

การอ่านจับใจความสำคัญสำหรับพัฒนาการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ

READING FOR MAIN IDEAS TO ENHANCE READING COMPREHENSION

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยฉบับนี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อพัฒนาเอกสารประกอบการสอนหลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษพื้นฐาน รายวิชา “การอ่านและการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อจุดประสงค์ทั่วไป” โดยมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาผลสัมฤทธิ์ด้านการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักศึกษาผ่านบทเรียนเรื่องการอ่านจับใจความสำคัญ และ 2) ศึกษาความพึงพอใจของนักศึกษาต่อบทเรียนดังกล่าว ประชากรที่ใช้ในการศึกษาคัดเลือกโดยการเลือกแบบเจาะจง ได้แก่ นักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 1 ต่างสาขาวิชาจำนวน 264 คนที่ลงเรียนรายวิชา “การอ่านและการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อจุดประสงค์ทั่วไป” ในภาคเรียนที่ 3 ปีการศึกษา 2557 ณ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏอุดรธานี เครื่องมือในการวิจัย ประกอบด้วย 1) แบบทดสอบวัดผลสัมฤทธิ์ ได้แก่ แบบทดสอบก่อนเรียนและแบบทดสอบหลังเรียน 2) แบบสอบถาม ประกอบด้วย คำถามปลายเปิดและมาตรประมาณค่าจากคำถามปลายปิด 3) การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก และ 4) การสังเกต การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้ค่าเฉลี่ย และส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐานในการวิเคราะห์ ผลจากแบบทดสอบวัดผลสัมฤทธิ์ระบุว่า การอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักศึกษาพัฒนาขึ้น โดยมีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับแอลฟา 0.05 ผลจากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกระบุว่า องค์ประกอบ 4 ประการ ได้แก่ 1) ความยากของเนื้อหาในบทเรียน 2) การมีวันหยุดติดต่อกันหลายวัน 3) ความไม่สม่ำเสมอในการเข้าชั้นเรียนของนักศึกษา และ 4) เวลาเรียนไม่เพียงพอ เป็นปัจจัยที่กระทบต่อการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักศึกษา ผลจากมาตรประมาณค่าของแบบสอบถามปลายปิดระบุว่า นักศึกษามีความพึงพอใจต่อบทเรียนเรื่องการอ่านจับใจความสำคัญอยู่ในระดับมาก (ค่าเฉลี่ย 3.78) และผลจากแบบสอบถามปลายเปิดระบุว่า คำศัพท์เป็นอุปสรรคต่อการเรียนรู้ของนักศึกษามากที่สุด และนักศึกษาต้องการให้ครูผู้สอนแก้ไขในจุดนี้

คำสำคัญ: การอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ การอ่านจับใจความสำคัญ ผลสัมฤทธิ์ของนักศึกษา ความพึงพอใจของนักศึกษา แบบทดสอบวัดผลสัมฤทธิ์

Abstract

This study was conducted to improve the instructional material of the general English course “Reading and Writing for General Purposes” by investigating two factors. These were: 1) students’ achievement of reading comprehension using a lesson

Reading for Main Ideas, and 2) students' satisfaction with the lesson. Using a purposive sampling technique, 264 different-major first-year students enrolled in the course during the third semester of the 2014 academic year at Udon Thani Rajabhat University were selected as the samples of this study. Research instruments were: 1) an achievement test administered by pretest and posttest, 2) a questionnaire employing open-ended questions and a mix of rating scale through close-ended questions, 3) an in-depth interview, and 4) observations. To analyze the data, mean and standard deviation were used. Results of the achievement test revealed that students' reading comprehension improved as there were statistical differences at $\alpha=0.05$ level. According to in-depth interview results, it indicated that four factors: 1) difficulty of the text, 2) many long holidays, 3) students missing class frequently, and 4) students' insufficient study time affected their reading comprehension. Results from the mix of rating scale through close-ended questions of the questionnaire showed students were very satisfied with the methodologies used in the study ($\bar{X}=3.78$). Results from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire indicated that vocabulary was students' most formidable obstacle, and they would like the lecturer to strengthen them in this regard.

