

THE READING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THAI EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
MAJORING IN ENGLISH

กลวิธีการอ่านของนักศึกษาไทย สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ
ที่เรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reading strategies employed by Thai university students. The subjects were 212 first-year English major students from the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University. The questionnaire used to collect the data was adapted from “The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS)” by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). The questionnaire consisted of two sections; part one, students were asked of their general information and part two, students were asked the frequency of use for their reading strategies. A 5-point Likert scale following each item indicated the frequency use ranging from 1 (least use) to 5 (very often use). The reading strategies were classified into three categories for assessment: global reading strategies, problem solving strategies, and support strategies. Descriptive statistics consisting of frequency, percentage and mean were used to analyze the data. The study reported that among three strategies, problem solving strategies were most frequently used followed by support strategies and global reading strategies. The findings also showed that the students often used all of three reading strategies.

Keywords : Strategies, Reading strategies, Thai EFL university students

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษากลวิธีในการอ่านของนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 1 สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะครุศาสตร์และคณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงใหม่ จำนวนทั้งสิ้น 212 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลคือแบบสอบถามกลวิธีในการอ่าน (SORS) ซึ่งดัดแปลงมาจาก Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) แบบสอบถามแบ่งออกเป็นสองตอน ตอนที่ 1 เป็นคำถามเกี่ยวกับข้อมูลทั่วไป ตอนที่ 2 เป็นการถามความถี่ในการใช้กลวิธีในการอ่าน คำตอบเป็นมาตราส่วนประมาณค่าโดยใช้มาตราวัดแบบลิเคิร์ท 5 ระดับ จากระดับ 1 ใช้น้อยที่สุดจนถึงระดับ 5 ใช้น้อยที่สุด กลวิธีในการอ่านในแบบสอบถามนี้แบ่งออกเป็น 3 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ กลวิธีในการอ่านแบบ Global Reading Strategies กลวิธีในการอ่านแบบ Problem Solving Strategies และ กลวิธีในการอ่านแบบ Support Strategies ข้อมูลที่ได้นำมาวิเคราะห์โดยใช้ค่าความถี่ ร้อยละ และค่าเฉลี่ย ผลการวิจัยพบว่า กลวิธีในการอ่านแบบ Problem Solving Strategies เป็นกลวิธีที่นักศึกษาใช้มากที่สุด รองลงมาคือ กลวิธี Support Strategies และ กลวิธีในการอ่านแบบ Global Reading Strategies ผลการวิจัยยังแสดงให้เห็นว่านักศึกษาใช้กลวิธีในการอ่านทั้งสามบ่อยครั้งในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ

คำสำคัญ : กลวิธี กลวิธีในการอ่าน นักศึกษาไทยสาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ

Introduction

The importance of language learning strategies in language learning has been proved and emphasized worldwide. Oxford (1990) discussed that learners' language learning strategies are one of the key dimensions for successful language learning. She also stated that language learning strategies are specific methods or techniques used by individual learners to facilitate the comprehension, retention, retrieval, and application of information for language learning and acquisition. Cohen (1998) defined learning strategies as the processes which learners use consciously in enhancing the storage, retention, recall, and application of knowledge about the language that they are learning. Therefore learning strategies are very important for learners. They can help them to continue to learn on their own outside the classroom.

In learning English, reading is one of the most important skills that students can practice anywhere anytime by themselves. Reading is the skill that students will in all likelihood have the most opportunities to use and that they can use most conveniently. Since reading strategies have an important role to play in promoting reading ability. Students need to master them in order to succeed in the classroom.

They use reading strategies to gain more effective language learning. The importance of reading strategies in learning has been proved and emphasized worldwide. Ahmadi (2012) stated that reading strategies indicate how readers understand a task, what textual clues they attend to, how they make sense of what they have read, and what they do when they do not understand the reading texts. He also pointed out that reading strategies can help students to understand texts so it is necessary for the teachers to teach reading strategies in the classrooms. Reading strategies are classified by many researchers. Oxford (1990) classified reading strategies into four categories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, and social strategies. Memory strategies involve personal strategies that depend on the skill and ability of each person as a tool for understanding, learning and memorizing that passage while cognitive strategies are essential in learning a new language. Compensation strategies enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge. The compensation strategies are intended to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and, especially, of vocabulary. Lastly, social strategies are a form of social behavior.

