



English Reading Efficiency of Non-English-Major Students via Context Clues Reading Drills

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Abstract

English is an official language in the world and lots of students learn it for communicating with foreigners. Therefore, four English skills are necessary to learn. Also, reading skill is important for students to read English proficiently and this is the reason for the study. The purpose of the study was to investigate English reading efficiency of students who do not study English as their major before and after being taught through context clues English reading drills. The instruments used in this study were context clues English reading drills. T-test Paired Two Sample for Mean was carried out to test differences between pre-test and post-test, including testing hypothesis of the study. The research findings revealed that students' English reading proficiency referred to the students' scores of post-test was greater than pre-test significantly at .05 level after being instructed via the context clues English reading drills. The average score of the pre-test was 12.76 and the post-test was 16.17. Additionally, testing the hypothesis of the study was found that the value of t-Stat a 10.69 was greater than the value of t-Critical as 1.66. This indicates that the students' English reading proficiency has developed when they learn through the drills.

Keywords: English Reading Efficiency, Context Clues, English Reading Drills

Introduction

English language is regarded as important for most people around the world. It is used as a tool for communication between those who are in different regions, countries, and languages. Because of its significance, English is considered as an international language used by a number of people around the world to communicate. For these reasons, the English language is generally taught in many schools in nonnative countries as the second language or as the foreign language. According to Graddol (2006), research "English Next 2006" for British Council, the number of students studying English may double to two million from 2015 to 2030. This probably indicates that English is an essential language for non-native English speakers to learn including Thais.

For Thai basic education, the students have to learn English as a foreign language and they need to learn four English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among the four English skills, reading is by far the most vital for Thai students. Some of Thai students now encounter the problem of how to understand what they are reading successfully. They cannot read or even pronounce English word accurately. The survey of Thai National Statistics Office in 2012 demonstrated that there were 22.4 million people who do not read any books including English books, and the sixty percent of them especially the ten to fourteen-year old teenagers revealed that they do not like reading. This causes the Thai teenagers to be unimaginative and it possibly causes their inability to read efficiently. If the readers do not know the meaning of vocabulary and are not familiar with the written words, it can discourage them to read English passages. They will think that it just a waste of time; causing them to give up reading entirely. Therefore, how to succeed in reading English has interested the researcher to find ways to instruct undergraduate students to accomplish reading English. For many years of



teaching Thai undergraduate students English reading, the researcher has found that one of the big problems of reading English ineffectively is to know more English words and their meanings. According to the

problems of a little knowledge of English vocabulary, Gates (1979) stated that English reading comprehension depends on understanding variety of vocabulary correctly and appropriately. The more they know meaning of words they find, the more they understand what they read. However, it is impossible for readers to understand the meaning of the words they found, so they sometimes need to guess the meaning of the words and strategies of guessing words via context clues are also essential for reading comprehension. Consequently, in the study, the researcher was interested in teaching English reading through context clues which is a necessary reading strategy for Thai students to improve English reading skill and hope it will be an approach to enhance the learners' English reading ability proficiently.

Literature Reviews

English Reading Strategies

A lot of English language learners often encounter problems in reading because they cannot comprehend the passages or articles. Wallace (1986) mentioned that the readers were not only literate but they had to comprehend the context of the passages. How to understand an English text effectively sometimes depends on experiences and background knowledge of readers. However, reading efficiency is occasionally related to readers' capability of guessing difficult new vocabularies in the text as well because readers frequently find a number of new English vocabularies when they read English text. Therefore, guessing meaning of new words from context is a strategy for readers to comprehend the text. For this reason, readers or learners need to be instructed how to guess the meaning of text through context clues. Moreover, reading strategies which can enhance the learners' reading capability are mentioned by Chun and Plass (1996) as reading component approach and metaphoric approach. Both of the reading approaches can be categorized into six types. They consist of automatic recognition skills, vocabulary and structural knowledge, formal discourse structure knowledge, content/world background knowledge, synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies, and metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

