



Building a system of exercises to develop poetry reading comprehension skills for grade 5 students

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Abstract

Developing reading comprehension skills for literary texts, especially poetry, is an important objective in primary language education. However, due to the condensed language, rich imagery, and artistic features of poetry, many Grade 5 students encounter difficulties in understanding both the content and aesthetic value of poetic texts. This study aims to propose and develop a system of exercises designed to enhance poetry reading comprehension skills for Grade 5 students. The research is based on the theoretical foundations of reading comprehension instruction and the requirements of the 2018 General Education Curriculum, combined with the practical context of teaching Vietnamese at the primary school level.

The proposed system of exercises is organized into three main types: content comprehension exercises, form-based comprehension exercises, and relational-comparative-connective exercises. Content comprehension tasks help students identify the theme, understand key ideas, and recognize the message conveyed in the poem. Form-based exercises guide students to explore linguistic features, imagery, and rhetorical devices, thereby enabling them to perceive the artistic value of the text. Meanwhile, relational and comparative activities encourage students to connect the poem with their personal experiences, real-life contexts, and other literary works, which contributes to expanding their thinking and literary appreciation.

The exercise system is designed in accordance with competency-based teaching principles, ensuring systematic organization, appropriate difficulty level, and suitability to the cognitive and psychological characteristics of Grade 5 students. The findings of the study provide a pedagogical basis for improving poetry reading comprehension instruction in primary education and contribute to the development of students' language competence, literary appreciation, and creative thinking.

Keywords: Poetry reading comprehension, reading comprehension exercises, Grade 5 students, Vietnamese language teaching, reading competence, competency-based instruction

Introduction

Literature serves as a mirror reflecting human life and the inner world of individuals. Every literary work represents a crystallization of emotions, thoughts, and aesthetic experiences that the writer conveys through artistic language. However, these values are rarely expressed directly; rather, they are often organized through imagery, rhythm, symbolism, and layers of implicit meaning. Therefore, reading to understand the author's message accurately and comprehensively requires not only the ability to identify explicit information but also the reader's capacity for inference, association, and aesthetic appreciation.

In the Vietnamese primary-level curriculum, poetry is an important genre that nurtures students' emotions, enriches their imagination, and develops their literary appreciation. However, poetry is characterized by concise language, rich imagery, and rhythmic structure, often employing artistic devices such as metaphor, simile, and personification. These characteristics make poetry reading comprehension a challenging task for primary school students, especially for Grade 5 students, who are in a transitional stage from basic recognition-level comprehension to deeper levels of analysis and interpretation. Classroom practice shows that many students still encounter difficulties in identifying the main content of a poem, recognizing artistic imagery, understanding the author's emotions, or relating the poem's meaning to their own personal experiences.

In the context of educational reform oriented toward the development of competencies and personal qualities, fostering students' poetry reading comprehension skills is not only aimed at helping them grasp the content of literary

works but also contributes to the development of linguistic competence, aesthetic competence, and creative thinking. One effective approach to achieving this goal is the design and implementation of a well-structured system of exercises that provides guidance and enables students to gradually form and develop poetry reading comprehension skills.

Based on the above considerations, the article "Building a System of Exercises to Develop Poetry Reading Comprehension Skills for Grade 5 Students" aims to propose and construct a diverse and scientifically grounded system of exercises that supports students in gradually developing their poetry reading comprehension skills during the learning process. Through this effort, the study contributes to improving the effectiveness of poetry reading instruction at the primary school level while fostering students' literary appreciation and enhancing their language competence.

Content

1. Principles for Building a System of Exercises to Develop Poetry Reading Comprehension Skills for Grade 5 Students

1.1. Principle of Competency-Based Teaching

Teaching poetry reading comprehension to Grade 5 students should aim at the development of comprehensive competencies, enabling students not only to understand the content of a poem but also to appreciate, analyze, and relate it to real-life experiences. The system of exercises should encourage students to think, explore, and express their personal responses rather than merely receive ready-made knowledge. Teachers should create an open learning

environment that encourages students to ask questions, identify distinctive features of literary works, and develop evaluative thinking. At the same time, learning activities should be connected with creative experiences such as continuing a poem, imagining stories within the poem, or relating it to other works with similar themes. Through these activities, students can develop linguistic thinking, artistic appreciation, and a foundation for studying literature at higher educational levels.

1.2. Principle of Ensuring the Development of Reading Comprehension in Relation to Other Language Competencies

Reading comprehension competence is closely related to other Vietnamese language skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. Therefore, the teaching of poetry reading comprehension should be organized in an integrated manner that combines these skills. During the learning process, teachers should create opportunities for students to discuss, present their feelings, perform expressive reading, or role-play characters in the poem to develop speaking and communication skills. In addition, writing tasks such as composing short reflective paragraphs, expressing impressions of poetic images, or creating short poems can help students improve their expressive abilities and creative thinking. Listening activities also play an important role when students listen to the teacher or their peers reading the poem aloud, enabling them to perceive its rhythm, sound, and meaning. Integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities contributes to the comprehensive development of students' language competence.