According to Cohen (1998), reading strategies were divided into three main categories: pre-reading strategies, during/while reading strategies, and after-reading strategies. Pre-reading concerns the strategies of scanning and guessing that the reader employs for prediction. At the stage of during/while reading strategies, self-questioning, self-monitoring, and problem-solving strategies are required to use for reading comprehension. Finally, the post-reading stage is the stage for evaluation of reader's comprehension. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) defined the reading strategies as five strategies: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, compensation strategies, memory strategies, and social strategies. However, Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) developed and summarized reading strategies to three main strategies: global reading strategies, problem solving strategies, and support strategies. They explain that global reading strategies are about the techniques that the students used to monitor or manage in reading such as planning what to read and evaluating one's mind progress. Problem solving strategies refer to the students' specific actions and procedures while they read the text such as rereading, guessing unknown word, and visualizing the

information they read. Lastly, support strategies refer to using tools to understand the text, such as using a dictionary, taking notes, underlining or highlighting the text.

To support the students having good reading strategies, thus, this study attempts to investigate their reading strategies. It is hoped that the results of this study can help the teachers construct and implement more useful and suitable so that the students improve their reading ability.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the reading strategies employed by Thai university students.

Methodology

The subjects of the study

212 subjects were purposively selected from first year English major students from the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in academic year 2019 at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University.

The research instrument

The questionnaire was the tool used to collect the data. It consisted of two sections. In part one, students were asked for their general information. In part two, students were asked to rate the frequency of use for their reading strategies. This part was adapted from "The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS)" of Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). The subjects were asked to rate three main reading strategies: global reading strategies, problem solving strategies, and support strategies. A 5-point Likert scale following each item indicated the frequency use ranging from 1 (least use) to 5 (very often use). The questionnaire was written in Thai to minimize problems of ambiguity and misinterpretation. To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, it was developed in accordance with a review of the literature and research. The draft questionnaire was modified and revised according to the advice of the experts in this field. Mean scores derived from the scale were calculated and interpreted based on the criteria; 1.00-1.49 = least use, 1.50-2.49 = rarely use, 2.50-3.49 = moderately use, 3.50-4.49 = often use and, 4.50-5.00 = very often use.

Findings

The findings are presented and discussed according to the main purpose of the investigation of English reading strategies employed by the first year English major students at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University.

1. Students' employment of each English reading strategy

The findings of the study reveal that problem solving strategies were most frequently used in their reading with a mean of 3.81. Problem solving strategies were followed by support strategies which had the mean of 3.75 and global reading strategies with an average score of 3.71. This finding reveals that the students often used all of three reading strategies. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean scores of English reading strategies employed by the students

English Reading Strategies	\bar{x}	sd.	Level
global reading strategies	3.71	0.85	often
problem solving strategies	3.81	0.86	often
support strategies	3.75	0.89	often

2. The Students' usage of each English reading strategy

The results shown in Table 2 indicate that the students often used global reading strategies. The students' usage of global reading strategies shows that they took an overall view of the text to see what it was about before reading it with the highest mean score of 4.05. The strategy that they employed the least was checking to see if their guesses about the text was right or wrong with a mean score of 3.50

Table 2 Mean scores of global reading strategies

Items	Usage of global reading strategies	\bar{x}	sd.	Level
1.	I have a purpose in mind when I read.	3.75	0.76	often
2.	I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	3.68	0.80	often
3.	I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	4.05	0.84	often
4.	I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.76	0.88	often
5.	I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.	3.57	0.93	often
6.	When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	3.56	0.89	often
7.	I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	3.65	0.87	often
8.	I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	3.75	0.89	often
9.	I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	3.56	0.75	often
10.	I check my understanding when I come across new information.	3.77	0.77	often
11.	I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	3.92	0.86	often
12.	I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.50	0.93	often
Total		3.71	0.85	often

3. The students' usage of problem solving strategies

Regarding to the problem solving strategies, the results show that the students read slowly and carefully to make sure for understanding what they were reading with the highest mean score of 3.99 while strategy the usage on stopping from time to time and thinking about what they were reading had the least mean

score of 3.70. It is clear that problem solving strategies were often employed by the students. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Mean scores of problem solving strategies

