

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussions of reading comprehension results and reading strategies, (4) conclusions and (6) recommendations for further study.

#### **5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

The objectives as well as subjects, materials and procedures of this study are summarized as follows:

##### **5.1.1 Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to investigate 3 areas in order to identify which reading strategies and skills of the employees need to develop. First, to investigate at what degree they comprehend the reading passage; second, to assess some of the key problems of the employees in reading the company online article; and third, to determine the reading strategies the employees use while reading the online article.

##### **5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures**

The subjects of this study were of 30 employees of Nielsen Thailand, selected by convenience sampling from a recent list of in-house English program participants. However, they represented the population of all business units. The subjects were categorized into two groups, good and poor readers by the Reading Comprehension Test scores, regardless of their level of proficiency, but based on Reading Comprehension Test scores. 15 subjects whose scores over 60% were referred as good readers; likewise, those whose scores less than 60% were referred as poor readers.

The reading material for the reading comprehension test was drawn from the Nielsen online article '2009 Industry Outlook: When times get tough, the tough go back-to-basics' which contains a 1,100-word passage. The subjects were requested to read the article and took a 10-item multiple-choice reading comprehension test. 1 mark was given to each correct answer, the maximum scores

was 10 marks. After finishing the reading comprehension test, the subjects completed the Survey of Reading Strategies questionnaire which consists of 3 categorized strategies: Global Strategies, Support Strategies and Problem Solving Strategies.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS**

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

### **5.2.1 The Reading Comprehension Test Findings**

It was found that the majority of the subjects seemed to be having difficulties in reading online articles for comprehension. As demonstrated from the Reading Comprehension Test, the overall mean score was only 5.40. It was shown that none of them fully comprehended the text. The highest score was 9 and 8 but only 6.7% obtained of these levels, whereas the lowest score was 2 (3.3% chose only 2 correct answers). 13.3% got 3 correct and the majority (about 50%) got a medium score range from 4-6 correct response (23.3% got 4 right, 10% got 5 and 20% got 6 right).

The item analysis indicated that 73.33% of the subjects chose the correct answers for item number 5, testing minor details, and item 7, testing references. Nonetheless, it appeared they had most problems with more difficult items such as item 9 making inference, item 1 and 2 asking about gist information and main idea, and item 8 & 10, testing topic sentence in paragraph. More notably, poor readers have shown remarkable weakness in making inferences, finding the main idea and identifying topic sentences in paragraphs and interpreting word meanings. However, it was unexpected that good readers scored less than the poor ones on item 10, which tested topic sentences in paragraph. This could be due to many factors: for example, good guessing, not overanalyzing the question and careless good readers might miss the words. Another possibility is that correct guessing played a part in the way the results came in.

### **5.2.2 The Reading Strategies Findings**

The Survey of Reading Strategies finding has demonstrated that the subjects deployed the problem-solving reading strategies most frequently while they

used support reading strategies least frequently. Overall, there was no significant difference between the reading strategies of good readers and poor readers in all three subcategories. Likewise, the order arranged from most frequency use to least frequency use of reading strategies claimed by good and poor readers appeared very similar in all three subcategories, particularly the problem solving subcategory. It could be that many readers do not have a clear awareness of which skills they are utilizing when they read. Another possibility is that it is difficult to identify which strategies or skills are being used when the readers are reading beyond their awareness. For example, it is hard to identify if they translate from English into their native language when reading.

Nonetheless, there was statistical significance on some items indicating that poor readers more frequently utilized these strategies than the good readers, such as strategy number 8 (one of global strategies), strategy number 2 and 29 (in support strategies subcategory).

## **5.3 DISCUSSIONS**

### **5.3.1 The Key Problems of the Subjects on Reading Comprehension**

From the scoring and item analysis, it was notably demonstrated that the majority of the subjects, especially the poor readers, had most problems with making inference, finding main idea in paragraph, main idea and gist information. It appeared that poor readers had most problems with the difficult items that required semantic knowledge and advanced reading skills such as finding the main idea and making inferences.

#### **1) Inference**

It was found that the majority of the subjects particularly the low proficiency readers had problems with item 9 which tested inference; only 26.67% of the subjects were able to choose the correct answer to this question. 84% of the subjects who chose the correct answer for this item were good readers, similar to item 3, which also tested inference but in an easier context. As a result, 60% of the subjects scored on this item, in which the proportion of the good readers vs. the poor ones is 2:1.

