



An Investigation of English Reading Problems and Enhancement Strategies of High School Students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamachalai School in Bangkok

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Abstract

The study entitled “An Investigation of English Reading Problems and Enhancement Strategies of High School Students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamachalai School in Bangkok” aimed to: (1) investigate the problems in English reading skill experienced by Matthayomsuksa 5 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamachalai School in Bangkok, and (2) construct the enhancement strategies of English reading skills of Matthayomsuksa 5 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamachalai School in Bangkok. The population of this research consisted of 105 high school students from Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamachalai School in the academic year of 2025. The research employed a mixed-method design. A questionnaire was used to collect data on the students’ English reading problems, while expert consultation was conducted to develop enhancement methods. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and standard deviation) and qualitative analysis from expert feedback. The findings revealed that the overall level of students’ English reading problems was at a high level ($\mu=3.78$, $\sigma=1.30$). For the investigation of the English reading problems, the students found that they felt unsure whether they have understood the passage correctly. It took time understand the meaning of the passage; therefore, they had to repeat the same passage several times. They also encounter unfamiliar words which cause no understanding the real meaning of the passage. For the construction for the enhancement strategies of English reading problem, the findings indicated that the strategies were categorized into four chapters namely; chapter 1: Learners, chapter 2: Instructors, chapter 3: Material, and chapter 4: Assessment. The strategies were approved by the three specialists towards their correctness and suitability of the strategies. Therefore, they could be used for the enhancement of English reading skills of the students.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, English Reading Problems, Enhancement Methods for English Reading Skill for High School Students

1. Introduction

English has become widely accepted as a universal language around the world, prompting a large number of people, particularly scholars, to study it. The study of English language is extremely valuable for scholars in their academic pursuits because it helps them improve both their academic and life skills. Proficiency in English helps scholars gain acceptance in higher education institutions (Alghonaim, 2020). Reading is one of the four fundamental language skills and is essential for academic and lifelong learning. According to Grabe (2009), reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text in which readers construct meaning by combining textual information with their background knowledge. It involves decoding written symbols, interpreting ideas, and comprehending meaning. Similarly, Urquhart and Weir (1998) defined reading as a cognitive process that requires the integration of linguistic, psychological, and contextual information. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), reading is not only a means to acquire language but also a key to access information and expand knowledge in other disciplines. For Thai high school students, reading English texts is particularly important because it influences their academic achievement, university entrance examinations, and future career opportunities. However, many students still struggle to comprehend English texts effectively. These problems highlight the need to explore the causes and nature of English reading difficulties among Thai learners. Thai secondary students face reading challenges that go beyond simple vocabulary deficiencies. Prior research has delineated a spectrum of interconnected issues: limited vocabulary acquisition, deficient syntactic awareness, inadequate reading strategies, subpar inferencing abilities, and insufficient background knowledge (Imsa-ard, 2022; Rungswang & Kosashunhanan, 2021). A study of the English reading section of the GAT (General Aptitude Test) found that students had trouble with using strategies, vocabulary, grammar, and managing their time during the test (Kongcharoenkitkul et al., 2022). These problems make it harder to understand, slow down reading speed, and lower students' confidence, all of which hurt their overall academic performance. If students can't read English texts fluently or deeply, they can't learn more, have trouble keeping up with English-language materials, and might not do well on standardized tests. Consequently, these reading challenges impede educational equity and social mobility. It is important to investigate the nature and causes of reading problems among Thai high school students so that better ways to teach them can be found.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand written text. It includes a variety of cognitive processes and abilities that allow people to extract meaning from a given text. However, there are many points of views about the definitions of reading comprehension as the following examples: Kintsch (1988) described reading comprehension as a cognitive process in which readers construct and integrate meaning from text through the Construction–Integration (CI) model. In this model, readers first generate multiple propositions from textual input (construction phase) and then integrate them with prior knowledge to form a coherent mental representation (integration phase). Reading comprehension, therefore, is not just decoding words but actively building a mental model of the situation described by the text. Melesse & Enyew, 2020 suggested that reading comprehension is one of the most important skills for learning English. Reading is the ability to understand and connect with written material. Reading lets you go back in time and see what happened in the past. Reading lets you see what other people are thinking. Reading is one of the most important parts of schools when it comes to practical matters. Reading well is also important for getting a job because it can help you do better in your career. On the other hand, Imsa-ard (2022) indicated that

reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in English language acquisition, especially vital for students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). High school students in Thailand have a hard time becoming good readers because English is more of a foreign language than a language they use every day. Reading is a basic skill that all high school students should have. Students in Thailand's high schools read more difficult academic texts. It is very important for students to be able to read English well. This is because it lets them learn about the world, get ready for college entrance exams, and compete in a job market that is becoming more global.

From the concept of reading comprehension mention above, it can be concluded that Reading comprehension is a cognitive process of constructing and integrating meaning from text. It is essential for learning English, academic success, and future careers. Especially for Thai EFL students, strong reading comprehension skills enable understanding complex texts, accessing global knowledge, and improving educational and professional opportunities.

According to the works of Bond and Tinker (1979, as cited in Suwannaroa, 2021) the following components are necessary for the comprehension of the author's reading material:

1. Acquire an understanding of the meaning of the word; getting a grasp on the meaning of the vocabulary will assist in providing a correct interpretation of the sentence.

2. Acquire an understanding of each unit by reading each word in turn, which will not be a barrier to comprehension due to the absence of continuity; consequently, the students need to be trained to read the text as a unit of their thoughts.

3. Have an understanding of sentences (sentence comprehension): When readers are able to relate the sub-concepts to the sentence, they are also able to see the relationship between the words in the sentence.

4. Have an understanding of the paragraph; the reader needs to be able to identify the most important points of each sentence and then have the ability to connect those points. Readers should therefore become familiar with the genre.

5. Have an understanding of all the content (comprehension of larger units): In order for readers to have a complete comprehension of the story, they need to be aware of the relationship between the important texts in each section, as well as the order in which the ideas of the story are presented. Additionally, they need to be aware that the text structure of each type of script is different.

2.2 Reading Problems among Thai EFL Students

The research highlights the importance of reading problems emphasizes on Thai EFL students to develop reading skill. The following are 5 main reading problems among Thai EFL students from some of the researchers.

2.2.1 Vocabulary and Lexical knowledge

Limited vocabulary knowledge is a significant barrier to reading comprehension for Thai EFL students. Rungswang and Kosashunhanan (2021) discovered that students have difficulty using English reading strategies, especially when they have to skip unknown words during the first reading. This overreliance on skipping words rather than attempting to deduce meanings impairs their ability to understand the text's overall message. Similarly, Imsa-ard (2022) discovered that students often struggle with limited vocabulary. These challenges have a negative impact on their ability to understand texts.

2.2.2 Sentence Complexity and Grammar.

Complex syntactic structures, particularly long sentences with subordinate clauses, frequently cause confusion among Thai students. Imsa-ard (2022) investigated the reading difficulties encountered by Thai high school students studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study discovered that students often struggle with complex grammatical structures. The difficulty is exacerbated by differences in English and Thai grammatical structures. Thai

students may struggle to map English sentence structures onto their native language patterns, resulting in errors in interpretation. Addressing these grammatical issues through targeted instruction can help students better navigate complex texts.

2.2.3 Comprehension and Inference Skills

Thai students frequently struggle to infer implied meanings and identify text structure. Boonmoh and Tuaynak (2023) observed that students rarely monitor their comprehension and frequently misinterpret key details. This lack of metacognitive awareness and inferencing skills leads to superficial comprehension, in which students grasp surface-level information but do not understand deeper meanings or the author's intent. Developing inferencing skills is critical for reading comprehension because it allows students to read between the lines and understand implicit messages. Incorporating activities that encourage critical thinking and inference-making can help students engage with texts more deeply.

