

USING COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND SIGNPOST QUESTIONS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY OF PRATHOMSUKSA 6 STUDENTS

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were to investigate students' English reading comprehension ability before and after using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions, and to investigate the attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions. Twelve Prathomsuksa 6 students of Naklongnongsrikamwittaya School, under the Udon Thani Primary Educational Service Area Office 1 in the first semester of the academic year 2024 were obtained as the sample, using the cluster random sampling. A one-group pretest-posttest design was applied in this research. An English reading comprehension ability test, 12 lesson plans and an attitude questionnaire were used as research instruments. The duration of the experiment was 12 weeks, or 24 hours in total. For data analysis, the mean, percentage, standard deviation, One Sample t-test, and t-test for Dependent Sample were employed. The results were: 1) The pretest and the posttest mean scores on students' English reading comprehension ability were 11.33 (S.D. = 3.50) or 28.33 percent and 31.33 (S.D. = 2.61) or 78.33 percent respectively. The posttest mean score

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on students' English reading comprehension ability was significantly higher than the set criterion of 70 percent at the 0.01 level, and the students' English reading comprehension ability after the experiment was significantly higher than the pretest mean score at the 0.01 level. 2) The attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions was at a good level with mean score was 4.42 (S.D. = 0.13).

Keywords: English reading comprehension, Communicative language teaching (CLT), Signpost questions, Attitude

Introduction

English is an important global language due to its widespread utilization in various fields including education, business, and international communication. Learning English is beneficial for accessing knowledge and engaging in the international broad society of today. As Kress (1999) states that English needs to change and grow in order to continue being useful for encouraging public communication as well as for understanding and producing texts that are culturally meaningful. In addition, Crystal (2003) states that English is a language that is widely recognized and acknowledged worldwide, it is essential for providing access to better educational and employment opportunities.

To ensure students develop these crucial language skills early, the Basic Education Core Curriculum in the foreign language strand at the primary level is intended to support in integrating the learners with necessary communication skills. According to the Ministry of Education (2008), Grade 6 students should be able to choose or identify sentences and texts that correspond to the meanings of symbols or signs, determine the main idea, and answer questions after listening to or reading dialogues, simple tales, and stories. Therefore, reading skill emphasizes developing students' ability to comprehend, interpret, and critically evaluate texts.

Among the four language skills, Harmer (2007) states that reading is useful for language acquisition. As long as students have a general understanding of what they are reading, their proficiency improves the more they engage in reading. Reading also has a positive effect on students' vocabulary knowledge, on their spelling and on their writing. As Oakhill et al. (2015) state that reading comprehension is important, not just for understanding text, but for broader learning, success in education, and employment. However, reading comprehension is a complex task, which requires the orchestration of many different cognitive skills and abilities.

In the context of Naklongnongsrikamwittaya School, is a small school located in Chiangpin District, under the Udon Thani Primary Educational Service Area Office 1. As reported by the Academic Department of the school in the academic year 2023, the school had 59 students, 90% of whom exhibited low levels of reading comprehension and lacked proficiency in English skills, particularly in reading. According to the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (Public Organization) (National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS), 2023), the national average score for the English subject in the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) was 37.32%. However, in the academic year 2023, the achievement result of Prathomsuksa 6 students on the English subject for O-NET was 35.63%, which indicated below-average English reading comprehension ability.

In response to the mentioned problems, some researchers discuss about methods or techniques for improving English reading comprehension ability. Communicative Language Teaching, as outlined by Brown (2001), encourages students to engage in interactive tasks involving comprehension, predication, and contextual analysis, making reading more purposeful. Moreover, this innovative use of Communicative Language Teaching offers potentially effective steps for teaching reading comprehension. Therefore, reading techniques are

typically divided into three phases. First, in the before-reading activity, the students are guided to meet the main point in each paragraph before reading. Second, in the during-reading activity, the students are able to read the text quickly and efficiently thereby preventing them from going off along a false way. Third, in the after-reading activity, the students link their prior knowledge to answer the questions in worksheets. This gives students a reason for reading properly to find the answer and complete the task.

