

# The Effectiveness of Reading Strategies on Reading Comprehension

Choosri Banditvilai

**Abstract**—This research aimed to investigate the effectiveness of reading strategies on reading comprehension of the second year English major students who enrolled to study English Reading at the faculty of Liberal Arts and Science, Kasetsart University, to find out whether, after being trained in reading strategies, they were able to apply any of these strategies to their reading processes. The data were collected from a questionnaire and reading tasks and semi-structured interviews. The statistical techniques used were the mean value and standard deviation. The analysis of qualitative data and summary of key points were made from the interview. The findings were that reading strategies had a positive effect on the students' reading comprehension. The students had favourable attitudes towards skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning and they could apply these strategies to their reading processes and they helped them to comprehend the text better.

**Index Terms**—Reading strategies, reading comprehension, English reading, reading processes.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a lifelong skill for academic learning and success in school. According to Anderson [1], reading is a basic life skill. Thai university students have to spend a great time on reading materials. However, the students face the problem of not understanding the passages of what they had read. This is reflected in their poor reading scores. In reading, students need to use various strategies to help them in the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information [2]. Therefore, reading strategies are assumed to be important for students reading comprehension and the reading strategies equip the students with the skills of how to handle their reading effectively. Research reveals that good readers are actively involved with the text and they are aware of processes they use to understand while they read. Teachers can help students improve their reading comprehension through reading strategies. Reading strategies are purposeful means of comprehending the author's message [3]. They are believed to influence readers in adjusting their reading behaviours to work on text difficulty, task demands and other contextual variables. Adams [4] identified the types of reading strategies as follows:

### A. Skimming

Skimming is a reading technique for speed reading. The purpose of skimming is to get an overview of the organization of the text and its main idea from a passage in a book. To skim a passage, the readers read through the passage

quickly and skips the details. They read the first sentence of each paragraph. Each paragraph usually contains a topic sentence which states the main idea. McWhorter [5] suggests a topic sentence can appear differently within a paragraph. The most common location of a topic sentence appears in the first sentence of the first paragraph. The second most likely place for a topic sentence is the first sentence of the last paragraph.

### B. Scanning

Scanning is a reading skill that allows the reader to locate specific information quickly. With scanning you already know before you begin what sort of information you are searching for. The purpose of scanning is to get specific information. Scanning is especially important for improving your reading. Many students try to read every word when they read, so they read very slowly. Scanning can help the students learn to read and understand faster.

### C. Making Predictions

Hutchinson [6] defines prediction as "A matter of using an existing knowledge of a pattern or system in order to anticipate what is likely in a novel situation". Many researches have shown that good readers use their experiences and background knowledge to make predictions and formulate ideas as they read [7]. This strategy also allows students interaction, which increases students' interests and improves their understanding of the text [8]. Making predictions is a strategy in which readers use information from picture, title, to make predictions about the story. The title of a text can operate memories of texts, permitting them to guess the content of a new text. During reading, successful readers can make predictions about what will occur next, or what opinions the writer will offer to support a discussion. Readers try to assess these predictions ceaselessly and change any prediction that is not approved by the reading [9].

### D. Questioning

Questioning helps students monitor their comprehension and stay engaged and interested in their reading. Readers can use the questioning before, during, and after reading. The questioning process requires readers to ask questions of themselves to construct meaning, enhance understanding, find answers, solve problems, find information, and discover new information [10]. In this strategy, the students return to the text throughout the reading process to find the answers to the questions. Questioning helps students to clarify and comprehend what they are reading. In this strategy, asking appropriate questions permits successful readers to concentrate on the most important information of a text [11]. Asking questions while involving in the reading process provides students with an opportunity to think about what are they reading, be active and independent readers, and be able

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to appropriately reflect on their reading [12].

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Goodman [13] defines reading as an active process in which readers use effective strategies to extract meaning from a text. In the process of reading, readers need to use reading strategies to understand the meaning from the text. Reading strategies are key elements in developing students' reading comprehension. According to [14], reading strategies influence readers in adjusting their reading behaviors to work on text difficulty, task demands and other contextual variables. Reading is a highly strategic process during which readers are constantly constructing meaning using a variety of strategies. Several research studies have shown that there is a positive relationship between learners' reading strategies and their reading comprehension skills [15]. Brookbank [15] indicated that the application of various reading strategies increased learners' reading comprehension proficiency. Learners who learn reading strategies try to recognize the main point of a paragraph, to elaborate on unclear words, phrases, or sentences, and to summarize their reading. These strategies aid readers in solving their problems when reading texts and assessing their planning and its results. Reading strategies improve the reading skills of proficient and less proficient readers. Readers who have learned different reading strategies know what, when, how, and why to use them in their reading comprehension processes. Su [16] investigated the impact of reading strategies on the learners' reading proficiency. The findings indicated that reading strategies are among the most powerful factors in improving reading comprehension skills and they have a great impact on the students' reading comprehension ability. Students become not just passive receivers of information but active makers of meaning. Successful readers try to apply numerous skills to grasp meaning from the texts. Readers should be involved in the reading process by using different strategies to monitor their meaning. Paris *et al.* [17] classified reading strategies into three categories based on when they are used: before, during and after reading. Pre-reading strategies is the process of examining a text or illustrations prior to actually reading the text. Pre-reading is aimed at activating the students' background knowledge or schemata from personal experience. Background knowledge is defined as the students' prior knowledge, or knowledge of the world and cultural knowledge. Readers used background knowledge to integrate new information from a text into their previous information. Pre-reading assists in the assimilation of new information that they are about to encounter. Generating part of the reading vocabulary and developing a goal for further reading, readers require reading strategies to help achieve reading comprehension. While-reading phase is designed to help in understanding the writer's purpose, style and skills, improve understanding of the text structure, clarify text content and locate the main idea. While reading questions may enable students to understand the details of what they read thoroughly. Post-reading strategies are aimed at promoting: consolidation or reflection on what has been read and relating the text to the learners' knowledge, interests or views. Harnseithanon [18] conducted a study with Thai