2.2.4 Reading: Confidence and Motivation

It is important to note that reading performance is significantly impacted by both anxiety and a lack of self-confidence. It was explained by Saito et al. (1999) that reading anxiety occurs when students are afraid of mispronouncing words or misunderstanding them, which in turn decreases their motivation to read. Some students may avoid reading assignments as a result of their anxiety, which further hinders their ability to develop their language skills. The establishment of a learning environment that is encouraging and supportive is of utmost importance in the reduction of reading anxiety. The development of a growth mindset, the provision of opportunities for success, and the use of positive reinforcement are all strategies that can assist students in gaining the confidence and motivation necessary to engage with reading materials.

2.2.5 Overreliance on Translation

Students who translate word-for-word instead of reading for meaning experience slower comprehension and reduced fluency. Intasena and Nuangchalerms (2022) investigated the instructional challenges of literacy and fluency in reading and writing among young Thai students. They discovered that the difficulties in teaching these skills stem from learners' limited understanding of textual language systems, such as spelling, meaning, and usage, in both receptive and productive capacities. This reliance on translation not only impairs reading ability, but also prevents students from developing a natural feel for the language. Encourage students to think directly in English and use context clues to help them progress beyond translation and improve their reading skills.

3. Research Methodology

This study is mixed methods research, which conducted with a questionnaire and the enhancement strategies. This chapter is divided into 4 main sections: 1) Population, 2) the Research Instruments, 3) Data Collection, and 4) Data Analysis.

3.1 Population

The population of this study was 105 high school students (Mathayomsuksa 5) learning Reading and Writing English at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok during the academic year 2025.

3.2 Research Instruments

The two main research instruments. The first instrument was the questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was employed for the investigation of problems with the reading skills of high school students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok. All items/questions in the questionnaire were evaluated and approved for their correctness and suitability by the 3 specialists in terms of the Index of Congruence (IOC), which was found in

the range of 0.66-1.00. In addition, the questionnaires were tried out in a group of 30 students, and the reliability value in terms of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.68. The questionnaires are, therefore, qualified to be used as the instrument for this research. The questionnaire was divided into 2 parts: 1) general information and 2) closed-ended question were used to investigate the students' opinions towards English reading problems. The researcher used a 5-point Likert scale to categorize the level of problems of English reading skill. The students were asked to do the questionnaire which was written in Thai language because it is the students' mother tongue. The second instrument was a set of questions for the focus group discussion was used to evaluate and approve the improvement strategies for English reading skills of high school students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School.

3.3 Data Collection

1. For the investigation of English reading problem, the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents by the researcher herself. However, the letter of permission request endorses by the program director was submitted to the school director in advance.

2. For the collection of comments towards the correctness and suitability of the strategies from the 3 specialists was conducted through the focus group discussion meeting.

3.4 Data Analysis

1. For the investigation of the problems, the data and information collected were analyzed and then interpreted and presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean (μ), standard deviation (σ).

2. For the approval of the enhancement strategies in term for its correctness and suitability, the comments of the three specialists collected from the focus group discussion meeting were analyzed through the content analysis method.

4. Results

This chapter presents the results of the study concerning the reading problems of Thai high school students. The data were analyzed by using mean (μ) and standard deviation (σ) to determine the level of problems in each aspect. It is divided into two parts, namely, 1) Problems of English Reading Skill, and 2) the Enhancement Strategies of Reading Skill.

4.1 Problems of English Reading Skill

Table 1: Problems of English Reading Skill of high school students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok.