Furthermore, Signpost Questions, as developed by Nuttall (1996), are guiding questions that help readers focus on key ideas, improving comprehension and critical thinking. Teachers usually ask these questions, but students can also be trained to create their own. Therefore, teachers can model questioning techniques, provide guided practice, and encourage students independent question formulation. This approach makes students more active and strategic readers to read effectively for developing reading comprehension. Moreover, Signpost Questions assess comprehension and guide readers to key ideas, helping them focus on essential content and avoid confusion. This enhances students analyze texts by identifying main ideas and connections. Through self-assessment and teacher support, students develop deeper understanding. Used before, during, and after reading, these questions activate prior knowledge, aid comprehension, and reinforce learning. Therefore, interpreting Communicative Language Teaching with Signpost Questions, these promote discussion and active use of English in reading activities.

Since, there is no research on Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions at the primary level in Thailand, the researcher would like to study whether using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions to improve English reading comprehension ability would be appropriate for primary students or not.

With the importance of Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions in teaching English reading comprehension ability as mentioned above, the researcher would like to investigate the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions improve English reading comprehension ability of Prathomsuksa 6 students at Naklongnongsrikamwittaya School and investigate the level of the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions. Therefore, the results of this study could potentially empower students with essential language skills for future teaching English at the primary level.

Purposes of the Study

1. To investigate the students' English reading comprehension ability before and after using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions.
2. To investigate the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions.

Research Methodology

This study was an experimental research with a one-group pretest-posttest design. It was conducted using a quantitative research method. A diagram of one group pretest-posttest design:



1. Population and Sample

The population in this study was 439 Prathomsuksa 6 students in the Network Group of Mueng 1 schools under the Primary Educational Service Area Office 1, in the first semester of the academic year 2024.

The sample in this study was 12 Prathomsuksa 6 students enrolled in fundamental English 6 (E16101), in the first semester of the academic year 2024 at Naklongnongsrikamwittaya School, Chiangpin District, Udon Thani Province, under the Udon Thani Primary Educational Service Area Office 1. These students were obtained by cluster random sampling.

2. Research Instruments

The three types of research instruments were used as follows:

2.1 Lesson plans of teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions with Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) was 1.00 for every aspect, which the lesson plans consisted of 12 units, 2 hours a week, the total was 24 hours. The lesson plans were developed an English-language version.

2.2 The English reading comprehension ability test was developed by the researcher with Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) which was 1.00 for every aspect, the difficulty value of the items was between 0.33 - 0.56, and the value of the discrimination was between 0.21 - 0.93. The reliability of the test was 0.88. It was used as pretest and posttest. This test was a multiple-choice test with 40 items.

2.3 The attitude questionnaire towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions with positive and negative 20 items which used Likert's rating scales was developed in Thai version with Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) which was 1.00 for every aspect.

3. Data Collection

3.1 Conduct the pretest using an English reading comprehension ability test with 40 items before studying English reading using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions in 60 minutes.

3.2. Carry out the teaching process according to the 12 lesson plans for 12 weeks, 2 hours a week, 24 hours in total. Likewise, the reading passages maintained a consisted difficult students' proficiency level and learning objectives. Moreover, each lesson used Communicative Language Teaching through discussion, group work, and interactive activities. For example, students activated prior knowledge in before-reading. Next, in during-reading, students were guided to comprehension. Finally, students summarized, discussed, and applied their learning in communicative tasks, ensuring active engagement and improved reading skills.

3.3 Conduct the posttest which was the same English reading comprehension ability test as the pretest with 40 items after the whole teaching process using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions completed in 60 minutes.

3.4 Distribute the attitude questionnaire to examine the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions.

The collected data from the pretest and the posttest and the students' attitude data were statistically analyzed and interpreted.

4. Data Analysis

The following steps were implemented to analyze the data:

4.1 The researcher analyzed the scores to study the teaching English reading comprehension of Prathomsuksa 6 students using mean (\bar{x}), percentage, and Standard Deviation (S.D.).

4.2 The researcher analyzed the scores to compare the students' English reading comprehension ability after the instruction with the set criterion of 70 percent using one sample t-test.

