

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. The Background of the Study

This chapter covers essential aspects for conducting this research and provides a background as well as a target situation to the study. This section contains the rationale of the study, the definition of terms, the purposes of the study, the research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the expected outcome and the thesis outline. Summary is concluded in this section.

Humans use language to communicate and one of the most important languages is English. English is a global language. This is because English has been used and taught as a second language around the world. Moreover, the world has been increasing its vast amount of information in English in the media, and even more so through advances in technologies and fierce competition in the global market. Therefore, learning English is crucial for the world today. In accordance with the aforementioned, all nations have to accelerate their pace with changes. The best way to do so is to develop the people of each country. In Thailand, the 10th National Economic and Social Plans 2007-2010 regards Thai people as a center of development (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2006).

In addition, in order to keep pace with a fast-moving world, Thai education is being reformed. English is compulsory from primary to higher education and learner-centered education is promoted (Thai National Education Act B.E. 2541(A.D. 1999)). In the Thai context, English is learnt as a foreign language (EFL) and reading is the main focus of all four main skills in national syllabus. This is because English is taught as a foreign language in Thailand, which is a monolingual society. Most importantly, Thai people must have the ability to read English to gain mainly technological and medical advances from all over the world. According to Wei's Ph.D dissertation at the University of Maryland which is directed by Professor Dr. Rebecca L. Oxford (2005), reading is the most fundamental skill in modern society.

Furthermore, as in a global age, EFL reading is significant for academic success and professional success as well as personal development.

However, Thailand has been facing literacy problems among children learning English. Reading English is still a core problem in every level of education in the country. Especially, in some parts of northeastern and southern Thailand, the great problems of poverty, malnutrition, disease, severe education disadvantage and lack of realization of the fast-moving world still remain (Rattananich, 1997). According to an NGO Thailand report prepared under the coordination of the National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCYD) and the Center for the Protection of Children's Rights (CPCR) in cooperation with child and youth organizations, youth groups, NGOs and international organizations based in Thailand, the quality of Thai education is especially low in rural schools compared to other countries at the same level of development. The report (2005) was submitted to the United Nations' Committee on the right of the child. Rattananich (1997) mentions that traditional approach to teaching literacy both in Thai and English fail to teach millions of children. This approach breaks the languages into its smallest parts, and each language is taught through rules of parsing, syntax, phonics and spelling. Each language is taught separately from the purpose and meaning of the language itself.

Panthachanacha (2004) conducted a research entitled "A comparison of Learning Achievement in English Comprehension of Secondary Grade 1 at Mattayomsiriwanwari 2 Songkhla School through Direct Method and Grammar Translation Method". The research showed that the approach which was employed to teach reading in English fail to teach learners. The learners were only taught translation, word recognition and grammar. In other words, the learners were not taught reading itself but translating into Thai. The learners would only sit and listen to their teacher before doing exercises.

Additionally, the research entitled "A Comparison of Comprehension Reading and Attitudes toward English Language Learning of P. 6 Students" by Wannajiye (1993) showed that though teachers paid much attention to reading, learners' reading ability is low.

In sum, the disability of reading English is a terrible problem that should be improved as soon as possible or Thais will continue to suffer from lagging behind the technological world.

This realization of the importance of reading ability in English will lead to an attempt to get the parties involved to find the solutions to help Thai learners of English improve their English reading ability.

