SUMMARIZING STRATEGY: POTENTIAL TOOL TO PROMOTE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION IN A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL, VIETNAM

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Abstract

This paper reports a study which examines how students perceived the effects of the implementation of the summarizing strategy on English as a foreign language (EFL) reading comprehension classes. Using a descriptive design, a survey and interviews were undertaken with students who were learning English at a vocational school of law at a province in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. The findings indicated how students recognized the role of the summarizing strategy although there were some problems they had to encounter while reading, namely vocabulary and grammar. The findings of this study give rise to pedagogical implications for teachers with regard to designing timely and effective techniques for optimizing students' text comprehension ability over time.

Keywords: reading comprehension, reading strategies, perceptions, summarizing

1. Introduction

Research on teaching and learning reading has shown that summarizing is a sophisticated and demanding activity or task that is crucial for text comprehension and information processing (Amsbruster, Anderson, & Ostertag, 1987; Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015; Shang, 2010; Torres, 2015). This importance is evidenced by the fact that English is widely known as an international language, stemming from its popular use in many fields of society, including education. It is therefore necessary for students in Vietnamese universities since in the ever-increasing global integration and information technology; they are required to become better or efficient readers to meet the strong demands of the developing country and keep up with educational changes and initiatives. In particular, in the learning process, students have to make meanings of what they read through summarizing, one of the reading comprehension strategies, for

greater depth knowledge and understanding the gist of particular text messages. More importantly, students are encouraged to better prepare themselves for the practical skills to respond to the increased requirements of their own disciplines and future jobs, and most importantly, the quality of teaching and learning foreign languages, as addressed by the Vietnamese government (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2005).

However, as university teaching in Vietnam is mainly dependent upon traditional lecturing (Nguyen, 2013), students lacked reading strategies, particularly summarizing, needed in their reading classes. This may be due to student passivity, their insufficient practice, and teachers' reluctance to train them this strategy. Thus, it is necessary to get insights into how students make sense of or interpret reading texts through summarizing while they access to and process their learning materials. Although summarizing has been addressed in the literature to exert positive impact on reading comprehension (Cordero-Ponce, 2000; Gorgen, 2015; Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015; Mudzielwana, 2013; Torres, 2015), little research has been carried out to investigate how summarizing instruction influenced reading comprehension of students within the context of teaching and learning reading such as that in Vietnam. The study is therefore aimed at examining students' perceptions about the effects of the summarizing strategy on EFL students at a vocational school in a Mekong Delta province. The research question that guided the study reported on in this paper was, 'What are EFL students' perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension?

In the following section of this paper, there is a description of the concepts of reading comprehension, reading strategies, and summarizing strategy, which are relevant to this study.

2. Reading comprehension

There are so many definitions of reading comprehension in the literature. Reading is a complex process of getting across the meaning of a written text (Johnson, 1990). Thus, in order to understand such process appropriately, it involves extracting and constructing meaning of particular text (Bernhardt, 2011; Brevik, Olsen, & Hellekjær, 2016; Grabe, 1991; Koda, 2007). In other words, reading comprehension is an active process of comprehending the texts that require learners to use various strategies during their reading process. In the same vein, Anderson (1999) emphasizes that "*the more exposure a student has to language through reading, the greater the possibilities of the overall language proficiency will increase*" (p.1). From the cognitive perspective, reading refers to a process of connecting the information from the text with readers' prior knowledge (Grabe, 2009; Nunan, 2003).

Another perspective of reading is that it is a process of a negotiation of a meaning Brown (2007). In this sense, readers must focus on words, phrases, sentences and the connection between the sentences and the paragraphs and relate this collection of information to their background knowledge in order to get across the meaning of such context.

Drawn on the above-mentioned perspectives, reading comprehension is defined, for the purposes of this study, as an interactive process in which students construct the meaning of a particular text and interpret the text embedded message through using their own knowledge and appropriate strategies while reading. In doing so, students can process information and promote their reading capacity.