1.3. Principle of Suitability to the Cognitive Characteristics of Grade 5 Students

Grade 5 students are experiencing strong development in both imaginative and logical thinking. Therefore, teaching poetry reading comprehension should combine aesthetic emotions with analytical thinking activities. Teachers should design engaging learning activities such as drawing illustrations, role-playing characters, or participating in group discussions to help students explore both the content and artistic features of the poem. At the same time, students should be encouraged to express their own interpretations rather than being confined to a single imposed way of understanding the poem. Designing questions and exercises that are appropriate to students' cognitive abilities will help them develop independent thinking, increase learning motivation, and gain a deeper understanding of the value of poetry.

1.4. Principle of Ensuring Appropriateness in Difficulty Level

Ensuring an appropriate level of difficulty is an important requirement in teaching poetry reading comprehension. Lessons should be suitable for the linguistic ability, thinking capacity, and psychological characteristics of Grade 5 students. Teachers should design a system of questions at different levels—from recognition and recall to inference and application—so that students can gradually improve their reading comprehension skills. At the same time, the amount and difficulty of learning tasks should be carefully adjusted to avoid both cognitive overload and boredom. Ensuring an appropriate level of challenge enables students

to approach literary works effectively while maintaining their interest and motivation for learning.

1.5. Principle of Integration

Teaching poetry reading comprehension should be implemented in an integrated manner, not only among language skills but also in connection with knowledge from other subject areas. Teachers can combine reading comprehension with speaking, writing, or poetry-writing activities to develop students' expressive abilities. In addition, linking poems with knowledge from subjects such as history, geography, or science can help students better understand the context and meaning of the poem. Furthermore, the use of diverse teaching methods—such as group discussion, dramatization, visual illustrations, or music—can make lessons more engaging, thereby fostering students' reading comprehension, thinking, and creativity simultaneously.

2. A System of Poetry Reading Comprehension Exercises for Grade 5 Students

To help Grade 5 students approach and appreciate poetry effectively, the system of reading comprehension exercises should be designed in a way that both explores the content and enables students to discover the artistic value of literary works. A reading comprehension exercise usually consists of two basic components: the question section (instructions) and the text section (reading material).

The question section includes tasks and learning requirements that guide students in exploring both the content and the form of the text. The text section provides the basis for students to complete the tasks; it typically consists of language units such as sounds, words, sentences, paragraphs, or complete texts. In addition, illustrations such as pictures or drawings may be included to suggest ideas and support students' thinking processes when completing the exercises ^[8, p. 37].

Based on the expected learning outcomes specified in the 2018 General Education Curriculum, we propose a system of poetry reading comprehension exercises for Grade 5 students consisting of three main types:

Content comprehension exercises

Form (structure and artistic features) comprehension exercises

Relational – comparative – connective comprehension exercises

2.1. Content Comprehension Exercises

The 2018 General Education Curriculum clearly defines the requirements for poetry reading comprehension at the primary level, especially for Grade 5. Students are expected to be able to identify important information and understand the overall meaning of the text. Specifically:

“Identify several typical details related to the main content of the text; understand easily recognizable implicit meanings in the text.”

“Point out relationships between details; be able to summarize the text.”

“Understand the theme of the text.” ^[9, p. 33]

Based on these requirements, content comprehension exercises are designed into two main groups:

- Exercises for identifying the main content of the poem
- Exercises for identifying specific content in different parts of the text

2.1.1. Exercises for Identifying the Main Content of the Text

This type of exercise helps students determine the theme, meaning, and message of the poem. Through guiding questions, students are led to recognize important information and understand how the author uses images and language to express emotions.

Some guiding questions may include:

- What is the poem about?
- What object or subject is mentioned in the poem?
- Which image appears most prominently in the poem?

These questions help students grasp the core content of the text and understand the message the author intends to convey.

Example Exercise

Week 3 – Lesson 5: The Song Sprouting

Question 1. What is the poem “The Song Sprouting” about?

- A. Students’ love for nature
- B. The joy of learning and the growth of students
- C. Teachers’ daily work
- D. Sparrows singing in the schoolyard

Question 2. In the poem, to whom does the author express gratitude and respect?

- A. Grandparents
- B. Parents
- C. Teachers
- D. Friends

Question 3. In your opinion, what is the main message of the poem?

2.1.2. Exercises for Identifying Specific Content in Different Parts of the Text

Besides identifying the overall content, students should also be guided to examine details in each stanza to better understand the structure and meaning of the poem. Teachers may ask guiding questions such as:

- What does the first stanza describe?
- What emotion of the author is expressed in this stanza?
- What characteristics do the images of nature or people in the poem have?

Analyzing each part of the poem helps students better understand the development of the content and recognize the role of artistic devices such as simile, personification, and repetition in expressing emotions.

Example Exercise

Week 3 – Lesson 5: The Song Sprouting

Question 1. Which image in the opening stanza shows the attentiveness of students in the classroom?