2. The Target Situation (Phratat Nongsammuen School)

Personal and academic interest made the teacher (researcher) want to solve the learners' reading problem. In particular, the learners in the target situation i.e. the learners at Phratat Nongsammuen School, where the teacher (researcher) has been teaching since October 2005 have shared the same problem mentioned. That is, they have not been successful in reading English despite many years learning English. Some learners at Phratat Nongsammuen School can not even identify letters of the alphabet so they are unable to read even at word level. To help such learners, the teacher should start from the alphabet before progressing to words and then finally to paragraphs. These learners are supposed to be at a lower intermediate level of English but are really still beginners. Moreover, in English reading class, the learners take only one role as a listener with no interaction with the teacher and peers. This makes English boring to them. The teacher (researcher) was seeking for a way to help them by applying Brown's Reading Strategy (2001) which teaches from reading the alphabet up word to a paragraph through interactive teaching approach. Brown (2001) offers ten strategies to help read effectively. Some examples of these are: a) Having a clear purpose to read, b) Employing graphemic rules and patterns for beginning learners and c) Employing silent reading for intermediate and advanced learners. In interactive teaching approach the learners are encouraged to interact with the teacher and peers. It is expected the learners will be enjoying themselves when learning to read English.

The primary causes of this problem are divided into two main areas: Teachers and Learners.

2.1 Teachers. There are three factors that involve teachers: Approach, Problems and the Ministry of Education policy.

2.1.1 Approach

The teaching approach that many teachers employ does not give enough chance to allow effective interaction with the learners. According to an interview on the Thailand Social Monitor "Improving Secondary Education," a new report by the World Bank's Human Development Team in Thailand which was launched at the "The Second Thailand Education Congress on the Occasion of World Teachers' Day" in Bangkok, Thailand 2006: In secondary schools in Thailand, teachers employ teacher-centered approach which does not allow learners to interact with the teachers or among fellow-learners. Thus the learners are passive learners, not critical learners (The World Bank, 2006). Similarly, a research entitled "The Development of Internet-Based Instructional System for Teaching Remedial English to First-Year University Students" by Suppasetseree (2005) a professor at Suranaree University of Technology showed that eighty percent of the learners who were from rural schools at Suranaree University of Technology have low proficiency in English since they were taught with front-style lecturing. Those learners rarely had a chance to participate in classroom activities. Consequently, the students were more likely to be passive learners rather than active learners.

Also a research paper entitled "Peer Response Technique: A Proposed Model for EFL Writing" by Torwong (2003) revealed that teacher-centered approach was still employed in Thailand. This is contrary to one major principle in the Thai Educational Act of 1999 (Thai National Education Act B.C. 2542 1999) where the learner-centered approach is extremely promoted.

In addition, The research "The Improvement of Reading Skill through Self-Access Center" by Somboonres (2004) showed that teacher-centered approach was one factor that blocked Thai learners from learning English.

In the targeted context, Phratat Nongsammuen School, the teacher-centered approach is still employed in classrooms. In English class, the learners are familiar with the front-style teaching which is sitting, listening, repeating and taking dictation. The learners do not participate in teaching and learning.

This creates many problems for the learners' ability in English especially in reading English. Besides, this affects the learners' attitude to and motivation for reading English.

2.1.2 Teachers' problems: motivation and qualification.

2.1.2.1 Motivation

According to the research entitled "A Condition of Teacher Shortage in Basic Education in Thailand" by Madilokowit & Ragponmueng (2004), teachers have many duties to do at school, in addition to having many heavy teaching loads. Furthermore, the research reveals that most of the schools do not support teachers to develop themselves. This makes a teacher's individual, academic progress slow. In addition, the teachers work very hard, but their workmanship is not equivalent to their salary. In other words, they earn very little. This makes them have little motivation to work. In particular, in this target school, if a teacher focuses on teaching only, he or she is perceived as an inefficient teacher even though he or she has the ability to teach. This might have caused some teachers to put more effort into other duties such as administrative and official work rather than teaching. In the past the policy of the Ministry of Education tried to make every school good but not by the qualification of teachers.

2.1.2.2 Qualification

In Thailand, the national curriculum of basic education--primary to secondary levels has the expectation that after finishing the basic education, learners will have a good attitude toward learning English. The learners will be capable of communicating in English in any situation to gain knowledge, work and to further their education. Furthermore, the learners will have a good understanding about other nations' culture and other socio-linguistic factors. (Academic Department, 2001).