4.3 The researcher analyzed the scores to compare the teaching English reading comprehension of Prathomsuksa 6 students before and after

learning English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions using t-test for dependent samples.

4.4 The researcher analyzed data to explain that the students' English reading comprehension ability after studying English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions.

4.5 The researcher analyzed the data to investigate the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions using mean (\bar{x}), and standard deviation (S.D.)

The criteria used for interpreting the scores of students' attitude questionnaire towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions was analyzed in order to conclude and interpret the data as below (Saiyos, L. & Saiyos, A., 2000).

Interpretation of score was shown as follows:

The average scores 4.50 - 5.00	means	Very good
The average scores 3.50 - 4.49	means	Good
The average scores 2.50 - 3.49	means	Fair
The average scores 1.50 - 2.49	means	Poor
The average scores 0.50 - 1.49	means	Very poor

Results of the Study

Results of the Study of using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions on Students' English Reading Comprehension Ability Before and After the Instruction

1. The results of the study on students' English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions

The individual results of the pretest and the posttest of the student's English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions before and after the instruction were shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The results of the study on English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions of Prathomsuksa 6 students

Student	Pretest		Posttest	
	Score (40 scores)		Score (40 scores)	
	Score	Percentage	Score	Percentage
1	5	12.50	29	72.50
2	11	27.50	30	75.00
3	10	25.00	32	80.00
4	10	25.00	28	70.00
5	16	40.00	36	90.00
6	15	37.50	35	87.50
7	9	22.50	28	70.00
8	13	32.50	34	85.00
9	7	17.50	31	77.50
10	15	37.50	32	80.00
11	15	37.50	31	77.50
12	10	25.00	30	75.00
\bar{X}	11.33	28.33	31.33	78.33
S.D.	3.35		2.49	

Table 1 illustrates the comparison of the pretest score and the posttest score on students' English reading comprehension ability. The mean score reveals that the pretest mean score of 12 Prathomsuksa 6 students was 11.33 or 28.33 (S.D. = 3.35) percent. For the posttest score, the mean was 31.33 or 78.33 (S.D. = 2.49).

2. The comparison of the students' English reading comprehension ability before and after using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions with the set criteria of 70 percent

The researcher used mean to compare students' English reading comprehension ability of Prathomsuksa 6 students after the instruction with

the set passing criterion of 70 percent using a one sample t-test which were shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The comparison of the students' English reading comprehension ability after the instruction with the set criterion of 70 percent

Posttest	n	Score	Criterion of 70 percent (28 point)				Sig. (2-tailed)
			\bar{X}	Percentage	df	t	
			31.33	78.33	11	4.43**	0.00**
The set criterion	12	40	28	70			

** $p \leq .01$

Table 2 illustrates the comparison of the students' English reading comprehension ability after the instruction with the set passing criterion of 70 percent. It reveals that the students' posttest mean score was significantly higher than the set criterion of 70 percent at the 0.01 level.

3. The comparison of the students' English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions before and after the instruction

After the experiment, the researcher used an English reading comprehension ability test consisting of 40 questions with 40 points for Prathomsuksa 6 students before and after the instruction using t-test for dependent samples which were shown in Table 3.

Table 3 The comparison of the students' English reading comprehension ability after the instruction before and after the instruction

Test	n	Score	\bar{X}	S.D.	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	12	40	11.33	3.50	11	27.87**	0.00**
Posttest	12	40	31.33	2.61			

** $p \leq .01$

Table 3 illustrates the comparison of the students' English reading comprehension ability before and after the instruction. It reveals that the students' posttest mean score of 12 Prathomsuksa 6 students of was significantly higher than that of the pretest at the 0.01 level.

Results of Students' Attitude Towards Teaching English Reading Comprehension Ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions

After the instruction using 12 lesson plans, an attitude questionnaire consisting of 20 question items was conducted. It was given to the 12 students to survey their attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions. The result of the students' attitude survey was shown in Table 4.

Table 4 The students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions

Attitude Test	n	\bar{X}	S.D.	Interpretation
Student's attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions	12	4.42	0.13	Good

From Table 4, after teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions, the mean score of the 12 students was 4.42 (S.D. = 0.13). It reveals that the students had an attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions at a good level.