Keywords: reading comprehension, reading for main ideas, students' achievement, students' satisfaction, achievement tests

Introduction

Enhancing reading comprehension is an important issue to strengthen English acquisition for students of Udon Thani Rajabhat University. This importance has forced consideration to implement a reading and writing course called Reading and Writing for General Purposes into the General Education Curriculum. The first course was offered in 2001, with agreement that vocabulary was a premier obstacle of reading, so the course had focused on utilization of prefixes, suffixes and context clues. Over the past ten years, it found that only a short sentence enabled students to deduce meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary. However, when they were offered to read passages, extracts or articles, they became complicated; in other words, they could not summarize or clarify details of the entire content. This dilemma affected instruction procedures, so it was raised and discussed to find solutions. The discussion came up with a conclusion that students' reading comprehension was still ineffective that the course should fulfil more techniques to strengthen them in this regard. To complete the mission, searching many reading approaches were examined, and finally it achieved that a technique of reading for finding main ideas was a target approach since this had been considered as the heart of reading comprehension (Yussof et al., 2013). Duke & Pearson (2009)

defined importance of reading for main ideas that it altered unskilled readers who were as passive readers to become skilled readers or active readers. The active readers did not just read the text; instead, they interacted with the text, which later led them to comprehend concepts of the text explicitly. Pikulski & Chard (2005) proved that identifying three reading components, i.e. topics, topic sentences, and supporting details from various reading texts was fundamental for unskilled readers to acquire main ideas. In order to support these findings, Coiro & Dobler (2007) conducted research to find which reading strategies students preferred to use when they were reading online, and the results revealed that finding main ideas through locating topic sentences and supporting details was a prior technique that assisted the students to comprehend the entire content evidenced by complete responses. These results also conformed to Vaughn et al. (2013) who had a further comment that exploring students' background knowledge based on their experience while reading also bolstered them to acquire main ideas easily. Duke & Block (2012) agreed that reading for main ideas was essential since their study showed students who gave effective responses were skilled readers who were trained through finding main idea procedure. All of these importance and successes attracted the course to conduct a new lesson Reading for Main Ideas focusing on identifying topics, topic sentences and supporting details, and finding main ideas into the course's new instructional material to discover how the lesson helped improve students' ability in reading comprehension, and how satisfaction the students felt with the lesson. Furthermore, it was also hoped to see how well students could integrate reading for main idea techniques into other subjects. For these reasons, this research was conducted.

Research Methodologies

1. Samples of the Study

The samples of this study consisted of 264 different-major first-year students who enrolled in the general English course Reading and Writing for General Purposes during the third semester of the 2014 academic year at Udon Thani Rajabhat University. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique.

2. Research Instruments

2.1 An achievement test: This test was adjusted and proven from the try-out. It included a pretest and a posttest which their reliability was 0.61.

2.2 A questionnaire: It consisted of an open-ended question and five-point Likert Scale close-ended questions assessing students' satisfaction with: 1) the text, 2) the classroom, and 3) the lecturer.

2.3 An in-depth interview: This was used with students whose posttest scores were lower than pretest scores. Only seven students selected by using a purposive sampling technique were interviewed.

2.4 Observations: It was for the lecturer observing students while they were doing various activities. Frequent occurrences were recorded.

3. Data Collection

Processes of performing this study began with discussion's result to improve the course by adding Reading for Main Ideas into the instructional material. When achieving the conclusion, information was gathered from the literature, and research instruments were designed. An appropriate tool to evaluate students' progress in reading comprehension was use of pretests and posttests. When the tests were written, they were first tested (henceforth called the try-out), and their reliability determined. Additionally, a poll used for finding students' first-three favorite reading passages was also included. Results of this try-out were discussed, leading to further adjustments to make the tests more effective. When the instruments were deemed reliable, they were ready to use with the actual study. The time required for collecting data was 63 hours with various activities. At the end of data collection, a posttest and a questionnaire were employed to find students' progress and opinions about the study. Pretest and posttest scores were compared to statistically determine students' evolution in reading comprehension.