students on the effectiveness of reading strategies on English reading comprehension of third-year marketing students in Thailand. The findings were that students had positive attitudes towards reading strategies and felt that reading strategies affected the students reading comprehension moderately. Saowakhon [19] studied the reading strategies of first-year Engineering students at a university in Thailand. The findings were that the students employed reading strategies moderately when reading English language materials. In 2005, Supanan [20] investigated the reading strategies of first-year Business English students at a university in Thailand, it was found that the students employed various reading strategies to assist in comprehension of English material. The most frequent strategy used was looking up the meanings of unknown words or usage from an English-Thai dictionary. Readers require reading strategies to help achieve reading comprehension.

## III. PROCESS

This section includes purpose of the study, the participants, the material, the significant of the study, the instruments, a questionnaire and follow up interviews.

### A. Purpose of the Study

This study, aims at answering the following questions:

- 1) What are the effects of reading strategies namely: Skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning on students' reading processes?
- 2) After being taught reading strategies, are the students able to apply any of these strategies in their reading processes?

### B. Participants

The participants in this study were 59, 13 males and 46 females, second-year English major students at Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus enrolled in the course of 01355201 English Reading from July to September 2019. It is a compulsory course for English major students. All of the students were approximately 18-20 years old and had similar backgrounds since they were second year English majors. They all had at least 10 years experience in learning English at primary and secondary school.

### C. Material

The material used in this study was adapted from Reading Power by [21]. The content in each unit contained three phases of reading to develop reading skills. Four reading passages of the four units were selected for the experimental teaching sessions and for checking the students' application strategies.

The steps in teaching were divided into three steps based on Williams, [22] as follows:

#### 1). Pre-reading

The purpose of pre-reading was to assist the students to get the most out of what they were going to read. This was done by providing the students with pre-reading questions to activate students to think and to relate their relevant background to the text, to preview important points, and to

set a purpose for reading.

2). *While-reading*

The while-reading phase was to help the students develop the skills of eliciting from what they read. Students needed to use bottom up processes to analyze words, phrases and sentences in texts to verify their anticipation from the reading phase and to understand the details of the text [23].

3). *Post-reading*

The purpose of follow up was to help the students develop the information gained from what they learned. It enabled students not only to review or conclude what they have read from the text but also to integrate the textual information into their own experiences.

In the pre-reading phase, the teacher asked the students to look at the picture, read the title and try to predict what the story was about. In while-reading phase, the students were asked to read the text to check their predictions. In the post-reading step students were asked to discuss the key concepts, review and summarize what they had read and integrate the textual information with their knowledge of the world.

*D. Significant of the Study*

The present study is significant in that it can provide notable insights into the effectiveness of reading strategies on reading comprehension.

*E. Research Instruments*

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of reading strategies on reading comprehension i.e. skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning, a questionnaire, reading tasks and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data (see Table I).

TABLE II: THE EXPERIMENTAL PERIODS IN THIS STUDY

Date	Text Units	Classroom Performance
September 4, 2019	Unit 6	Conduct the experimental teaching
September, 11, 2019	Unit 7	Conduct the experimental teaching
Septemberv18, 2019	Unit 8	Conduct the experimental teaching
September 23, 2019	Unit 9	Conduct the reading test

*F. Questionnaire*

The first part of the questionnaire focused on the participants' gender and length of English learning experience. The second part was used to obtain students' reading strategies awareness focused on the above-mentioned reading strategies. The questionnaire was used to obtain students' reactions towards using skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning in the pre-reading and while- reading phase. This study was conducted during the first semester in the academic year 2019. It consisted of five items.

Item 1. measured students' opinions on the effects of skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning on their reading comprehension.

Item 2. elicited how different strategies helped them in reading.

Item 3. and 4 aimed to investigate students' attitudes towards using the above strategies.

Item 5. was to get the students' general comments and suggestions.