3. Reading strategies

Reading strategies are known as processes used by readers to comprehend text messages or construct meaning from such reading texts. These processes can help readers to accomplish assigned reading tasks and improve their comprehension. O' Malley and Chamot (1990) describe reading strategies as special thoughts or plans that readers use to comprehend the reading texts. Furthermore, strategies are defined as "*comprehension processes that readers use in order to make sense of what they read*" (Brantmeier, 2002, p. 1). Moreover, since good readers use different strategies during the reading process (Dogan, 2002), such strategies are known as tools or plans for facilitating and extending comprehension (Hardebeck, 2006). Reading strategies therefore can help readers identify the main ideas, distinguish the important from unnecessary information and make connections among ideas embedded in the reading contents.

There have been a numerous of studies that focus on identifying common strategies that good readers often use in their reading process and these strategies should be taught in language classroom. According to Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), several strategies shown to be effectively improve reading comprehension include activating prior knowledge, generating questions or ideas while reading the text, visualizing the text, analyzing various story structures, and summarizing information. Similarly, Pressley and Wharton-McDonald (1997) state that students' comprehension of complex texts can be improved if they are equipped with a number of strategies before, during and after reading (as cited in Qanwal & Karim, 2014). These authors posit a list of strategies as tools to facilitate student strategic thinking (attending to text, summarizing, checking understanding through wh-questions, and using fix-up strategies such as monitoring and seeking clarification).

From the above perspectives, reading strategies are seen to be crucial in the reading process, and therefore, EFL teachers should raise students' awareness of using strategies in their reading practices.

4. The role of reading strategies in reading comprehension

Second language reading studies have shown the importance of implementation of reading strategies in reading classes by indicating positive impact of such instruction on learners' reading ability (Anderson, 1991; Brantmeier, 2002; H. Y. Lee, 2015; Nosratinia & Shakeri, 2013). That is, strategic learners can enhance their comprehension by a variety of strategies. In particular, they are encouraged to apply summarizing, questioning, clarifying, and predicting strategies while reading which can facilitate their comprehension (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). Oxford (1990) argues that strategies are important for two reasons. Firstly, "*strategies are tools for active, self-directed involvement, which is essential for developing communicative competence*" (p.1). Secondly, learners who possess or become aware of reading strategy use become more confident and perform better.

From these perspectives, reading strategies are viewed as potential tools for students to make sense of constructing meanings of texts, thereby enabling them to take greater responsibility for their learning reading as well as to increase awareness of such involvement in their own reading process. This is supported in the literature (Anderson, 1991; Khoshsima & Tiyar, 2014; Nuttall, 1996; S. K. Lee, 2007; Wright & Brown, 2006). A study of Anderson (1991) revealed that students using reading strategies got higher score in reading tasks, indicating that successful strategic readers knew both what types of strategies to use; how to use it; and "orchestrate" it with other strategies. In Salataci and Akyel's (2002) study, they found that there was a positive effect of reading strategy instruction on Turkish EFL students' reading lessons. In a study of Cubukcu (2008), he found that reading comprehension could be developed through the metacognitive strategy instruction because the experimental group gained significantly better results than the control group. There is also strong evidence for better reading performances with regard to strategy instruction (Fatameh, 2011; Mehrdad, Ahghar, & Ahghar, 2002; Wright & Brown, 2006).

In the Vietnamese context, a number of studies have been done in reading strategies. For example, Chau (2009) investigated the effects of the metacognitive strategy instruction on learners' awareness and reading ability from sixty one non-majored students of English, indicating that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group regarding metacognitive strategy use and reading ability. A study by Nguyen (2010) reported that after using three reading

strategies (global, support and problem-solving) 84 participants in an upper secondary school in a rural area of the Mekong Delta were found to become aware of the positive effects. A recent study by Do and his colleagues (2014) examined the effect of meta-cognitive strategies in EFL reading comprehension. The results revealed that of the 64 college students at a Foreign Language Center, Mekong Delta, the experimental group with strategy instruction improved their test scores and perceived the role of reading strategies through post-questionnaire in comparison to the control group.

Although these studies have shown the impact of strategies on students' enhanced reading comprehension, none specifically discusses the relationship between the summarizing strategy and students' reading comprehension. Thus, more research is needed to examine how students perceive the summarizing strategy as a contributing factor to the development of their reading ability.

