



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE PROBLEM OF READING ONLINE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

\***Nguyen Thu Ha, PhD. and Trinh Thi Thanh Thuy, MA.**

Trade Union University, Vietnam

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#### ABSTRACT

This article is aimed to study the problems of reading online of undergraduate students and development of the most effective methods and techniques for improving of reading online of students. The purpose of this study is to investigate the time that the undergraduate students spend on reading online, the difficulties the encounter while reading as well as their opinions to improve the result of this activity. A monolingual questionnaire was developed to look in to their evaluation and the impediment when doing online reading as well. It has been revealed that almost the students have difficulty related to health problem when reading texts on the internet. Based on the study's findings, suggestions for improving this situation were provided. Students should create their own motivation and select the appropriate topics to read. The article identifies effective methodological techniques of reading online improvement of undergraduate students. The methodology of reading online was offered for the undergraduate students, providing thoughtful skill of reading of the works of various styles, creative reading skill.

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## INTRODUCTION

Reading is always among the healthy habits of many people. Especially nowadays with the advent of new advanced technology, reading printed text is not the only way of reading. As Schcolnik (2011) said, "in the future our reading could be mainly digital and the fact that e-readers are one of the emerging technologies." (Schcolnik, 2011). The problem of reading among students is one of the urgent problems of our time (Sadykova, Yashina & Sharafieva, 2014). However, getting accustomed to this new method of reading is not easy at all. Responding to this awareness, some research has been examined and it has been found that experiencing eyestrain, skipping lines, being unable to take notes or underline words on computer screen are the main difficulties which students encounter while doing online reading (Tseng, 2018). Do all people reading online get involved in such difficulties? The research aims to find out the problems the undergraduate students experience and accordingly provide suggestions to make use of electronic reading.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To collect the data for the research, a questionnaire was developed. The research pointed to explore the problems that the undergraduate students face with when doing online reading.

\*Corresponding author: **Nguyen Thu Ha, PhD.**,  
Trade Union University, Vietnam.

The questionnaire was designed with 8 items: the three first questions about the habit of reading online, the next one about their evaluation of online reading, the two following ones about their frequency of doing e-reading and the two last ones about difficulties and solution. Besides, some suggestions were given to improve the result of reading online. Before the survey was conducted, the questionnaire was piloted randomly by a group of undergraduate students at universities. The results of the trial process proved that the questionnaire was suitable for all of them. The subjects of the survey were 550 undergraduate students at universities who were all selected on a voluntary basis. They were both sexes and from many parts of Vietnam, either big cities or small provinces. The participants did the questionnaire at different times. They were given the handout and allowed to read them first. Queries about points of difficulty were responded and the subjects then completed the questionnaire by answering 8 questions.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reading is a basic component of education, training and development of culture. It is an activity of forming and developing the identity, a tool for education and the dissemination of culture, evidence of formation of communicative and professional competence of specialist tool for achieving success in life (4). There are different definitions of the concept "reading" in modern science. Foreign scientists give the following definition of reading: "Reading is a skill (habit, practice, memorization), work with printed text".

**Habit of reading online:** The first three questions were raised to find out whether e-reading was among students' habit or not.

