of both the control group and the experimental group.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the respondents strongly preferred the use of reading aloud strategies as a teaching method to enhance their reading comprehension. The students' perceptions of social interaction regarding reading comprehension were relatively consistent, highlighting their desire to develop their reading skills and improve their language learning performance. The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores revealed that the experimental group, which employed reading aloud strategies, performed better than the control group, which did not utilize any specific teaching strategies to enhance their reading performance.

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