In the approach of classifying language strategies, there are a lot of studies related to vocabulary learning strategies. For the note of O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo and Küpper (1985, p. 561), it was stated that "Training research on learning strategies with second languages has been limited almost exclusively to cognitive applications with vocabulary tasks". In spite of this, there are not many individual vocabulary strategies researched in any depth, the main exemptions as guessing words from context (Huckin, Haynes and Coady, 1993). However, learning strategy research dealt with vocabulary-learning strategies allows us to conclude about vocabulary learning strategies that they are needed in reading skills. There are various learning strategies of new vocabulary that Gu (2003) stated that the strategies can be applied in learners' tasks. Additionally Gu explained the order of vocabulary learning strategies: finding the meaning of a word from the context (*inter alia*), guessing the meaning of a word by using a dictionary, and taking notes of the new vocabulary. Moreover, Amirian and Heshmatifar (2013, p. 637) gathered five kinds of vocabulary learning strategies which consisted of Determination Strategies: DET, Social Strategies: SOC, Memory Strategies: MEM, Cognitive Strategies: COG, and Metacognitive Strategies: MET. DET is strategy which learners have to determine and try to find the



meaning of words on their own. Meanwhile SOC or Social Strategies is an approach that the learners can interact with others or relate to someone or something surrounding them. For the Memory Strategies: MEM, it is the process of learning that the learners can link or connect the new word to their own experiences. The learning strategy involved in learners' perception by practice and performance is Cognitive Strategies: COG. MET or Metacognitive Strategies is an approach that occur when the learners observe and make up their mind to do something in a situation.

Context Clue Strategies

Guessing the meaning of a word found in a sentence or passage is called context clue. It is a strategy for learners to predict the meaning of an unfamiliar word or vocabulary by context and clues. However, clues do not only mean the surrounding words but they also relate to reading purposes of a reader, backgrounds or experiences of a learner. Furthermore, clues in passages sometimes involved punctuations and grammar as well (Brown, 1997). The context clue strategies in the study are concluded as 7 strategies following this:

1. Definition and Explanation Clues is a process of guessing a word through the definition and description in context which can guide the reader to define the meaning of the word.
2. Punctuation Clues is predicting the meaning of a word by punctuations occurring in a sentence. The punctuation is like an indicator to find out the meaning of the word more easily.
3. Contrast and Comparison Clues is one of the strategies in guessing the meaning of word through the contrast and comparison appearing in a sentence or a passage.
4. Restatement and Synonym Clues is repeating the meaning of a difficult word by using other words which has a similar meaning.
5. Example Clues is stating or giving more information of difficult words through giving examples, so a reader can predict the meaning by observing given examples.
6. General Knowledge Clues is related to reader's experiences and knowledge. For this strategy, if the reader has experienced the topic he or she is reading, it probably indicates that the reader can get the meaning of the word and can comprehend the topic more easily.
7. Cause and Effect Clues is a strategy where the reader can understand the meaning of a word through word clues in a sentence; showing why something happens and what the result of the thing is.

According to the seven context clue strategies shown above, there are some studies supported the context clue strategies are crucial for reading comprehension. For example, the study of Yuen (2009) found that the 20 students taught by context clues could understand the strategies in guessing the new words in context more easily. Furthermore, the students could apply the context clue strategies to reading passages or other articles outside the classroom. Additionally, the action research of Wilson (2013) studied with 13 students in 3rd grade with different learning ability concluded that students' capacity for deriving the meaning directly from the clues in context improved more than fifty percent. This can be determined that the context clues were required in reading English text.

Purpose of Study

To study English reading efficiency of students who are not studying English as their major before and after being taught through the context clues English reading drills.



Hypothesis of Study

English reading efficiency of students at Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University is greater after being instructed through using context clues reading drills.