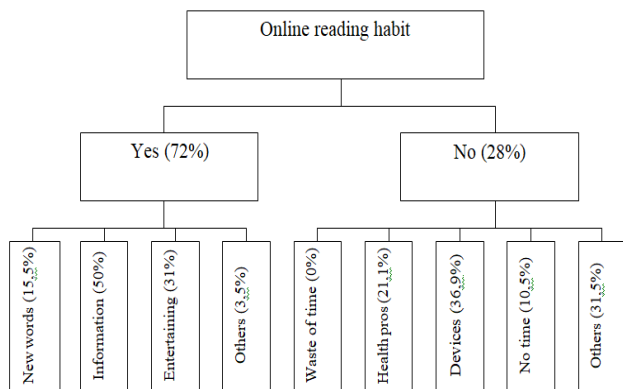


Figure 1. Online reading habit

The figure describes the routine of reading text of undergraduate students. It shows that the majority of students (72%) make online reading as one of their habits. They gave many reasons about what they read online for, that is, learning new words (15,5% choices), getting information (50% choices), entertaining (31% choices) and other reasons. As can be seen, getting information is the main purpose when they do online reading (50%). It is easy for them to search information on the world wide web (www.) because “e-books have the potential to display pages of many kinds, from office documents, to journals, letters, newspapers, magazines and web pages, and they support analytic reading” (Schilit, 1999). A smaller number of choices belongs to entertainment. Certainly, there are many things to read online, not only for studying but also for relaxing, such as sport, fashion, jokes, etc. 15,5%of the students said that they did online reading for learning vocabulary. Normally, there are words in the text which they do not know.

Therefore, it is a good way to learn new words. According to Jack (2018), “an extensive reader will have a wide recognition vocabulary” because regular reading builds a large range of vocabulary and helps guess unknown words in the context. 3,5% of students had the different reasons for reading online. They did research or prepared for a discussion. It is clear that these students e-read for information more than for entertainment. This result is a little different with the result of Scholnik’s research (2011) which showed that more people did online reading for pleasure (75%) than for information (56%) (Schcolnik, 2011). It seems that undergraduate students pay more attention to studying when they do online reading. On the other hand, 28% of students did not regard reading online as a habit. Also, a large number of reasons were given for this. The main reasons were no time (10,5%), health problems caused by computer screen (21,1%) and lack of supporting devices like laptop, internet, network (36,9%). Many students considered the lack of supporting devices as the major reason that made online reading not be their habit. It is obvious that not everyone has capacity of affording all the devices to access to internet anywhere or any time. Some other reasons were provided, such as “not familiar with this style”, “difficult to read”, “not interest”, etc.

**Evaluation of the benefit of e-reading:** The students’ different opinions of online reading are indicated in figure 2.

Figure 2: Opinion of using the internet for reading

Opinion of online reading	Percentage
Very Useless	4%
Useless	8%
Slightly useful	10%
Useful	58%
Very useful	20%

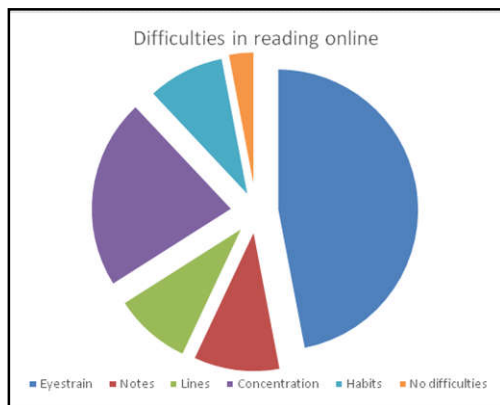
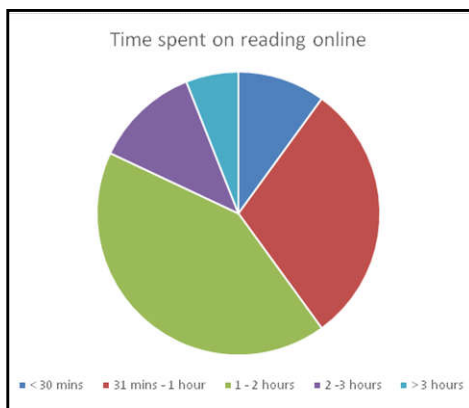
As is illustrated by the table, 58% of the students agreed that reading online was useful, 20% of them said that computer-based reading was very useful and 10% of the participants found the new kind of reading slightly useful. However, 4% of them indicated that online reading was very useless and the rest (8%) stated that this activity was useless. The data implies that the undergraduate students hold positive evaluation of e-reading. Those results also confirm viewpoint (Sadykova et al., 2014), “today, computer technology is integrated into almost every aspects of learning in higher education: textbooks arrive with CD-ROMs, homework is delivered and grade on the world wide web, and assignments are designed to be completed collaboratively through electronic mail” (as cited in Shen, 2016) (Shen, 2016).