4. Data Analysis

The data in this study was divided into two parts. These were quantitative data and qualitative data. Quantitative data was in the form of students' achievement test scores as well as mean and standard deviation of questionnaire's responses. Qualitative data was from students' opinions and comments expressed in open-ended questions of the questionnaire. Students' frequent-written comments were scoped to report significant data.

Results of the Study

1. Results of the quantitative data

1.1 Students' achievement test scores

From the full score of the posttest which was 5, the students' average mean score of the posttest was 1.89 which was higher than the pretest of 1.41. This showed that students had developed their understanding of reading for main ideas (Table 1).

Table 1 Students' average pretest and posttest score

Items	N	\bar{X}	S.D.	Std. Error of Mean
Pretest Scores	264	1.41	1.136	0.070
Posttest Scores	264	1.89	1.421	0.087

1.2 Results of the questionnaire's close-ended questions

Results of these sections derived from three parts of students' satisfaction. They were comprised of: 1) students' satisfaction with the text, 2) students' satisfaction with the classroom, and 3) students' satisfaction with the lecturer. These were calculated through mean and standard deviation. The overall mean score of the three sections was 3.78 indicating the students felt very satisfied with the study. From all the three sections, it showed that: 1) the students felt very satisfied with the lecturer the most because its average mean score showed 4.10, 2) the students felt very satisfied with the text as the second rank since its average mean score had indicated 3.61, and 3) the students felt very satisfied with the classroom as the third rank because its average mean score revealed 3.53 (Table 2).

Table 2 Students' satisfaction through questionnaire

Item	Status	\bar{X}	S.D.	Interpretation
1	Students' satisfaction with the text	3.61	0.82	Very Satisfied
2	Students' satisfaction with the classroom	3.53	0.94	Very Satisfied
3	Students' satisfaction with the lecturer	4.10	0.79	Very Satisfied
Average		3.78	0.83	Very Satisfied

2. Results of qualitative data

2.1 Results from an open-ended question of the questionnaire

Of the 264 students completing the questionnaire, 106 students made additional comments through an open-ended question. Their explanation was interesting. Eighty-four students felt that vocabulary was quite difficult, and the sample passages in the textbook were also difficult. Although the passages derived from their favorite reading passage poll matched their interests, they still could not translate those passages into their mother tongue. However, they enjoyed finding topics since this technique did not depend upon grammatical structure. Besides lacking vocabulary, 10 students claimed that their background knowledge in English was their major problem. They felt their English skills were very poor. This made them lose confidence to study English and felt that learning English was boring. However, they wanted to be able to make English sentences skillful as well as Thai sentences. A third frequent comment was about the text. Only five students claimed that the text was too

difficult. They wanted the text to have additional explanation in Thai. This was because they could review the lesson and learn by themselves at home. A last type of comment was related to the classroom's atmosphere. It was noted by five students. They claimed that the hot weather in summer was the main factor making the class boring. They felt acceptable to study in a non-air-conditioned class in the morning, but they could not bear the afternoon. They preferred to study in air-conditioned classes.

2.2 Results of an in-depth interview

An in-depth interview was conducted with students whose posttest scores were lower than pretest scores. Of the 264 students, 77 students showed no improvement in their reading comprehension. Seven students were selected using a purposive sampling technique. These students gave reasons why they had no progress.

Students missing class frequently was seen as a major problem inhibiting their progress. Many of them had part-time jobs in addition to studying. Those who had part-time jobs at night found it difficult to get up early to attend class in the morning. Frequently, students who worked in shifts were asked to exchange working times with older colleagues, and they could not refuse. More unfortunately, the time at which shifts changed was the same as the time of their class. When the students were asked why they did not choose to study first, their answer was they must make money to pay tuition fees in the upcoming semester.