However, the teachers' ability does not reach standard (Curriculum Innovation, Testing and Evaluation: Proceeding of the 1st Annual JALT Pan-SIG Conference, 2002). The results of teacher assessment tests provide good evidence for this claim as outlined below.

In 2002, English teachers in primary schools were given a test in English that included listening, reading, writing and speaking. The maximum score was one hundred. The exam was administered by the Office of the Basic Education Commission. The result was that ninety per cent of those teachers scored very low, and the rest ranked medium. In addition, in 2004, 1, 500 English teachers in both primary and secondary schools in thirty provinces with heavy tourism and 80 educational districts were given an English test. The test included listening, reading, writing and speaking. The results were that seventy five per cent scored low grades (Asia News Network, 2005).

In 2006, 103 English teachers in primary and secondary schools in Chaiphum Educational Service Area Office 2, where Phratat Nongsammuen School is located, were given a test of English that included conversations, grammar and reading. The maximum score was one hundred. The exam was administered by the Office of the Basic Education Commission. Their results are shown in Table 1. Ninety percent got scores lower than fifty and the rest were in medium range (Chaiphum Educational Service Area Office 2, 2006). This might make learners incapable of learning English successfully in every skill because some teachers have a low proficiency in English themselves.

Table 1 Exam scores of English teachers in Chaiyaphum Educational Service Area
Office 2

1. Teachers who work for ERIC and train other teachers		2. Secondary teacher		3. Primary teacher	
Number	Scores	Number	Scores	Number	Scores
Teacher No.1	77	Teacher No.1	23	Teacher No.1	53
Teacher No.2	76	Teacher No.2	28	Teacher No.2	49
Teacher No.3	64	Teacher No.3	26	Teacher No.3	45
Teacher No.4	63	Teacher No.4	39	Teacher No.4	34
Teacher No.5	62	Teacher No.5	33	Teacher No.5	35
Teacher No.6	61	Teacher No.6	28	Teacher No.6	36
Teacher No.7	51	Teacher No.7	40	Teacher No.7	36
Teacher No.8	54	Teacher No.8	35	Teacher No.8	36
Teacher No.9	51	Teacher No.9	49	Teacher No.9	36
Teacher No.10	51	Teacher No.10	44	Teacher No.10	36
Teacher No.11	48	Teacher No.11	45	Teacher No.11	36
Teacher No.12	46	Teacher No.12	33	Teacher No.12	37
Teacher No.13	45	Teacher No.13	30	Teacher No.13	37
Teacher No.14	36	Teacher No.14	47	Teacher No.14	37
Teacher No.15	36	Teacher No.15	64	Teacher No.15	38
Highest scores=77 Lowest scores= 36 Means scores=54.73		Teacher No.16	60	Teacher No.16	39
		Teacher No.17	63	Teacher No.17	34
		Teacher No.18	44	Teacher No.18	34
		Teacher No.19	35	Teacher No.19	34
		Teacher No.20	53	Teacher No.20	34
		Teacher No.21	41	Teacher No.21	33
		Teacher No.22	52	Teacher No.22	33
		Teacher No.23	37	Teacher No.23	33
		Teacher No.24	34	Teacher No.24	33
		Teacher No.25	38	Teacher No.25	32
		Teacher No.26	20	Teacher No.26	32
		Teacher No.27	37	Teacher No.27	32
		Teacher No.28	25	Teacher No.28	32
		Teacher No.29	31	Teacher No.29	32
		Teacher No.30	22	Teacher No.30	31
		Teacher No.31	34	Teacher No.31	31
		Teacher No.32	29	Teacher No.32	30
		Teacher No.33	72	Teacher No.33	43
		Highest scores=72 Lowest scores= 20 Means scores=37.75		Teacher No.34	37
				Teacher No.35	37

Table 1 Exam scores of English teachers in Chaiyaphum Educational Service Area Office 2 (Cont.)

