

# The Development of the English Content-Based Reading Materials for Buddhist Students of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

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## Abstract

The study aims to develop the English content-based reading materials for Buddhist Student of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. The primary objective is to find out how to develop the English content-based reading materials for Buddhist student monks. To do so, the principles of materials development by Tomlinson and Six-T's approach by Stoller and Grabe were used as the underlying principles. The next objective is to explore the attitude of student of MCU and teachers towards the quality of the English content-based reading materials. Thus, there are two main parts in the study – material development and material implementation and evaluation. In this study, the sampling methods were used in 2 stages: 1) in the needs analysis stage, a purposeful sampling and stratified samplings were used and 2) in the English content-based reading materials implementation stage, a purposeful sampling was used. To evaluate the effectiveness of the developed content-based materials during and after the implementation, 30 students of MCU and 3 English teachers were purposefully selected. After all copies of the needs analysis questionnaires were returned, each item was descriptively analyzed using SPSS program. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data regarding student of MCU purposes of reading, needs of academic and physical aspects and preferred task types. Findings were as follows: 1. In response to the research question 1: How can the English content-based reading materials be developed for Buddhist student of MCU?, the integration between six stages of material development framework of Tomlinson and six components (themes, topics,

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texts, tasks, transitions, and treads) of Six-T's approach of Stoller and Grabe could effectively produce physical and academic aspects of the English content-based reading materials. 2. In response to the research question 2 What is the attitude of student of MCU towards the quality of the English content-based reading materials? – the result of  $\bar{x} = 3.45$  from the whilst-use evaluation questionnaire and  $\bar{x} = 3.53$  from the post-use evaluation questionnaire indicated that student monks had positive attitude towards the quality of the English content-based reading materials in terms of academic and physical aspects and the effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension. The level of satisfaction of the developed materials was at a high level and the student monks with higher English proficiency tended to have stronger positive attitude or greater satisfaction. 3. In response to the research question 3 What is the attitude of teachers towards the quality of the English content-based reading materials? - the result of  $\bar{x} = 3.78$  from the whilst-use evaluation questionnaire and  $\bar{x} = 3.51$  from the post-use evaluation questionnaire indicated that English teachers had positive attitude towards the quality of the English content-based reading materials in terms of academic and physical aspects and the effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension. The level of satisfaction of the developed materials was at a high level.

**Keywords:** Development; English Content-Based Reading Materials; Buddhist Students

## Introduction

The importance of English reading and reading comprehension Reading is clearly an essential skill for professional and academic achievement especially, in the 21st century, the importance of reading is increasing due to the growth of technology causing educated citizens to be equipped with stronger reading abilities. However, reading is probably the most difficult language skill to master due to the involvement of multiple abilities such as word recognition, meaning interpretation, cognitive skill engagement, etc. In addition, the complexity of reading process in a foreign language is even greater for EFL students who must study the subject areas in English since they require additional factors such as adequate language proficiency and adequate background knowledge. The former is needed for bottom-up processing and the latter for top-down processing. Thus, it can be concluded that reading is a highly

dynamic and complex process that serves as a predictor of professional and academic success for EFL learners.

The goal of reading is comprehension, which is an ability to extract and construct meaning from a text. For successful comprehension to occur, readers must know how to employ appropriate and effective reading strategies. For EFL learners, reading strategies are crucial to be used as learning tools to enhance comprehension. The impact of reading strategies on reading comprehension, especially for poor readers, was clearly emphasized by "Acquisition of better reading strategies is apparently needed to crack the illusion of comprehension in readers who are settling for low standards of comprehension; They need to acquire and implement strategies to facilitate deeper levels of comprehension".

Moreover, reading is essential for higher education in Thailand and other countries. In Thailand, the two prominent Buddhist public universities established by King Rama V, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) provide international programs for post graduate students. In other countries, Buddhist studies are available in many leading universities such as University of California, Berkeley, University of Toronto, University of Oxford, University of Sydney, etc. Dealing with a large body of instructional materials written in English, Thai student monks need to be proficient readers who can effectively use reading strategies to comprehend the specialist subject materials throughout their academic studies.

Tomlinson and Six-T's approach by Stoller and Grabe with the aim enhance reading comprehension of Buddhist student monks. Tomlinson's materials development framework is used as a guideline to design the effective content-based reading materials through six stages: 1) identification needs to create materials or problems to solve by the creation of the materials, 2) exploration needs or problems 3) contextual realization, 4) pedagogical realization, 5) physical production, and 6) evaluation of materials. The dynamic and self-adjusting process starting from the identification of needs to the evaluation of materials concerning the physical and academic aspects ensures that these newly developed materials help solve the existing problems, and the needs of the student monks will be satisfactorily fulfilled. Stoller and Grabe's Six-T's components consisting of themes, topics, texts, tasks, transitions, and threads are integrated in some steps of Tomlinson's framework to encourage the creation of content coherence which is an effective means to promote language, content, and strategies learning.