A second reason was related to the text. Since the text contained only English, they became bored when they needed to look up and translate most words to understand details of the lesson. They were not relaxed and did not enjoy studying every lesson in English. Many of them searched the Internet for details about reading for main ideas written in Thai. By doing this, they thought it was unnecessary to attend the class every period. When the students were asked if they could understand the material from the information they found on the Internet, they replied that they had an idea how to find main ideas, but they did not have deep understanding of the details. They also commented that it would be better if the textbook had Thai explanations.

The large number of long holidays in summer was seen as a reason for students not attending a class. During these holidays, students preferred to return to their homes and celebrate with their families. They enjoyed their time at home where they were happy and relaxed. Moreover, they tended to remain at home longer. Incredibly, a week after Songkran Day, class attendance was less than 50%. Some students further expressed that if holidays occurred in the first week and again in the

third week, they would not attend class in the second week because returning to the university wasted their time.

2.3 Results from the Observation

Observations while students were studying were important for this study. It helped the lecturer to find new methods to motivate students while they were in class. During observation of students' behavior, hand written notes were taken. Observations showed that: 1) most of them complained about unknown vocabulary, 2) they often used a dictionary when they were doing exercises associated with Finding Main Ideas, 3) students whose classroom was air-conditioned usually paid more attention to the lesson than those whose classroom had only fans, 4) some students preferred the textbook which had Thai explanations, and 5) reviewing topics taught last week before beginning a new topic improved students' understanding.

Discussion

According to the answers on the questionnaire's open-ended questions, the in-depth interview and the observations, students would become more enthusiastic if they could understand all the details of the lesson. Moreover, sample passages in the lesson should match students' interests (Park, 2012) and not be too difficult for their background knowledge (Zare & Othman, 2013).

The difference of students' background knowledge was very interesting. Frequently, many lecturers produced textbooks according to their judgment. They did not consider students whose background knowledge was different. An easily understood textbook supported student comprehension and motivated them to learn more (Mangen et al., 2012). Moreover, activities such as exercises, tasks and projects should not be overlooked. Exercises and tasks which matched the lesson and the students' ability helped increase students' self-confidence and aided learning. Consequently, it would be better if the lecturers would consider students' background knowledge and their interests before producing a textbook (Zhang et al., 2013).

Besides knowing differences in students' background knowledge, realizing student learning styles was also important. Wenden & Rubin (1987) differentiated learners into four types: visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactual learners. Each of them was different. Visual learners acquired language well through pictures or diagrams. Auditory learners could easily understand the language through listening and speaking. Kinesthetic learners learnt well through their physical movements, and tactual learners were mature learners who preferred to study in a class where everyone including the lecturer respected each other. It was important to realize differences in student

learning styles (McCallum et al., 2010) and design activities suitably for each group of students (Drummon et al., 2012). This could motivate students to attend class, and better enjoy educational activities (Zhang et al., 2013).

The students' problem with vocabulary should not be overlooked. Approximately 80% of the samples claimed that the vocabulary used with the lesson was difficult. Many of them still felt learning vocabulary was the only process to help them be better in English. In fact, there was a lesson about prefixes, suffixes and context clues in the textbook that students must master before learning to read for main ideas. However, when they learned about reading for main ideas, they still had a problem with vocabulary. Consequently, it was unclear why the students had problems with vocabulary. It might be that the lesson on prefixes, suffixes and context clues was not enough for them. Perhaps the students could not integrate use of prefixes and suffixes with reading for main ideas. In light of this, it would be better to include other interesting strategies to help students master of vocabulary.

Conclusions

Of all the results of this study, it could be concluded that over 50% of the students had an improved reading comprehension, and students generally enjoyed the course. This was evidenced by statistical comparison of students' pretest scores and posttest scores which showed that they were different with 95% confidence ($\alpha=0.05$). Additionally, the overall mean satisfaction score was 3.78 which indicated that students were very satisfied with the new lesson Reading for Main Ideas. However, vocabulary was a large obstacle for the students. Consequently, it is interesting to find suitable strategies to strengthen this regard.

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