- A. “A sparrow swiftly crossing the river”
- B. “Bright eyes looking at the board”
- C. “A strange sound stirring in the garden”
- D. “A sea ship dropping anchor”

Question 2. In the second stanza, what thoughts does the author express about the life and future of students?

Question 3. What message does the author convey through the following concluding lines?

“Oh, the children’s song,
Pure as the blue sky,

You are the seeds of happiness
Growing peacefully each day...”

2.2. Form (Structure and Artistic Features) Comprehension Exercises

In addition to understanding the content, students should be guided to recognize the formal and artistic elements of poetry. According to the 2018 General Education Curriculum, students are expected to:

- Identify the characteristics of imaginative texts and texts about real people and real events.
- Understand the meanings of words, images, and several rhetorical devices such as simile and personification [9, p. 36].

Based on these requirements, form-based comprehension exercises can be divided into two main types:

- Exercises for identifying details in the poem
- Exercises for identifying artistic elements and modes of expression

2.2.1. Exercises for Identifying Details in the Poem

This type of exercise helps students practice searching for and recognizing information in the text. When completing these tasks, students need to read the poem carefully and pay attention to elements such as imagery, characters, emotions, or words that convey the main content.

Example

Question 1. In the line “Bright eyes looking at the board,” what does the image of the students’ eyes express?

- A. Curiosity and eagerness to learn
- B. Anxiety and fear
- C. Sadness and fatigue
- D. Playfulness and restlessness

Question 2. Based on the reading text, mark T (True) or F (False) for each of the following statements:

- The students both listen to the teacher’s explanation and observe her illustrative gestures.
- While the teacher is explaining, the whole class imagines images and sounds.
- The students are moved to tears while listening to the teacher.
- The objects mentioned by the teacher all belong to urban life.

2.2.2. Exercises for Identifying Structure and Artistic Elements

This type of exercise helps students recognize the structure of the poem, its poetic form, and rhetorical devices such as simile, personification, and repetition. Through these tasks, students can understand how the author uses language to create the aesthetic value of the work.

Example

Question 1. What poetic form is the poem “The Song Sprouting” written in?

- A. Four-syllable verse
- B. Five-syllable verse
- C. Six-syllable verse
- D. Free verse

Question 2. Which of the following lines uses the rhetorical device of personification?

- A. “The sea ship drops anchor”
- B. “The newspaper bursts with sound”
- C. “The song begins to sprout”
- D. “The musical lines remain quietly attentive”

Question 3. Which artistic devices are used in the poem?

- A. Simile, personification, repetition
- B. Metaphor, metonymy, wordplay
- C. Enumeration, contrast, exaggeration
- D. Metonymy, repetition, idioms

2.3. Relational – Comparative – Connective Comprehension

Exercises

In teaching poetry reading comprehension, besides understanding the content and artistic features of the text, students should also be trained to relate, compare, and connect what they read with real-life experiences. This type of exercise helps expand students’ thinking, apply knowledge, and develop their literary appreciation.

According to the 2018 General Education Curriculum, students are expected to:

- State the lessons or ideas they draw from a story or poem.
- Select details or meanings they find most impressive and explain their reasons [9, pp. 36–37].

Example

Question 1. In your opinion, why did the author title the poem “The Song Sprouting”? How is this title related to the content and meaning of the poem?

Question 2. What memories of teachers and friends does the poem remind you of? Write a short paragraph to share your feelings.

Conclusion

Thus, the article focuses on researching and developing a system of poetry reading comprehension exercises for Grade 5 students based on the integration of theories of reading comprehension instruction and practical teaching experiences at the primary school level. By analyzing the characteristics of poetic texts and the learning outcomes required for students when approaching this genre, the study proposes a system of exercises aimed at contributing to the development of students’ reading comprehension competence and their ability to appreciate literature.

The system of exercises is designed to foster key components of reading comprehension competence. Specifically, content comprehension questions help students identify the theme, grasp the meaning, and understand the message of the poem; form-based comprehension questions guide students to explore linguistic features, imagery, and rhetorical devices, thereby helping them understand the artistic value of the work. Meanwhile, relational, comparative, and connective exercises create opportunities for students to relate the poem to their personal experiences, real-life situations, or other texts, thereby expanding their thinking and enhancing their literary appreciation.

The process of developing this system of exercises draws on modern approaches to reading comprehension instruction while adhering to pedagogical principles such as systematic organization, appropriate difficulty level, and suitability to

the psychological and cognitive characteristics of Grade 5 students. The exercises are not only intended to assess students’ understanding of the text but also to encourage them to express their own thoughts and feelings and to develop their creativity when engaging with poetry.

In the future, this system of exercises will continue to be implemented through classroom experimentation in order to evaluate its feasibility and its compatibility with the current educational curriculum. The results of this implementation will serve as a basis for further refinement and improvement of the exercise system, thereby contributing to the enhancement of Vietnamese language teaching at the primary level, particularly in developing students’ poetry reading comprehension competence.

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