It has been seen that the low level proficiency readers encountered more problems with making inference than the high proficiency ones. According to Allen (2002, pp. 95-96), to answer an inference question, the reader has to understand the main idea of the passage. In addition, the reader must use some background experience or knowledge to understand what the author is implying and try to not infer beyond what can be true from the given information. In concord with the finding on item 10, the subjects also had problems with the main idea or the topic sentence in a paragraph. Since many subjects misinterpreted the main idea, they were not able to accurately infer the message. Additionally, it would be difficult to understand what the author is conveying if the readers do not have enough schemata, or background knowledge, or culture-specific knowledge (Carrell, Devine, & Eskey, 2002, p. 2). It was also possible that the readers did infer more than the fact stated in the text as they were trying to match their own background knowledge with the author's (Allen, 2002; Nuttal, 2005). It was found that a number of the subjects chose the choice (c) 'Online activities will become more popular among the new generation ...' since for them, it seemed true and made more sense than other items.

## **2) Topic sentence in paragraph**

One of the key problems that the majority of the subjects had was finding the topic sentence in a paragraph. Surprisingly, good readers found more difficulty in finding the topic sentence in paragraph 11 (item 10) than the poor readers. This could be due to many factors. It is possible good readers carelessly missed the words or they tried good guessing. Otherwise, they do not really know how to determine the topic sentence. Of 33.33% of the subjects who chose the correct answer, the proportion of the good readers vs. the poor ones is 2:3. According to Nuttal (2005) when readers and authors share the same things in common, the readers would likely have no difficulty to comprehend the written text since they have similar background knowledge. However, that could lead them to infer more than what can be true in the passage (p. 13). From the finding, the subjects claimed that they often thought about what they already know to help them understand what they read, and they often try to guess what the content of the text is about when they read; that indicated that they tried to use their background knowledge to construct the meaning.

It has been reviewed that background knowledge is crucial to inference in comprehension (Carrell, Divine, & Eskey, 2002; Anderson, 1999; Nuttal, 2005; Nunan, 1999) and in this case it highly influenced the readers so that they trusted their background experience more than the visual text. Even though some main idea or topic sentences in the paragraph were displayed as eye-catching highlighted information in the paragraph. Probably, the subjects lacked reading skills or they were not well trained on finding the main idea or topic sentence.

### **3) Main idea and Gist**

It was also identified that the one of difficult tasks for poor readers was to find the main idea of the article (40% of the subjects scored on this item; the proportion is 5:1 for good and poor readers) as well as to identify the gist information (40% of the readers chose correct answer; in which each good and poor readers shared the same proportion). It was demonstrated that the subjects did not effectively use the reading strategies to find the main idea, as it can be seen from the material that the author has used a heading or subheading in bold or in a large font. However, it was also found that the subjects (both groups) claimed that they almost always used headlines to increase their understanding (good readers' mean = 4.3, S.D. = 7.24; poor readers' mean = 4.13, S.D. = 7.43). That is unlikely to have happened because the main idea of paragraph 11 is clearly in bold face headline. Probably, they have never been trained to find the topic sentences in L2 reading and they were not aware that the topic sentence usually can be found in the heading or subheading. Given that they have been trained to find the main idea in L1 or they are good readers in their native language, their reading skills transfer is unlikely to have occurred since it has been blocked out by the limit of linguistic proficiency (Nunan, 1999, p. 258).

As Allen suggested, to find the main idea, readers should ask themselves 'what is this about?'. In addition, the reader must understand the topic in order to be able to determine the main idea (Allen, 2002, p. 32). Likewise, to answer the question that asks about gist information in a long passage, the readers must be able to answer this question: 'What is the author telling me about this topic?' (p. 51).

#### **4) Vocabulary**

As mentioned in the summary, poor readers had more problems with lexical meaning than good readers. However, they tend to rely on bottom-up strategy. Nevertheless, decoding the meaning of the word alone is unlikely to be very helpful in reading process. In addition, probably, they did not effectively use the context clues in the context to comprehend it. Both good readers and poor readers claimed that they often used context clues to help them better understand what they were reading. Using the context clues is a skill that can be developed from practicing and training. According to Allen, knowing how to use context clues and word part clues will help a reader become a better reader. The author uses context clues to define words and to help the reader to understand the text. There are six types of context clues: definition, restatement or synonym, example, details or explanation, comparison, and contrast. Good readers have a general knowledge of prefixes, suffixes and root words to determine meaning from word parts (Allen, 2002, p. 11).

#### **5.3.2 The Reading Strategies of the Subjects**

On average, there were no significant differences of the reading strategies that good readers and poor readers used in 3 subcategories, the global, support and problem solving strategies. Base on the average mean scores of the frequency use, reading strategies of poor readers were mostly claimed as ‘often used’ in all three subcategories; while good readers claimed that they sometimes used the support categories, but often used the global and problem solving strategies. It was found that the subjects tended to use problem-solving reading strategies most frequently while they used support reading strategies least frequently.