1. Teachers who work for ERIC and train other teachers		2. Secondary teacher		3. Primary teacher	
Number	Scores	Number	Scores	Number	Scores
				Teacher No.36	34
				Teacher No.37	33
				Teacher No.38	33
				Teacher No.39	31
				Teacher No.40	35
				Teacher No.41	28
				Teacher No.42	30
				Teacher No.43	30
				Teacher No.44	29
				Teacher No.45	29
				Teacher No.46	29
				Teacher No.47	29
				Teacher No.48	29
				Teacher No.49	30
				Teacher No.50	19
				Teacher No.51	19
				Teacher No.52	19
				Teacher No.53	19
				Teacher No.54	20
				Teacher No.55	20
				Highest scores=53 Lowest scores= 19 Means scores=32.39	

(Chaiyaphum Educational Service Area Office 2, 2006)

Table 2 Results of English Test

Number of Teachers	Lowest Scores	Highest Scores	Total Scores	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation
103	19	77	100	37.79	12.50

As the Ministry of Education realized that the quality of English teachers had the most influence on learners’ English ability, it has cooperated

with Cambridge ESOL to train English teachers in Thailand. Cambridge ESOL provided the TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test) course for the English teachers. It intends to enhance teachers' confidence and improve job prospects by focusing on the core teaching knowledge needed by teachers of primary, secondary or adult learners, everywhere in the world (University of Cambridge, 2008).

There are three modules in TKT (Pulverness et al., 2005 p.2):

1) Module 1 focuses on terms and concepts commonly used to describe language and language skills; the background to language learning: activities and approaches to ELT (English language teaching) and assessments.

2) Module 2 focuses on lesson planning and the use of resources and materials.

3) Module 3 focuses on the language that teachers and learners use in the classroom and on techniques for classroom management

According to English Language Institute (2008, p.2), in each module, teachers who have trained with TKT course have to take the TKT exam. There are four bands in the TKT exam:

1) Band 1 A candidate at this level demonstrates limited knowledge of TKT content areas.

2) Band 2 A candidate at this level demonstrates basic but systematic knowledge of TKT content areas.

3) Band 3 A candidate at this level demonstrates breadth and depth of knowledge of TKT content areas.

4) Band 4 A candidate at this level demonstrates extensive knowledge of TKT content areas.

In Thailand, since 2005 there are many teachers that took the course and exam as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3 Results of TKT in Thailand since 2005

Band	Number of teachers	Per cent
Band 4	215	2.7
Band 3	5, 613	70.1
Band 2	2, 149	26.8
Band 1	35	0.4
Total	8, 012	100

(English Language Institute, 2008)

2.1.3 Ministry of Education’s policy

Thai government has been developing education. Section 30 of National Education Act encourages teachers to do research in classrooms for developing teaching and learning process (National Education Act of B.E. 2542 1999). The Ministry of Education evaluates teachers by looking at their written paper, but not their performance. This makes some teachers neglect teaching activities and instead work on producing documentation. Therefore, the teachers cannot apply their research into teaching activities.

2.2 Learners

2.2.1 Motivation

Most of the learners do not like learning English especially reading it. This is because they are taught only translation and grammar. Moreover, in Thailand, English is used as a foreign language. Most of the learners do not have enough chance to especially use it in their daily lives and around those who live in rural areas where they are not frequently exposed to foreigners. This makes them think learning English is not important and thus they have little motivation to learn English.

Pothong (2001) conducted a research entitled “A Study of English Camp Activity that Enhance Motivation in Learning English of the First Year of Primary Level Student at Suphunburi College of Dramatic Arts”. The research revealed that the learners do not have the motivation to learn English since they are

taught only grammar. Also, because the teacher-centered approach is employed, the learners do not have a fair chance to practice English since teachers primarily focus on teaching and not on more teacher/student activities that would involve student participation in teaching and learning process.