5. Summarizing strategy

Summarizing is a strategy that allows students to understand what is being read and is therefore it helps them retain important ideas and information given in a particular text (Brown, 1983). This learning strategy is a complex process that students need in their learning process. It requires readers to filter the whole text from important to unimportant ideas, synthesize these ideas to create a new text which includes the basic information from the original material (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Khoshsima & Tiyar, 2014). Similarly, Friend (2001) argues that "*to make a good summary, a student must be able to relate new ideas with old ones and put unique ideas forward*" (p.320). In his view, a summary must be short and provides enough information of the writer and it is written by students' own words. It implies that summarizing enables students to make the meaning of information and retain it for a long time.

Another perspective on summarizing information is that readers not only recap the text after reading but also design their own texts from what they read (Fountas & Pintell, 2001). It can be inferred that a reader must be able to analyze, comprehend the information and get across the writer's intentions or messages. Summarizing involves identifying ideas and refining statements of important concepts from a reading text, either in oral or writing forms. It may encourage deeper engagement with a text and encourage students to reread as they construct a summary (Kamil, 2004).

6. Summarizing strategy benefits reading comprehension

It has been acknowledged that the summarizing strategy can enhance students' reading comprehension (Brown & Day, 1983; Gardner, 1982; Paris & Lindauer, 1982). Likewise, students are encouraged to use other cognitive strategies, including questioning,

predicting, rereading, verifying which are significant to comprehension (Brown, Day, & Jones, 1983). Specifically, the summarizing strategy can motivate students to connect new ideas or concepts in the text with their prior knowledge (Wittrock & Alesandrini, 1990). Thus, this learning strategy can help students increase comprehension (Pearson & Fielding, 1991; Jitendra et al, 2000) or comprehend texts at a great level (Thiede and Anderson; 2003; Jones, 2006). As such, students may become more critical readers.

Another role of summarizing is leading students to recognize how information is structured if the teacher provides questions which direct students' attention to specific content (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Students who can effectively summarize a given text know how to analyze information, identify key concepts, and select relevant information or knowledge for their discipline.

7. Methodology

7.1 The study
The study was conducted at a vocational school of law in Hau Giang province, Mekong Delta of Vietnam. This site is bordered on the north of Can Tho and Vinh Long provinces, far from the big cities within the Mekong Delta, and for the most part, student learning is largely based on traditional lecturing (Nguyen, 2013; Pham, 2010). As such, students did not have opportunities to practice the skills or strategies, such as summarizing in their reading lessons. Utilizing a descriptive design, a survey and a semi-structured interview were undertaken to investigate perceptions of students about effects of the summarizing strategy on their reading comprehension.

One hundred and fifty students at a vocational school of law participated in the study. Ninety four male and fifty six female students from different high schools at Hau Giang province were at the elementary level of English language proficiency. At the vocational school, they have been studying Basic English for three months using American Headway course book. Eight students were randomly selected for interviews in order to explore their perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension.

The data collected in the study included questionnaires and interviews in order to examine how students perceived the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension. The questionnaires were designed in Vietnamese in order to make ease for the participants. There were two parts in the questionnaire using five-degree Likert scale. The first part included a clear statement of research objectives, an enquiry into the personal information and instruction in answer to the questionnaire. The second part contained thirty-two items divided into three clusters: students' perceptions of the

summarizing strategy (items 1-10), their strategy use (items 11-24) and perceptions of the effects of summarizing strategy on reading comprehension (items 25-32). The questionnaires were adopted from the model framework of Brown and Day (1983) about the summarizing strategy and the theories about the effects of the summarizing strategy and its roles on reading comprehension (Anderson & Thiede, 2003; Grabe, 2009; Jitendra et al., 2000).

Using semi-structured interviews allows for gaining insights into students' perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension. Interviews are known as an excellent way of complementing questionnaires (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). In addition, interviews are known as one of the important tools to investigate the phenomena that are not directly observed (Mackey and Gass, 2005). Each interview took approximately half an hour. All the interview questions were designed in English and then translated into Vietnamese. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese so that the participants felt more comfortable and could express all their ideas in a clear and natural way. The interview data were recorded, transcribed, and organized using thematic analysis, as suggested by Richie and Spencer (1994) and Boyatzis (1998) through stages: familiarization, identifying a thematic work, indexing, charting, mapping and interpretation. This study was conducted within a semester over the 2016 academic year.