However, there were statistical significances on the frequency use of strategy item 8 in global subcategory and item 2 and 29 in support subcategory of good and poor readers. It was found that poor readers applied these strategies much more than the good ones in these 3 strategies: reviewing the text first by noting its characteristics, like length and organization; taking notes while reading to help me understand what I read; and translating from English into my native language when reading. This finding was against those of McNeil (1987); Songsri Soranastaporn (1999) and (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002). It was possible that the poor readers did not really

understand how they read because they lack self-awareness and they sometimes made the choices that they thought were expected or desirable. According to Smyth and Pamararat Wiriyakarun's study (as cited in Sasikarn Sasitornwetchakun, 2008, p. 54), Thai learners are viewed as passive learners rather than active learners as a result of traditional teacher-centered instruction, where the learners are not encouraged in self-monitoring and free thought-expression. It has been suggested by McNeil (as cited in Anderson, 1999, p.12) that efficient readers approach reading tasks in a more active, strategic, and flexible fashion than poor readers. Lacking prediction and monitoring strategies, poor readers passively perform. Poor readers do not ask themselves questions, identify a goal, or check the extent to which answers have been confirmed.

On the other hand, good readers have shown that they used some key reading strategies more than poor readers. In global reading strategies number 1, 3, 6, 15 and 17, the findings indicated that they have a purpose in mind when they read (setting a goal); they think about what they already know to help them understand what they read (using background knowledge); they often think about whether the content of the text fits their reading purpose; they use the eye-catching highlighted information in the paragraph to increase my understanding (determining the main idea) and they check their understanding when they come across new information (self-monitoring). Likewise, in problem solving strategies, when text becomes difficult, they pay closer attention to what they are reading (strategy14); they stop from time to time and think about what they are reading (strategy 16); they try to picture or visualize information to help them remember what they read (strategy 19). It was indicated that good readers largely used these self-monitoring strategies and other helpful strategies as Aebersold and Field (1997, p. 16) suggested; for example, recognizing words quickly, using text features, using titles to infer what information might follow, using world knowledge, analyzing unfamiliar words, guessing the meaning of the text, evaluating guesses and trying new guesses, monitoring comprehension and keeping the purpose of reading the text in mind, adjusting strategies to the purpose of reading, and using context to build meaning to aid comprehension. According to Carrell, Devine, & Eskey (1991); Clarke (1979); Cziko (1978) (as cited in Anderson, 1984; and Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002), there is strong positive relation between students' metacognitive awareness of reading processes and

their ability on reading proficiency. And this finding best described what Anderson has argued; that there are two factors which affect reading comprehension; first, the development of models of the reading comprehension process and second, the role of metacognitive awareness during reading.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSIONS**

This conclusion receives support from the finding that the key problems of the subjects in reading online articles were making inferences, identifying the main idea of the article, gist information and the topic sentence in paragraph. The poor readers were also found to have problems with lexical meaning. The research evidence also points strongly to the ineffective use of reading strategies and possibly lack of background knowledge of lower-ability readers. Among three subcategories, it was indicated that the subjects used problem-solving reading strategies most frequently while they least frequently used support reading strategies. Although there were some small points statistically significant in some subcategory strategies, the mean scores of poor readers were largely higher than the good ones. These negative results probably overestimate the poor readers' reading strategies. Though poor readers claimed that they deployed the global reading strategies and supportive reading strategies more frequently than the good readers, there was no significant difference on the average mean scores of reading strategies between good readers and poor readers in three subcategories. Thus, reading skills and reading strategies training should be facilitated to help them develop their reading ability.

#### **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, recommendations for further research are as follows:

5.5.1 The sample size should be expanded since it was not possible to distinguish 'poor' readers from good ones in a small size sample. In the case where participation numbers are limited, a qualitative study should be considered instead of quantitative. The researcher can probe more accurate answers in indepth interviews.

5.5.2 The Reading Comprehension Test could include various kinds of available materials in the website for more validity. The alternative testing items

could be a mixture of deploying multiple-choice items with True or False (with at least 30-items) or some short answer questions for more reliability reading comprehension test.

5.5.3 The Oxford standardized test can be used for proficiency test.

5.5.4 The treatment and post-test can be done; hence, the study can address more effective use of reading strategies.

5.5.5 Other factors which can be the barriers of reading the company online library as well as the readers' attitudes, readers' profile and reading habits should also be accounted for. It might be useful to use an open-ended question for other suggestions.

5.5.6. Other variables such as education background, work area, working experience could also be accounted for when running the data.

5.5.7 Another possible limitation on my conclusions is that the testing should be done in the same controlled setting. Different timing or places possibly effects testing as a result of emotional or physical factors.