According to Phoythong's (2006) research, entitled "A Study of Method of Learning and Teaching English by Utilizing Research Process from Rural Resource Center", in Karnjanaburi Province (like Phratat Nongsammuen School, this school is a rural secondary school), seventy percent of the 715 learners did not have motivation to learn English, and thought English was boring. Moreover, eighty percent of these learners lacked confidence to speak and read English since they rarely had opportunities to use English in daily life.

In addition, Tutwisoot (2003) conducted the research entitled "Use of the Extensive Reading Program to Develop Reading Comprehension". The research revealed that learners face many problems reading English, and the learners have bad attitudes towards studying English. Moreover, the learners do not enjoy reading.

In the target school, most of the learners have little motivation and negative attitudes to learning English, especially reading in English. Additionally, some of the learners just wish to finish their schooling and obtain certificates to apply for employment.

2.2.2 Family background

Most of the learners' parents work as farmers, and they can work only in the rainy season. Their income is not enough for their families. Therefore, during other seasons some of the parents have to migrate to work in big cities, and they have to leave their children with relatives. They only come back home on national holidays or during the rice harvest time. Thus, most of the learners are not well-trained or disciplined. This factor has a great influence on the learners due to their family background which plays a vital role in the achievement of children learning (Ministry of Education of New Zealand, 2003; UNICEF, 2001)

Most of the parents in a target school did not further their education after finishing primary so they do not understand the globalization. The parents cannot provide a learning resource to support their children learning through books, computers and so on, and the learners cannot consult their parents in learning particularly in English. This problem affects the learners' learning achievement.

Most of the learners at Phratat Nongsammuen School therefore have a low level of disciplinary awareness. When in a classroom situation, most of the learners do not pay enough attention to lessons, fail to meet the deadlines, cheat in examinations and are not punctual.

2.2.3 Mixed ability classes

In all classes at Phratat Nongsammune School, there are some learners that are good in learning in many subjects such as Thai, Math and English. On the other hand, some learners cannot even read and write in Thai or English. Most of the time, those learners who cannot read are left behind. Worse, in the English class, some learners can not read even a letter. There are many learners in one class at least about thirty and their abilities are very different. It is also very hard to teach effectively because there are not enough English teachers in proportion to the number of students.

According to the aforementioned problem, the teacher (researcher) attempts to solve it by using an approach that allows the learners to involve themselves in teaching and learning. The learners have the chance to interact with the teacher and peers. The learners have many activities to do to gain knowledge by not only listening. The learners are assumed to be taking pleasure in reading English. This is expected to lead to better attitudes to and motivation for reading English. Additionally in this study, the teacher (researcher) will employ Brown's Reading Strategies (2001) to help to solve the learners' reading problem.



3 Rationale of the Study

Based on mentioned problems above, they gave rise to this research study.

3.1 The teacher-centered approach which was used in the target context could not improve the learners' attitudes to and motivation for reading English. Also, it could not improve the learners' reading comprehension. This resulted from the learners passively sitting and listening to their teachers, as teachers did not know if the learners could read or not. Therefore, there is a need for an effective teaching approach which allows the learners to involve themselves in the teaching and learning process. In addition, the approach aims to make the learners feel enjoyable, lively and happy in learning to read English. This aims to improve the learners' attitudes to and motivation for reading in English and the learners' reading comprehension.

3.2 The learners do not see the importance of English; more importantly, they find that it is difficult to read English. Some learners cannot read English even at letter level and this affects their attitudes to and motivation for reading. Thus, it is vital to use practical reading strategies. In this study Brown's Reading Strategies are selected since they are appropriate to the target learners. For example, the target class is a mixed-ability class and the strategies range from decoding a word for beginners up to silent reading for intermediate and advanced learners. This aims to improve their reading in English and increase their attitudes to and motivation for reading in English.

These problems require applying the interactive language teaching approach to teach Brown's reading strategies (2001) that would enhance the learners' attitudes to and motivation for reading English, as well as improve the learners' reading comprehension. Brown's Reading Strategies through interactive teaching approach would have to be integrated into instruction. At the end of the course, the learners' reading comprehension and attitudes to and motivation for reading English would be improved.