**Time allocated for e-reading:** The figure shows the regularity of using the internet for reading of the undergraduate students. Following the figure 3, nearly half of the students (46%) usually read text on the web, approximately one third of them (30%) did it sometimes and 8% of them stated that they did online reading very often.

Figure 3: The frequency of reading online

The frequency of reading online	Percentage
Never	2%
Rarely	12%
Sometimes	32%
Usually	46%
Always	8%

Obviously, they are aware of the benefits of online reading. Once computers are connected to a network, there is a wide range of topics for them choose, both studying and relaxing. The rest students did e-reading much less. It is likely that the influences of computer screen (eyestrain, short sight, astigmatism, etc.) keep them away from this device. Students usually read online but the time they spent on reading each time was not the same. It is illustrated in the chart below. From the pie chart, it is clear that nearly half of the students (42%) reported that the spent from 1 to 2 hours on e- reading per day, 30% of them allotted from 30 minutes to 1 hour to computer-based reading activity and 12% of them spent around 2 to 3 hours on reading on the web. Besides, the smaller percentage of the students (10%) admitted that they often read on the net less than 30 minutes and the rest (6%) did e-reading activity for more than 3 hours a day. It seems that the students’ daily internet consumption for reading is not much. In fact, those results run contrary to Shen’s findings. In the survey named “Computer technology and college students’ reading habits” (2006), Shen reported that 42% of the students admitted spending more than 3 hours online, 57% of them spent from 1 to 2 hours online everyday (Shen, 2016). Those differences are understandable. Perhaps, students of different countries have different learning strategies as well as academic time management.



**Difficulties and solutions:** This chart indicates the difficulties that students got involved in when doing online reading. As can be seen from the chart, eyestrain is considered to be the most influential factor which comprises the majority of the choices (47%). The respondents mentioned that their eyes got strained after looking at the computer screens for a period of time. And if they continued staring at it, they felt their eyes blurred and the text on the computer screens seemed to be unclear to read. This confirms Tseng's research (2018) that eyestrain was the biggest problem with 50% of the choices (Tseng, 2018). It seems that eyestrain is considerable obstacle to everyone when doing e-reading. Surprisingly enough, 22% of the students attributed weak points of computer-based reading to lack of concentration. It seems that Vietnam undergraduate students are too familiar with offline reading and prefer to get information from paper documents because it is easier to be concentrated. Additionally, "there were too many websites on the internet, they would feel like going to other webs and this distracted their attention from text" (Tseng, 2018). Difficulties in taking notes, lines and habits make up the nearly same percentage of choices, 9-10%, and constitute about one third of all the choices. In 10% of difficulty in taking notes, the respondents said that they could not take notes or underline words on computer screens. Because hypertext is not like printed text, we can not use highlighted to underline key words, phrases or sentences. Problems with lines and habits share the equal numbers with 9% of the choices. A printed text is often divided into paragraphs; therefore, it is easier to remember where the special words or phrases are. But in hypertext, students have to go from the top of the page when they want to find a word or line. They may get lost between lines as they mention (Tseng, 2018). In addition, it is not easy to get over the old habit of reading printed text because people are used to reading in this way for a long time since they started learning and reading online.

Many students said that they did not like the style of text on web pages, so they did not like reading online. Lastly, only 3% of the choices of students show that they have no difficulties in reading online. Maybe they got accustomed to this and adjusted to this new method. After the difficulties are found out, a question is open: what should students do to enhance their reading result? Most respondents shared the same idea that students should create their own motivation. In fact, motivation is cited as an important factor in students' becoming proficient readers (McClure, 2018) (McClure, 2018). Once they have passion for something, they can do it better. Some other suggestions were given such as organizing time reasonably, choosing suitable topics, having break during reading time, etc.

## Conclusion

In summary, this small research shows the difficulties of reading text of the web that the undergraduate students face up with. Also, this survey demonstrates that the students have good attitude to online reading but the time they spend on reading on the internet is not much. It is still not recommended that students should practice more but they should make their own motivation to achieve the best result of this activity. Reading online acts as major means of preserving the intellectual and cultural potential of society, continuity of knowledge and the essential factor of the social-communicative development of man, as a way to develop moral potential of undergraduate students.

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