Items	N=105		Level of Problems
	μ	σ	
1. I often encounter too many unfamiliar words when reading English materials. นักเรียนพบคำศัพท์ที่ไม่รู้จักมากเกินไปเมื่ออ่านสื่อภาษาอังกฤษ	4.33	0.83	highest
2. I find it difficult to guess the meanings of new words from context. นักเรียนมีความยากลำบากในการเดาความหมายของคำใหม่จากบริบท	4.06	0.97	high
3. I find it hard to understand the main idea when reading English texts. นักเรียนรู้สึกว่ายากที่จะเข้าใจใจความสำคัญเมื่ออ่านข้อความ	3.87	1.07	high

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4. I have problems understanding long and complex sentences. นักเรียนมีปัญหาในการทำความเข้าใจประโยคที่ยาวและซับซ้อน	4.24	0.88	highest
5. I find it difficult to summarize or draw conclusions from what I have read. นักเรียนมีความลำบากในการสรุปความหรือหาข้อสรุปจากสิ่งที่อ่าน	3.98	1.07	high
6. I need to read sentences several times to understand their meaning. นักเรียนต้องอ่านประโยคซ้ำหลายครั้งเพื่อให้เข้าใจความหมาย	4.38	0.81	highest
7. I often forget what I have read after finishing reading. นักเรียนมักลืมสิ่งที่อ่านหลังจากอ่านจบ	4.07	1.03	high
8. I often feel unsure whether I have understood the passage correctly. นักเรียนมักจะไม่มั่นใจว่าเข้าใจเนื้อหาที่อ่านถูกต้องหรือไม่	4.42	0.82	highest
9. I feel that reading English is boring and uninteresting. นักเรียนรู้สึกว่าการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษน่าเบื่อและไม่น่าสนใจ	2.36	0.82	moderate
10. I do not see how reading English texts relates to my daily life or future goals. นักเรียนไม่เห็นความเกี่ยวข้องของการอ่านข้อความภาษาอังกฤษกับชีวิตประจำวันหรือเป้าหมายในอนาคต	2.06	1.33	moderate
Total	3.78	1.30	high

Note. 5 = Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3=Moderate, 2= Disagree, and 1= Strongly Disagree

According to table 1, the findings revealed that the overall level of students' English reading problems was at a high level ($\mu=3.78$, $\sigma=1.30$). Among the ten items, the three most serious problem were: item number 8 "I often feel unsure whether I have understood the passage correctly" ($\mu= 4.42$, $\sigma=0.82$), Item number 6 "I need to read sentences several times to understand their meaning" ($\mu=4.38$, $\sigma=0.81$), item number 1 "I often encounter too many unfamiliar words when reading English materials" ($\mu=4.33$, $\sigma=0.83$).

Other items with high levels of problems included: item number 4 "I have problems understanding long and complex sentences." ($\mu=4.24$, $\sigma=0.88$), item number 7 "I often forget what I have read after finishing reading." ($\mu=4.07$, $\sigma=1.03$), item number 2 "I find it difficult to guess the meanings of new words from context." ($\mu=4.06$, $\sigma=0.97$), item number 5 "I find it difficult to summarize or draw conclusions from what I have read." ($\mu=3.98$, $\sigma=1.07$), and item number 3 "I find it hard to understand the main idea when reading English texts." ($\mu=3.87$, $\sigma=1.07$).

On the other hand, the two lowest-rated items were: item number 9 "I feel that reading English is boring and uninteresting." ($\mu=2.36$, $\sigma=0.82$) and item number 10 "I do not see how reading English texts relates to my daily life or future goals." ($\mu=2.06$, $\sigma=1.33$).

4.2 The enhancement strategies of reading skills of high school students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok.

Table 2: The 4 chapters of the enhancement strategies of reading skill of high school students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok

Topics / Contents
Chapter 1: Learners - Encourage learners to build vocabulary. - Provide training on reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and summarizing. - Motivate learners through interesting reading materials. - Promote self-directed learning. - Use cooperative learning to enhance interaction and comprehension.
Chapter 2: Instructors - Encourage the use of scaffolding and differentiated instruction. - Provide feedback focusing on comprehension improvement. - Integrate technology and multimedia in reading lessons. - Foster a positive and supportive classroom atmosphere. - Designing Pre-Reading, While-Reading, and Post-Reading Activities
Chapter 3: Materials - Select reading texts suitable for students' proficiency levels and interests. - Use various genres of authentic reading materials (stories, news, articles, dialogues). - Encourage use of online reading resources and digital platforms.
Chapter 4: Assessment - Use both formative and summative assessments for reading skills. - Reading Journals and Reflection. - Use performance-based assessment instead of rote tests.