8. Findings

The findings from the study focused on students' perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension in EFL classes. Responses from participants to the questionnaires suggest that students perceived the benefits of the summarizing strategy on their reading lessons.

To examine the students' perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension, the *One Sample t-test* was conducted to check the mean score of students' perceptions and the test value 4.0. The results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Students' perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading

N	Mean	SD	t	df	sig. (2-tailed)
150	3.48	.408	-15.56	14.9	.00

As can be seen from Table 1, the overall mean score for the perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension (*M*= 3.48), indicates that there was a significant difference between the mean score of participants' perceptions (*M*=3.48) and test value 4.0 (*t*=15.56, *df*=14.9, *p*=.00). It can be concluded that students'

perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension were high. In other words, students were aware of the important role of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension.

A *Descriptive Statistics Test* was also administered on each cluster of the questionnaires to examine students' perceptions of the summarizing strategy, their use of the summarizing strategy and their perceptions of the roles of this strategy on reading comprehension. The results reveal that the participants had different attitudes toward the summarizing strategy, as shown in the following parts.

A. Students' perceptions of the summarizing strategy

Students' perceptions of the summarizing strategy in the questionnaire are presented in cluster one (items 1 to 10), as shown in Table 2. Given the scale from 1 to 5, 1 is graded *strongly disagree* and 5 as *strongly agree*.

Table 2: Students' perceptions of the summarizing strategy

Item	Statements	M	SD
1	Students know how to write a summary.	2.93	1.08
2	Students like writing summaries.	2.66	1.10
3	Students think writing a summary is difficult.	3.53	1.15
4	Summarizing after reading the text is a waste of time.	2.52	.91
5	The summarizing strategy is an important skill to learn.	3.80	1.03
6	The summarizing strategy should be taught explicitly.	3.95	1.05
7	A long summary is better than a short one.	3.22	1.17
8	It is better for students to write more in detail in a summary.	3.57	1.11
9	Generating ideas is the most difficult step in writing a summary.	3.46	1.08
10	Students should practice writing a summary more in class.	4.10	.98

The overall mean scores in Table 2 indicate that participating students perceived the benefits of writing a summary in their learning process. In particular, they agreed that knowing how to write a summary for a particular reading text was important although the value for item 1 was not at a high level (*M*=2.93; *SD*= 1.08). The result also reveals that students recognized the need for including more frequent use of summary writing (*M*=4.10; *SD*=.98), the highest mean. They considered this learning strategy should be taught explicitly in classroom (*M*=3.95; *SD*=1.05) because it was an important skill to learn in their reading lessons (*M*=3.80; *SD*=1.03) and this was needed to practice in detail (*M*=3.57; *SD*=1.11). However, students thought summary writing was a difficult task ((*M*=3.53; *SD*=1.15) and implementing this learning strategy after reading was a waste of time (*M*=2.52; *SD*=.92). With regard to what a good summary is, the students acknowledged that a long summary was better than a short one with a few

sentences (*M*=3.22; *SD*=1.16) and that generating ideas was the most difficult thing to write a summary (*M*=3.46; *SD*=1.06). In general, students perceived the role of the summarizing strategy instruction.

B. Students' use of the summarizing strategy in reading

In cluster two, 14 items were presented to ask participants about their use of the summarizing strategy in reading. Table 3 below describes the items in detail.

Table 3: Students' use of the summarizing strategy in reading

Item	Statements	M	SD
11	Students rarely use a summarizing strategy.	3.57	1.09
12	Students usually summarize a text after reading.	2.87	1.08
13	Students always use a summarizing strategy.	2.62	1.11
14	Students have never been taught how to summarize a text.	2.70	1.22
15	Students can delete unnecessary information of the text when summarizing.	3.32	1.15
16	Students can invent new words to relate the items.	3.40	1.07
17	Students can select a topic sentence in a reading text to write a summary.	3.60	.95
18	Students can write a topic sentence in a summary by themselves.	3.31	1.09
19	Students use their prior knowledge to understand the text.	3.89	.876
20	Students guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases in context.	3.66	1.05
21	Students should think about how the text is related to what they have already known when summarizing.	3.91	.939
22	Students take notes of the main ideas while reading to understand the text.	3.93	.965
23	Students copy sentences from the selection when they write a summary.	2.45	1.18
24	Students reread the reading texts many times in order to write a summary.	3.98	.951

