

## **ABSTRACT**

This study took a closer look at the roles of background knowledge and second language proficiency in second language reading in M.5 students from Science-Mathematics in Benjamarachutit School, Nakhon Si Thammarat. The purposes of this research investigation were to investigate 1) whether all participants were affected by background knowledge or not, 2) whether second language proficiency or background knowledge play a more vital role in second language reading comprehension in the sample groups, and 3) reading behavior of the subjects while taking the Reading Comprehension Test as well as subjects' opinions on the passage.

60 M.5 students from Science-Mathematics in Benjamarachutit School were divided into two groups, a control group and an experimental group. Each group consisted of 15 high proficient and 15 low proficient students. Cultural background knowledge of subjects in the experimental group was enhanced through pre-reading activities, that is to say, a video clip and semantic mapping. After a 50-minute reading instruction, subjects took a 10-item reading comprehension test on unfamiliar Irish culture.

The results revealed that effects of background knowledge are strong in all second language proficiency levels and that background knowledge and language proficiency worked side by side in promoting reading comprehension. The findings also offer pedagogical implications for L2 classroom reading instruction.