Items	Usage of problem solving strategies	\bar{x}	sd.	Level
1.	I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	3.99	0.79	often
2.	I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	3.75	0.86	often
3.	I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	3.71	0.83	often
4.	When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	3.74	0.91	often
5.	I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	3.70	0.83	often
6.	I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	3.75	0.93	often
7.	I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	3.84	0.84	often
8.	When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.	3.92	0.82	often
9.	When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	3.73	0.89	often
Total		3.81	0.86	often

4. The students' usage of support strategies

The table 4 shows the students' usage of support strategies which were often employs in all items. The highest mean score of strategy usage was underlining or circling information in the text to help them remember it ($\bar{x} = 4.04$). The least strategy usage employed was using reference materials such as a dictionary to help them for understanding ($\bar{x} = 3.57$).

Table 4 Mean scores of support strategies

Items	Usage of support strategies	\bar{x}	sd.	Level
1.	I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	3.62	0.92	often
2.	When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	3.75	0.82	often
3.	I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	4.04	0.86	often
4.	I use reference materials such as dictionary to help me understand what I read.	3.57	0.99	often
5.	I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	3.67	0.87	often
6.	I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among the ideas in it.	3.80	0.89	often
7.	I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	3.66	0.89	often
8.	When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	3.94	0.84	often
9.	When reading, I think about information in both English and Thai.	3.67	0.92	often
Total		3.75	0.89	often

Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to find out the reading strategies employment of the first year English major students. The students had to respond to the questionnaire of "The Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS)" which was adapted from Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). Rating frequency of usage on global reading strategies, problem solving strategies, and support strategies were required. The findings of this study clearly reveal that the subjects employed all three strategies at often usage level. The study also indicates that problem solving strategies were most frequently used, followed by support strategies and global reading strategies. This implied that if the students find the problems while they are reading, they are more likely to employ

a variety of problem solving strategies to solve the problems. These findings can be supported by many studies.

For instance, Saengpakdeejit (2014) studied the differences in reading strategies of Thai third-year students when reading academic material. The Participants were 549 third-year students studying at Khon Kaen University, Thailand. The results of the study indicated that problem solving strategies were the most frequently used. Boonkongsan (2014) investigated the effects of gender, reading anxiety and language learning experiences on the use of reading strategies used 1,140 students. The results also revealed that problem solving strategies were most frequently employed. Alsheikh (2011) investigated the metacognitive reading strategies of three advanced proficient trilingual readers whose native language is Hausa. He found that the perceived use of reading strategies was quite similar and the participants most used problem solving reading strategies. Moreover, Li (2010) explored the uses of reading strategies among senior middle school EFL students, and found that problem-solving reading strategies were used most often.

Other studies also discussed and expressed that problem solving strategies are helpful and necessary in reading. Martinez (2008) investigated the metacognitive awareness of reading strategies used by 157 chemistry Spanish students. His study concluded that the students show higher reported use for problem solving strategies. Ilustre (2011) explored whether metacognitive reading strategies or beliefs about reading is a better predictor of text comprehension. The data was collected from 226 Filipino college students in a private university. Results showed that among the three subscales of metacognitive reading strategies, only problem solving strategies correlated positively with text comprehension. Furthermore, the results also reveal that problem solving reading strategies contributed to text understanding.

Mokhtari and Reichard (2004) and Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) discussed that problem solving strategies were mostly used because these strategies were critical for comprehension. Especially, the students' actions of problem solving strategies like rereading text to improve their comprehension, adjusting reading speed, and paying close attention to reading were mostly preferred to employ (Ilknur & Ismaili, 2012). Moreover, Sheorey and Mokhtari (2001) found that the students preferred to apply guessing unknown words from the context among problem solving strategies.

Although the findings of this study revealed that problem solving strategies were the most frequently used, global reading strategies and supporting strategies were often used. The findings can guide and help the teachers understand the students' employment of reading strategies better. Moreover, from these findings, the teachers can apply appropriate strategies for their instruction and suggest useful strategies to the students so that they can employ those strategies more effectively.

Suggestions for Further Study

Further research can be done to compare the employment of EFL reading strategies classified by English proficiency level as well as learning style or the reading anxiety. Besides, more research is needed to understand students' selection of strategies within each major group of strategies. Moreover, the studies should focus on the influence of some demographic information like age, gender, and cultural background on the choice of English reading strategies. Actually, the present study did not focus on this information at all.

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