As presented in Table 3, students reported that they rarely used the summarizing strategy after reading (*M*=3.57; *SD*=1.08) and that they were not taught the strategy in classroom ((*M*=2.70; *SD*=1.22). However, they revealed that they frequently or always used the summarizing strategy (items 12 and 13). The mean scores for these two items were not high, only slightly above average (*M*=2.87; *SD*=1.08; *M*=2.62; *SD*=1.11, respectively). These results show that students knew how to use this learning strategy to some extent. With regard to the ways to summarize a text, students mostly agreed that they could delete the unnecessary information while reading (*M*=3.32; *SD*=1.15) and use new words to relate the items (*M*=3.40; *SD*=1.07). In addition, students understood the value of a topic sentence in the reading text (*M*=3.60; *SD*=0.95) and its use in writing a summary of a printed text (*M*=3.31; *SD*=1.09). In terms of using prior knowledge to summarize the information of the text, students recognized its importance (*M*=3.89; *SD*=0.87). With regard to dealing with unknown words, students

reported that they guessed the meaning from the context (*M*= 3.67; *SD*=1.05) and thought there was a connection between the text and their background knowledge (*M*=3.90; *SD*=.93) as well as knew to take notes of main ideas while reading (*M*=3.93; *SD*=.96). However, they copied sentences from the reading text in a summary (*M*=2.45; *SD*=1.18) and had to reread the text many times to gain the general ideas of the printed text for summarizing (*M*=3.98; *SD*=.95). Overall, students were rarely asked to summarize a reading text after reading although some knew how to do it.

C. Students' perceptions of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension

Eight items in the last cluster of the questionnaire were used to examine students' perceptions of the role of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Students' perceptions of the role of the summarizing strategy

Item	Statements	M	SD
25	A summarizing strategy helps students to identify the main ideas of a reading text.	3.94	1.0
26	A summarizing strategy helps students to link the ideas in the text with their prior knowledge.	3.86	.92
27	A summarizing strategy helps students to remember the information in a text longer.	3.94	.97
28	A summarizing strategy helps students to overcome comprehension breakdown.	3.63	.96
29	A summarizing strategy helps students to understand author's intention.	3.66	1.0
30	A summarizing strategy helps students to improve their reading comprehension.	3.82	.91
31	A summarizing strategy motivates students to use the other cognitive strategies such as questioning and predicting…	3.76	.93
32	A summarizing strategy helps students to become critical readers.	3.76	1.1

As can be seen from Table 4, the overall mean scores were at high level (*M*= >3.5), indicating that students had positive perceptions towards the role the summarizing strategy plays in assisting them in learning reading comprehension. In particular, students thought that this strategy helped them to figure out the key ideas of a reading text (*M*= 3.94; *SD*=1.02) and that they thought positively of the relations between the ideas in the text and their background knowledge, while a small proportion of students (n=16) had the negative view. With regard to the statement about retention of information, students acknowledged this value at the highest level within the cluster (*M*= 3.94; *SD*=.97) as well as the opportunity this strategy allowed them to overcome comprehension breakdown (*M*= 3.63; *SD*=.96), which was similar to what they perceived the strategy as enabling them to appreciate the author's intentions (*M*= 3.66; *SD*=1.04). In addition to the statement about the summarizing strategy helped students

to enhance comprehension (*M*= 3.82; *SD*=.91), students had strong perceptions about this cognitive strategy instruction that motivated them to learn (*M*= 3.76; *SD*=.93) and allowed them to become critical readers (*M*= 3.76; *SD*=1.1). In general, students perceived the important roles of the summarizing strategy in their learning reading comprehension.