*G. Findings*

Data from the questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire found that students had a favourable attitudes towards the strategies that the teacher used. The students' feedback supports the idea that learning takes place by relating previous knowledge to understand new information. In L2 learning where the students have limited experience of the language, their previous knowledge, especially the knowledge of the content is very important. The students mentioned that prediction stimulated them to pay more attention to the listening text in order to see whether their predictions were right or not. This gave them a purpose for reading. The reading strategies concerning skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning could affect their reading comprehension. Therefore, they needed to be taught some pre-reading activities to be able to activate their own prior knowledge about a given topic.

1). *English reading tasks*

This task was designed by the researcher to study the reading abilities of the students. It consisted of 4 passages. There were 4 multiple-choice answers. The objectives were to check whether the students could apply reading strategies to aid reading comprehension. The four reading tasks which the students did while reading the passages together with the final test of students abilities in skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning strategies were used as one source of data.

To analyze the reading tasks, the steps were as follows:

- 1) The full score of each task was specified as 10 points.

The tasks were scored and results recorded in a table with frequency distribution. The arithmetic means of the scores from each task was calculated.

The data from reading tasks that the students did in the while-reading phase were administered. Then the mean-value was calculated for each task. The results are presented in Table II.

TABLE II: THE READING TASK RESULTS

Unit	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
Mean	8.89	9.27	9.08	9.00
S.D.	1.07	0.86	1.11	0.97

Table I, shows that the students have a reasonable reading comprehension level since the mean value of reading task score were 8.89, 9.27, 9.08 and 9.00. The results of S.D. illustrate that the mean scores are reliable since the S.D. of each test is low.

To support the results from the reading tasks, the data from the questionnaire, item 1 which asked the students to rate the degree to which skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning assisted their understanding of each reading task was calculated into a mean-value. The results are presented as follows:

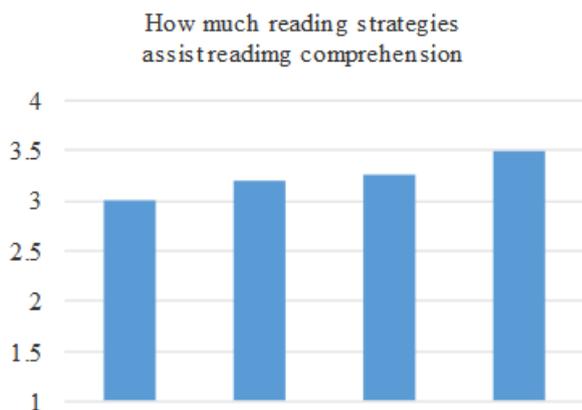


Fig. 1. Students' self-rating of the degree to which reading strategies assisted their reading comprehension.

It can be seen from the graph in Fig. 1 that the students felt reading strategies assisted their comprehension a lot.

The mean-values were calculated using the following scale:

- 1.00-1.75 = None
- 1.76-2.50 = A little
- 2.51-3.25 = To some extent
- 3.26-4 = A lot

The results of the semi-structured interviews show that most students had positive attitudes towards the reading strategies on reading comprehension. Students taught the reading strategies were enabled to improve their reading comprehension. The following are some quotes from students' attitudes towards using reading strategies on reading comprehension.

"I like the way the teacher asks me to read the title, look at the picture and make predictions. This strategy motivates me to read the article with a purpose".

"The teacher teaches us to find key words from the passage because it can help us to get specific information easily and quickly".

"I skim through the article about the content of the passage and try to guess the meaning of the unknown words from the context".

"Prediction helps me get more understanding when reading".

"Prediction gave me a chance to activate relevant existing knowledge in making predictions".

"It encourages students to pay more attention to the reading to see whether their prediction is right or wrong".

"The teacher's questions activate relevant ideas and hence provides a basis for understanding the reading text".

"Pre-reading questions helps me make predictions about content and can solve meaning problems when I am later faced with language difficulties".

"I have some background knowledge about Unit 6. Please let smokers know: It is never too late to quit. This knowledge facilitates my predictions".

"I like the way the teacher teaches me to find key words because they help me find specific information quickly and I can apply this technique to use in my daily life".

"The questions that the teacher asks before reading activates my background knowledge and stimulates my interest to read the passage purposefully".

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study showed that reading strategies have a great impact on the students' reading comprehension ability. Students have revealed that skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning strategies have helped the students' reading comprehension. The students had positive attitudes towards these strategies. Students needed to be trained or guide on the use of different reading strategies so that they would know how to apply these strategies for successful comprehension of academic materials. Teachers will require the skills in order to teach reading strategies that will assist students in understanding and applying the appropriate strategies to become skilled readers.

#### V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

Reading strategies based on skimming, scanning, making predictions and questioning helped the students have a reasonable reading comprehension level. However, the level of the students' comprehension might vary from tasks to tasks, depending on students' background knowledge and the complexity of the tasks. The majority of the students could apply reading strategies to their reading processes. It could be interpreted that students gained the ability to predict and ask questions because the teacher had provided the opportunity for them to build up the skill.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Ms. Chosri Banditvilai is fully responsible for this research paper.

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