Methods and Materials

Participants

The participants of the study were fifty two students at Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University who study the English course GELN102 English for Learning; and all of them were not taking English as their major for the reason that generally, the non-English major students have less opportunity to read English text than the English major ones, so their ability in English reading comprehension are rather low if compared to students in English major. The sampling selected was purposive. There is an error to tolerate (E) at and degree of confidence of ninety-five percent. Additionally, the sampling ones were selected with low level of English proficiency which needed to be improved continuously.

Materials

In the study, there were two instruments used as follow:

1. Fifty English reading achievement tests including close-ended questions and open-ended questions were designed to test how different the learners' English reading proficiency was before (pre-test) and after learning (post-test) through the context clues. The achievement test consisted of ten items related to the reading text comprehension. However, before the achievement test was used to collect the data, the researcher found IOC (Interval of Convergence) of the pre-test and post-test at the level of 0.52 and the level of difficulty and reliability at 0.7.

2. English reading drills were designed for students to practice guessing the meaning of vocabulary through seven context clues strategies including definition and explanation, punctuation clues, contrast and comparison clues, restatement and synonym clues, example clues, general knowledge clues, and cause and effect clues. The English reading drill was measured difficulty and reliability at the level of 0.74.

3. A questionnaire was designed to study the students' appreciation to learning English via the context clue reading drills. There were eight items asking about their knowledge after learning English through the context clue reading drills, how to apply English reading strategies by the context clues outside class, and the learners' motivation in learning English after being taught to read English text through the context clue strategies. All items were five levels of Likert scale. All participants had to answer the questions after they had been taught reading English text by the context clue reading drills.

Data Collection

First of all, collecting data began by testing the learners' English reading proficiency with the English reading achievement test (pre-test). After that all the participants were taught reading English with context clues reading drills which consisted of seven strategies of guessing the meaning of words through context clues. The duration of teaching English reading with the reading drills were planned for seven weeks according to the seven context clues strategies. Each week after teaching, the learners would be required to take a test. This meant that the learners had to take seven tests according to the seven context clues approaches. In it's the seventh week of collecting data, participants had to take the post-test to compare the results of English reading achievement



between pre-test collected in the first week and post-test done in the seventh week. Finally, they were required to answer the questionnaire on how satisfied they were after being taught reading English through the English reading drills.

Data Analysis

There were three several related statistics to analyze the data of the study. First, the English achievement tests (pre-test and post-test) and questionnaire were examined the efficiency of the test with E1/E2, IOC (Index of Item-Objective Congruence), and reliability by α - coefficient and (KR-20). When the achievement tests and questionnaire were verified, comparison of the result between pre-test and post-test was tested by t-test for dependent samples. Additionally, t-test for one sample was used to investigate the hypothesis of the study. Finally, the mean (\bar{x}) and the standard deviation (S.D.) were the statistic for illustrating the result of satisfaction of the study.

Results

The result of the study presented the statistical analysis of the study. The presentation was divided into two parts as follows:

1. The finding of the students' English reading efficiency before and after being instructed through the context clues English reading drills.

According to the purpose of the study, the result of the study was presented in Table 1 to illustrate the average (Mean: \bar{x}) and S.D. of pre and post-test.

Table 1 Comparison of the students' English reading efficiency before and after learning through the context clues English reading drills

	N	Mean (\bar{x})	S.D.
Pre-test	52	12.76	8.64
Post-test	52	16.17	2.37

The finding of fifty-two students' English reading achievement before and after learning through the context clues English reading drills indicated that the average of the pre-test point of participants was 12.76 and S.D. as 8.64 whereas the average point of the post-test was higher and it was at 16.17 (S.D. at 2.37) which full score of both the pre-test and the post-test was twenty. Data from the study in Table 1 was calculated for finding the statistic result by t-pair or t-test for dependent samples to compare the score of pre-test and post-test which found that the t-value (10.69) was higher than t-critical (1.98) at the level of .05 significantly. This revealed that the students' English reading scores after learning through the context clues English reading drills were higher than before learning at the level of .05 significantly.