D. Insights into students' perceptions of the summarizing strategy

This section focuses on students' responses to the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension. This also includes some problems when students wrote a summary. It was found that eight participating students all understood the summarizing strategy influenced their learning of reading regardless of their academic background or qualifications. In particular, five students indicated that the summarizing strategy was an aid to understanding the author's inferences or implications. They could remember the text assigned to them longer. For instance, Hoang said,

> *Summarizing is very important. In English, it helps us understand the content and intended meaning of the author in the reading text. As a result, we can do the tasks in that text. Such strategy is indispensable for both learning and working in the long run.*

> (Hoang, interview)

When asked about the effectiveness of the summarizing strategy, vocabulary guessing skill was reported to be included. For example, Thao shared her views about this skill in relation to the importance of building on new knowledge from their background knowledge and retention of words:

> *Summarizing allows us to identify the main ideas of the text so that we can tell the content of the text by our own words to help the others understand the text because we found the main ideas to help us remember it longer. I believe it will improve my ability of guessing new vocabulary.*

> (Thao, interview)

Moreover, Tam said that the summarizing strategy could enhance students' listening skill. Readers must read a long text to choose the main ideas of that written text. It would train their ability to summarize a long piece of information when listening to the audiotapes. He stated:

> *Firstly, in order to summarize, we must understand the meaning of the words, structures and terms so that we can understand the content of the text. Secondly,*

summarizing frequently helps us improve listening skill. Because when summarizing, we can understand the main ideas of various sentences, it helps a lot in listening.

(Tam, interview)

Five out of the eight participating students reported that they were not often asked to write a summary after reading in classroom or they rarely practiced this strategy to develop their reading comprehension by themselves. In addition, three participants revealed that they had never been taught this strategy in class. For example, Tan claimed that:

It's not completely true when saying that I have never been taught the summarizing strategy because teachers rarely showed us how to summarize a text. When I studied at high school, my teachers taught me this. However, at college, teachers did not teach us since they assumed we had known this before.

(Tan, interview)

When asked what difficulties students encountered when summarizing information in a particular text or passage, students revealed some dominant difficulties when they wrote a summary. All of eight students claimed that they lacked vocabularies and grammatical structures during summarizing reading passages. For example, Hung said,

I meet a lot of difficulties in doing a summary. Firstly, it is vocabulary. I often forget some vocabulary which I have already learnt. Sometimes, these words make me confused to get the wrong meaning. Secondly, it is about grammar structures. Now at advance level, these structures are more complicated to me.

(Hung, interview)

This quote suggests that Hung perceived vocabulary and grammar as problematic and this may hinder his confidence and influence how he practiced the summarizing strategy to learn better.

With regard to the difficulties in vocabulary, Thao with high proficiency level presented his own method to learn and remember vocabulary which could be used as a reference for the others in learning vocabulary to develop reading skill and particularly to summarize key points in a reading passage. He said:

After each reading lesson, the teacher provided us with some vocabularies. At home, I wrote them in my vocabulary notebook. I tried to learn some new words every day and repeated them many times. It would help me to remember the meaning in reading texts, then summarizing the gist.

(Thao, interview)

Regarding students' suggestions for teachers when presenting to students reading comprehension lessons, their responses were somehow different from each other. Three students thought that teachers should use more games when teaching reading through the use of the summarizing strategy. For example, Hang said,

Teacher should use many games and activities to make us students more active. Moreover, teachers should provide students with instruments to summarize or let students to play games.

(Hang, interview)

Besides, students expressed their desire to learn more vocabulary and enjoy activities to expand their knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures. For instance, Son expressed his views on how teachers could change or define their roles in lesson planning and delivery. He said,

In my opinion, teachers should explain the meaning of vocabulary first. If there are any new structures, they ask students to underline and explain them later. Teachers should guide students how to summarize a particular reading passage effectively in order that students can understand the lesson contents in a more comprehensive way. By using many pictures and teaching more vocabulary, or having us repeat words many times, these ways can help us remember faster.

(Son, interview)

In a research conducted in a vocational school in Hau Giang Province to examine the students' perceptions of the effects of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension, most of the respondents indicated the positive effects of this learning strategy on reading comprehension. However, some of them indicated some problems when using this type of reading strategy. The most often reported responses were associated with time constraints, training, and level of text difficulty. For example, Thuyet revealed his problems while practicing summary writing:

It takes me lots of time to summarize a text. You know, we were not trained this learning skill. Also, some texts which consists of so many unknown words long sentences are sometimes too difficult for us to put it in a short form as required by the teacher in a mixed level class.

(Thuyet, interview)

In his view, it appears that this student felt the need for more training and practice as well as instructional changes initiated from the teacher in a reading class with regard to this learning strategy.

9. Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that students perceived the importance of the use of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension. By summarizing text passages, participating students revealed that this type of strategy could help them to retain information in the text and overcome the reading breakdown. Interviewed students reported that the summarizing strategy could help them to learn other reading skills, such as guessing, problem-solving, and the like, and as a result, they could remember information in a particular text longer. Such findings support the studies by Pressley and Wharton-McDonald (1997), Nunan (2003) and Grabe (2009), who claimed that the summarizing strategy could allow students to facilitate or improve their reading comprehension if they were given greater exposure to practice.

The findings from the questionnaires and interviews show that the summarizing strategy is important for students to learn to become better readers. This concurs with the literature that indicates the need to encourage students to implement such effective learning strategy in their reading practices (Dogan, 2002; Pressley and Afflerbach, 1995; Qantal and Karim, 2014). However, they were seldom given opportunities to use the summarizing strategy in their classrooms. Understanding such challenge students encountered and the benefits of summarizing reading passages suggests that teachers should raise students' awareness of the role the summarizing strategy plays in enhancing students' comprehension ability and that teachers are encouraged to instill students positive attitudes towards this learnable strategy by teaching students how to actively use it, as confirmed in the studies of other researchers in this area (Anderson, 1991; Do et al., 2014; Khoshisima and Tiyar, 2014; Mudzielwana, 2013)

From the interview analysis, most students reported that reading comprehension was related to what they could translate a reading text into the native language and vice versa, and this finding sheds new light on how teachers change their roles and instructional ways in relation to enabling students to become more creative and strategic readers while processing text messages. In other words, reading comprehension means that readers may understand the meaning of the text, evaluate the author' implications and remember the information in the text (Alfassi, 2004). However, students recognized that vocabulary and grammatical structures were the most difficult when they dealt with the summarizing strategy. A possible explanation is that students who are low at proficiency English level like elementary students neither know how to learn and retain the words and structures nor familiarize themselves with text summarization, which was ignored during reading for a long time. The concerns that students felt as reported in the study might be eased through the teachers' efforts to finds ways to provide opportunities for students to improve comprehension. Since

reading is a long and sophisticated interactive process, not inborn; teachers need to be equipped with innovative instructional reading strategies more often in order to facilitate student learning, thereby enabling them to become critical readers in the long run.

10. Conclusions

The aim of the study was to explore how students perceived the role of the summarizing strategy on reading comprehension. The findings suggest that students perceived the benefits of using the summarizing strategy to comprehend a specific reading text despite some difficulties students encountered in their summarizing process. For this reason, teachers should consider several ways to encourage students to implement this effective learning strategy in order to facilitate their reading competence.

The findings of the present study have some implications for teachers and Vietnamese vocational school students in particular as well as for authorities in Vietnamese educational setting. From the students' perspectives of the role of the summarizing strategy in reading comprehension, teachers should pay much attention to teaching students how to summarize a text after reading and provide them with opportunities to practice the summarizing strategy in getting across the meaning and inferences of lessons. As students reported, most of their English reading lessons were taught through translating activities; therefore, it is necessary for teachers to tailor their teaching methods or engage their students in discussions and other speaking activities, if possible, to respond to the needs of students' learning outcomes and content language required by their school policies. Furthermore, it can be seen from the present study that students appear to expect to practice the summarizing strategy more frequently in classrooms. This could turn into a motivator that instills students with confidence to integrate this strategy into reading lessons on their own.

The findings from the present study have some pedagogical implications in relation to evaluation of students in vocational schools. It should be noted that it is essential to include the criteria and the format of a reading text in the teaching and learning process. In particular, true-false exercises and summary writing practice should be enlisted in the course programs so that students' comprehension ability could be enhanced and evaluated or assessed over time. If this is done, it is hoped that students could become more aware of the importance of the use of reading strategies for their language skill success.

Further research into how different students' perceptions interact with their learning process should be investigated. In addition, in the present study, students

claimed the difficulties when summarizing, it would be interesting to conduct a research into their difficulties and solutions to help students overcome the difficulties while using this strategy. Additionally, the good ways for EFL students in Viet Nam to learn and remember the words longer would be an interesting topic to develop.

There should have an investigation into other effective reading strategies that can be used before, during and after reading a particular text or a reading passage in order to help students to improve their reading ability at school.

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