According to table 2, the enhancement strategies of reading skills of high school students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok are comprised of 4 chapters; namely, chapter 1: Learners, chapter 2: Instructors, chapter 3: Material, chapter 4: Assessment. All the 4 chapters were approved by the three specialists (One Thai professors and two English native speakers) in terms of correctness and suitability of the contents all the 4 chapters. Therefore, the constructed enhancement strategies of high school students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok could be used as guidelines for the improvement of high school students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in Bangkok.

5. Conclusion

The title of the research is "An Investigation of English Reading Problems and Enhancement Strategies of High School Students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok." The objectives of this research were: 1) to investigate the problems in English reading skill experienced by Matthayomsuksa 5 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok and 2) to construct the enhancement strategies for English reading skills of Matthayomsuksa 5 students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School in Bangkok. The population in this research project was 105 high school students (Mathayomsuksa 5) studying reading and writing English at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachlai School in the academic year of 2025 in Bangkok. The main research instruments were: 1) a questionnaire, and 2) a set of questions for a focus group discussion meeting for the approval of the constructed enhancement strategies for improving English reading skills of high school Students at Nawamintrachinuthit Benjamarachalai School. For this research project, the researcher herself collected the data and information from the

population. The data and information collected were analyzed and then interpreted and presented in terms of frequency count, percentage, mean (μ), and standard deviation (σ). In addition, the comments from the three specialists collected in the focus group discussion meeting towards the correctness and suitability of the strategies were analyzed through the content analysis method. According to the research findings, it is indicated that 1) the students rated the reading problem in the high level, and 2) the reading strategies were divided into 4 chapters namely; chapter 1: Learners, chapter 2: Instructors, chapter 3: Material, and chapter 4: Assessment.

6. Discussion

For the investigation of the English reading problems, the students' English reading problems was at a high level. In addition, students found that they felt unsure whether they have understood the passage correctly. It took time understand the meaning of the passage; therefore, they had to repeat the same passage several times. They also encounter unfamiliar words which cause no understanding the real meaning of the passage. These problems are probably cause by the three main problems including: 1) the influence of their first language (Thai) on the target language (English); therefore, they keep translating from English to Thai to make sure that they understand the passage, 2) they lack reading techniques of English reading, and 3) the students don't have enough vocabulary which facilitate understanding the passage quickly. The findings are found correspondent to Rungswang and Kosashunhanan (2021) in that students frequently skip unknown words rather than deducing meaning from context, resulting in lower overall comprehension. Moreover, Imsa-ard (2022) in that Thai high school students' limited exposure to English and lack of vocabulary impairs their reading ability.

For the construction for the enhancement strategies of English reading problem, the findings indicated that the strategies were categorized into four chapters namely; chapter 1: Learners, chapter 2: Instructors, chapter 3: Material, and chapter 4: Assessment. The contents of the strategies are based on the investigation of problems of the respondents. Moreover, some theories and concepts of English reading are also applied for the strategies. The findings are found correspondent to Wonglao (2022) in that the English reading comprehension problems had a big impact, but the average means of the individual factors were a little different. The students thought that reading English was hard for them because they didn't know enough words to understand the texts. However, they thought they could get better at reading if they read English texts more often and learned from a teacher who could help them get better at reading English at school. Moreover, Prombut (2024) in that in-depth interviews with students showed that most dislike and lacked confidence in learning English, an issue that has persisted since before university. Students understood the importance of English and wanted to learn more. Teachers should emphasize a variety of learning activities, they said. They wanted more active learning than lectures.

7. Suggestions

7.1 For the usage of the research results into practice, the problems of English reading skill should be reported to the director and teachers of the school. Likewise, the improvement strategies constructed should be reported to the director and teachers for the application in the English teaching and learning setting.

7.2 For further study, the investigation of problems in writing skill and enhancement strategies should be conducted.

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