Conclusion and Discussions

1. Conclusion

The investigation of the students' English reading comprehension ability before and after using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions and the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions could be summarized as follows:

1.1 The pretest and posttest mean scores on students' English reading comprehension ability were 11.33 or 28.33% (S.D. = 3.35) and 31.33 or 78.33% (S.D. = 2.49) respectively. The posttest mean score on students' English reading comprehension ability was significantly higher than the set criterion of 70 percent, and the students' English reading comprehension ability after the experiment was significantly higher than the pretest mean score at the 0.01 level.

1.2 The attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions was at a good level with mean score was 4.42 (S.D. = 0.13).

2. Discussions

2.1 The students' English reading comprehension ability after studying English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions was significantly improved with a mean score higher than the set criterion of 70 percent. This finding supported the first research hypothesis of the study. This results from teaching English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions consisted of effective teaching techniques. There were many activities and worksheets to check the students' comprehension in each section after reading. Thus, the students could follow the main idea to comprehend the details in each paragraph clearly. Before moving to next paragraph, the teacher also motivated the students to comprehend their understandings using questions and discussions

at the ends of each paragraph. This finding was consistent with the method of Nuttall (1996) who states that Signpost Questions had purposes to guide the readers not to test, but to direct their attention to the main point in reading a text, and to prevent them from going off along a false track.

2.2 It was found that teaching English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions could improve students' English reading comprehension ability. The students' pretest and the posttest mean scores were 11.33 or 28.33% (S.D. = 3.35) and 31.33 or 78.33% (S.D. = 2.49) respectively. This finding supported the second research hypothesis. The students' English reading comprehension ability after studying English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions was higher than prior because, in the before-reading activity the students had been guided to meet the main point in each paragraph before reading. This made the students read the text quickly and efficiently in the during-reading activity, thereby preventing them from going off along a false way. Finally, in the after-reading activity the students linked their prior knowledge to answer the questions in worksheets. This gave students a reason for reading properly to find the answer and complete the task.

The results of this research were aligned with the study of Chongjoho (2016) findings on teaching English reading comprehension using Signpost Question Activity which was the students' reading comprehension ability after the experiment was higher than that of the pretest at the significance level of 0.01, and Srikheaw (2021) findings on using Signpost Question Activity to Improve Matthayomsuksa 3 Students' English Reading Comprehension Ability which were the students' posttest mean score on English reading comprehension ability was higher than the set criterion of 70 percent, and the students' English reading comprehension ability after the experiment was significantly higher than that of the pretest.

2.3 The students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions was at a good level. The attitude questionnaire indicated that the students agreed that using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions stimulated them to be curious and wanted to find the answer in the next paragraph. The classroom atmosphere becomes lively and enjoyable when teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations from this study

From the study, the development of English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions, the students had improved on English reading comprehension ability and had a good attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension. To support the activity in teaching English reading comprehension ability using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions, the researcher has recommended as follows:

1.1 From the research results, it was found that teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions could improve students' English reading comprehension ability. This might be because that this activity helped students effectively identify the main idea of each paragraph, making them comprehend the text quickly, and preventing them from getting lost while reading. Therefore, English teachers should apply Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions to teach English reading comprehension to improve students' English reading comprehension ability.

1.2 From the research results, it was found that the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions was at a good level. This might be because using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions provides activities that allows students read the text section by section and discussed with classmates to check their own understanding before moving to next section. Besides, the students were able to answer the questions in each section separately. Thus, English teachers should promote the use of Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions in teaching English reading comprehension ability.

2. Recommendations for further study

The researcher has some suggestions as follows:

2.1 To apply the using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions to all different learners' levels by integrating the tasks into the topics of other subjects or other language reading text with digital tools and platforms, particularly in English Teaching in the 21st Century.

2.2 To investigate the impact of using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions on other language skills such as listening, speaking, or writing skill. The using Communicative Language Teaching and Signpost Questions was one of the most effective teaching approaches that could enhance students' English language abilities.

2.3 To identify other variables that impact student language learning English such as self-learning or classroom atmosphere.

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