When the result of the study was investigated, the hypothesis of the study was additionally tested to compare the students' English reading achievement score before and after learning through the context clues English reading drills. The hypothesis of the study was set as the average scores of English reading of the students after learning via the context clues English reading drills was higher. Testing Hypothesis of the study was investigated as follows:

H0: The average pre-test scores of English reading of the students after learning through the context clues English reading drills was not significantly different from post-test scores.



H1: The average scores of English reading of the students after learning through the context clues English reading drills was higher than before.

The hypothesis testing was conducted by t-test: Paired Two Sample for Means as illustrated in Table 2

Table 2 Hypothesis Testing by t-test: Paired Two Sample for Means

	Post-test	Pre-test
Mean	16.17	12.76
Variance	2.37	8.64
Observations	105.00	105.00
Pearson Correlation	0.04	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.00	
df	104.00	
t Stat	10.69	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00	
t Critical one-tail	1.66	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00	
t Critical two-tail	1.98	

The data illustrated in Table 2 for testing the hypothesis of the study was found that the value of t-Stat as 10.69 was higher than the value of t-Critical as 1.66. This indicated the score of reading English after learning through the context clues English reading drills was greater than before; therefore, the main hypothesis (H1) “The average scores of English reading of the students after learning through the context clues English reading drills was higher than before” was accepted. Additionally, testing hypothesis was examined for comparing P value with the reliability of the study set at .05. The study found that P value (.00) was less than the level of reliability (.05); as a result, the H1: The average scores of English reading of the students after learning through the context clues English reading drills was higher than before was acceptable.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study findings revealed that the students’ English reading achievement after learning through the context clues English reading drills was higher than before. The hypothesis of the study was tested by t-pair found that the average points of learners after being taught by the context clues English reading drills increased significantly. Findings from the study presented that the students were more successful in reading English because of various factors. Apparently, strategies in learning the new vocabularies through guessing the words through context clues can lead readers to get the meaning of the new difficult words more easily. In the term of getting the new words through context clues, the readers do not waste their time to look up meaning of the words from a dictionary; moreover, it can inspire non-native readers to improve themselves in English reading. The finding is similar to the previous study of Weatherford (1990) that indicated the strategy for learning new vocabularies through context clues would save time of the readers to find out meaning of the unfamiliar words effectively. They were able to predict the meaning of the words more easily if being instructed through the English context clues. Furthermore, the study of Rokni and Niknaqsh (2013) presented that ability in reading English of the students who had been taught through context clues were more effective than those who had not because of their increased capability in guessing meaning of the new words and aspiring them to read more



related English texts. Additionally, the learners' experiences relevant to or familiar with a topic is one of the related factors that affects to the learners' English reading achievement. The preceding study of (Kuhn and Stahl, 1998) found out that the learners who had lots of general knowledge were able to read more English passages compared to those who did not for the reason that the well-informed persons could comprehend and understand the passages they were reading more easily than those who had less knowledge in the topics. Even though the readers had to face unfamiliar words, they probably guess the meaning of the words due to their experiences being relevant to the topics. Therefore, an instructor should select the reading topics relating to the learners' experiences to stimulate them in reading English, for example, the learners' local tourist attractions or the local traditions and festivals. Most of the things that the learners experienced can lead the students to comprehend the content and vocabulary and they are reading more easily because of their relevant experiences. Additionally, to improve the learners' English reading skill more efficiently, a teacher needs to find how to guide students to remember new vocabularies for long-term memory. The instructor should encourage the learners to use the new vocabulary on their own sentences and to remember the new ones through drawing pictures. Moreover, the teacher should set the opportunity for the learners to use the new vocabulary in various situations such as presentations in class, English camps, and conversations with foreigners.

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