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4 Definition of Terms

4.1 Interactive teaching approach refers to teaching that encourages learners to participate in class by answering questions and expressing their ideas. The teaching focuses on group work and interaction among learners and a teacher (Department for Children, Schools and Families of England [DfEE], 2008; Brown, 2001)

4.2 Reading strategies are tools that the learners use when they read. The strategies help the learners comprehend texts more effectively. This research study focuses on Brown's Reading Strategies (2001).

4.3 Motivation is simply referred to as a reason or reasons that make people do something (Richards et al., 1992).

4.4 Attitude is a manner of acting, feeling, or thinking that shows one's disposition, opinions, etc (Webster's New World: Collage Dictionary, 2002, p. 91).

5 Purposes of the Study

The study aimed:

- 5.1 To enhance attitudes to and motivation for reading in English.
- 5.2 To improve reading comprehension.

6 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

- 6.1 Does interactive teaching approach improve learners' attitude to and motivation for reading English?
- 6.2 Do Brown's Reading Strategies help improve learners' reading comprehension?

7 Scope of the Study

This research investigates the improvement of Matthayom Two (eighth grade) learners' attitudes to and motivation for reading English, as well as reading comprehension after employing Brown's Reading Strategies (2001) through interactive language teaching. Also, the research focuses on learning and reading

strategies of the learners at Phatat Nongsammuen School, Amphoe Phukhieo, Chaiyaphum, in the second semester of 2008 academic year.

8 Conceptual Framework

In this research study, the teacher (researcher) found that the learners had negative attitudes to and motivation for reading in English. They did not like to read in English both inside and outside classroom. This resulted in the learners having low abilities in reading comprehension. Therefore, the teacher (researcher) employed Brown's reading strategies through the interactive language teaching approach to enhance the learners' attitudes to and motivation for reading in English in order to improve reading comprehension. This can be illustrated by the following diagram:

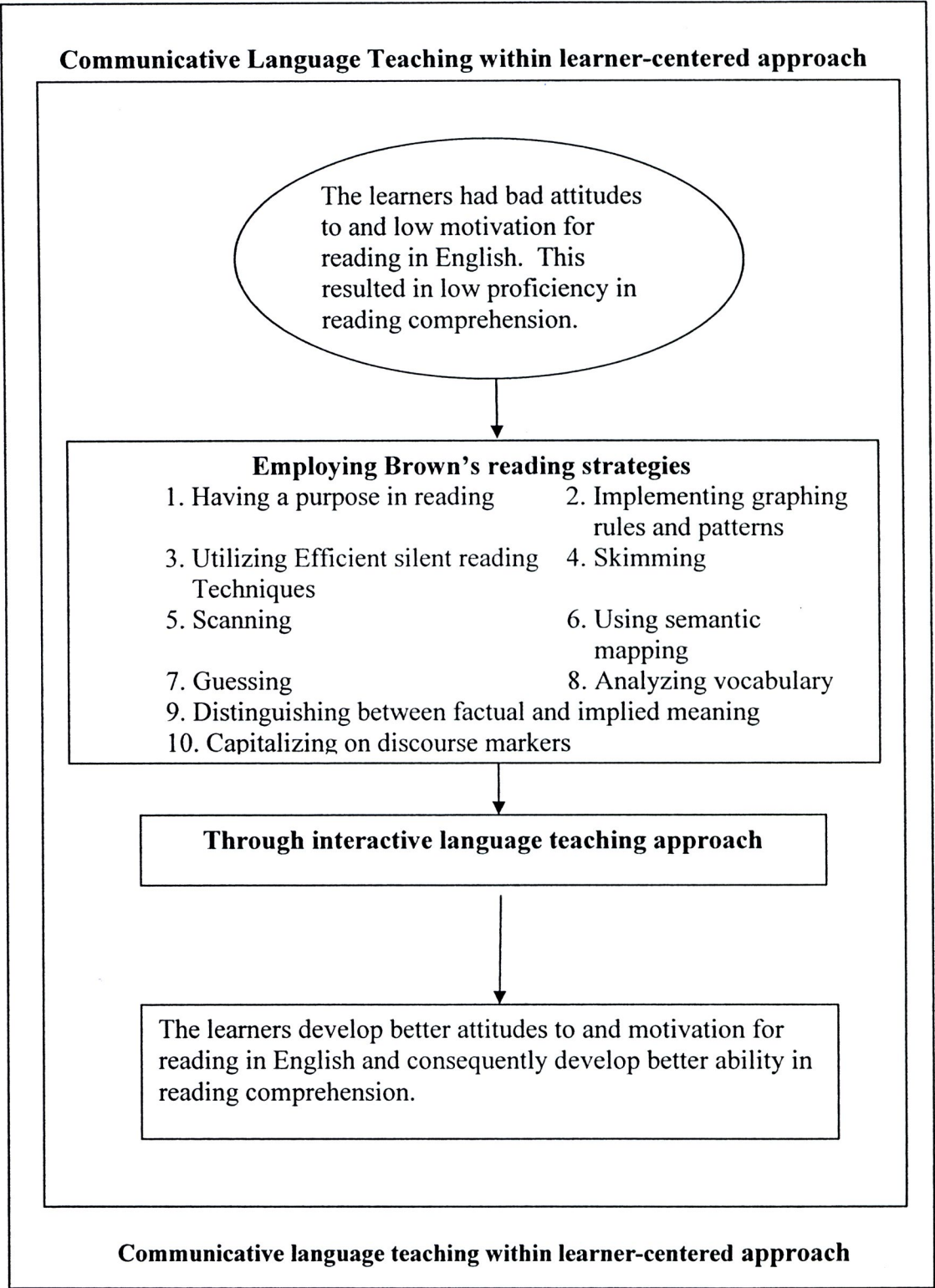


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

9 Significance of the Study

The research was regarded as significant at three levels.

9.1 The local context: This research was an innovative trial using an interactive language teaching approach to introduce reading strategies. It can provide a model for other schools with similar problems.

9.2 The national context: This research was the first attempt to employ interactive teaching to introducing Brown's Reading Strategies in Thailand. Also, the research supports the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) B. E. 2544 (OBEC, 2001 A.D.) that proposes the curricular reforms for all elementary and secondary schools in Thailand. The curriculum focuses on shifting from the 'parroting' style of learning by copying and repeating to communicative methods with a learner-centered approach. Also, the development of critical thinking is promoted within this curriculum and the methods used within this study support such development. This can help eradicate illiteracy in Thailand.

9.3 The international context: This research study employed Brown's Reading Strategies (2001) to help the learners comprehend effectively. Brown's Reading Strategies would be practical, useful and efficient to the target situation. The target class comprises mixed-ability learners as Brown's Reading Strategies (2001) focus from the beginner to advanced readers. This supports the United Nations' "Education for All (EFA)" project which aims to enhance basic education and diminish illiteracy worldwide within 2015.

10 The Expected Outcomes

The target-group learners were expected to gain better attitudes to and motivation for reading English with better reading comprehension.

11 Thesis Outline

This thesis includes five chapters. The content of each chapter is summarized respectively.

Chapter One provides background of the study, rationale of the study, definition of key terms, purposes of the study, research questions, scope of the study, significance of the study, and the expected outcomes and summary.

Chapter Two reviews relevant theories and previous research on the communicative language teaching approach, the interactive teaching approach, the learner-centered approach, self-directed learning, reading, reading strategy and related research.

Chapter Three discusses the major research method including population, research design, research instruments, collection of the data, data analysis and research plan and schedule.

Chapter Four describes and discusses the results of the research findings of the research study

Chapter Five summarizes the major findings of the research study including the summary of the study, conclusion, discussion and recommendations.