In conclusion, the newly English developed content-based reading materials based on Tomlinson's materials development framework and Stoller and Grabe's Six-T's approach, along with the explicit teaching of Anderson's cognitive reading strategier will help student monks achieve literal comprehension and interpretive comprehension. Eventually, they become strategic readers who can take advantage of their background knowledge to fully comprehend the text.

## **Research Objectives**

1. To develop the English content-based reading materials for Buddhist student of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
2. To explore the quality of the English content-based reading materials by examining the attitude of student of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

## **Scope of the Study**

### **1. Scope of Contents**

This study will reflect some aspects of content-based theories, in which the Six T's approach is applicable to develop CBI course materials through the deliberate selection of themes, topics, texts, tasks, transitions, and threads, for specific group of learners who are Buddhist student monks. Since most of the previous studies related to the development of content-based materials are focusing on the content providing for secular education, the content suitable for monastic education is rarely explored.

### **2. Scope of population and key informants**

#### **Qualitative research design using in-depth interview**

The population of the study is 3 English teachers. All are at the Education Department of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in academic year 2021.

#### **Quantitative research design using survey research.**

The population of the study is 30 Buddhist student ranging from the first year to the fourth year. All are at the Education Department of MCU in academic year 2021.

### **3. Scope of Areas**

The researcher used Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

### **4. Scope of time**

The study has conducted from October 2021 to May 2022.

## **Research Hypothesis**

The Buddhist student have positive attitude towards the quality of the content-based reading materials against the criteria.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research designs**

The main objectives of the present study are to develop the English content based reading materials for Buddhist student monks, to explore the attitude of student monks towards the quality of the English content-based reading materials.

### **Population**

The population of the study consisted of 30 student of MCU in academic year 2021 and 2 English teachers conducting courses.

### **Participants**

A purposeful sampling was used to obtain three stakeholders for the semi constructed interview. According to Griffie, purposeful sampling is a technique where the researcher selects the participants who are knowledgeable and available to participate the study. They could be the advisor, the instructor, or the student. In this study, the researcher conducted individual (face-to-face) interview with 1 student of MCU, 1 English teacher.

The researcher randomly selected them to have the sample size calculated based on the common confidential level of 95% and the margin of error of 5%.

## **2. English Content-Based Reading Materials Implementation Stage**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the developed content-based materials during and after the implementation, 30 students of MCU were purposefully selected.

### **Research Instruments**

The evaluation questionnaires consisted of 4 sets of questionnaires as follows:

- Whilst-use evaluation questionnaire for student monks,
- Post-use evaluation questionnaire for student monks,

### **Research Procedures**

In this study, the processes of developing the English content-based reading materials using the framework of materials development of Tomlinson embedded with Six-T's approach of Stoller and Grabe were divided into 6 stages

Stage 1: Identification of needs of materials or problems to be solved by the creation of the materials.

Stage 2: Exploration the needs or problems by identifying language, functions, skills that should be included in the developed materials.

Stage 3: Contextual realization by examining and selecting ideas, contents, or texts that provide familiarity and appropriateness to the learners' context.

Stage 4: Pedagogical realization by examining and selecting meaningful exercises to be solved by the developed materials and to construct the content of the proposed materials.

Stage 5: Materials production concerning the physical and academic aspects of the developed materials.

Stage 6: Evaluation of the effectiveness of the developed materials.

### **The Assessment of Questionnaires**

Researcher edited questionnaires and gave to 5 experts to assess the content validity and objectivity as the below criteria.

+1 means the item correlated to operational definition

0 means not sure that the item correlated to operational definition

-1 means the item did not correlated to operational definition

All items in questionnaires were calculated Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) and the score from 0.5 and above was selected for data collection. Result from IOC calculation was between 0.80 – 1.00.

Questionnaires were used for tryout with 30 questionnaires to assess internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha Coefficient:  $\alpha$ ) Result of the analysis was .933. After that researcher made the final questionnaires and used it for data collection with the sample group.

### **Data Analysis**

The results were compared using the following criteria:

3.50-4.00 means strongly agree

2.50-3.49 means agree

1.50-2.49 means disagree

1.00-1.49 means strongly disagree

Frequency and percentage were used to analyze data regarding preferred topics. The items of largest percentage of selection by any groups of respondents would be included in the developed English content-based reading materials.

## Research Results

### Results of Research Question 1

The first research results and findings from each stage of the study in response to the research questions. The first section presents the process of developing the English content-based reading material. Six stages according to the framework of materials development and the integration of six components based on Six-T's approach are purposed. Then the results of needs analysis questionnaires regarding preferred tasks, topics, and physical aspects are reported. Based on this information, the English content-based reading materials are physically produced. They consisted of workbook and teachers' manual containing nine units under the main theme of the Triple Gem divided into 3 sub-themes of the Lord Buddha (Unit 1-3), the Dhamma (Unit 4-6), and the Sangha (Unit 7-9).

### Results of Research Question 2

The whilst-use evaluation questionnaire and post-use evaluation questionnaire were constructed in order to ask the 30 student of MCU who were the users of workbook. That all student of MCU were satisfied ( $\bar{x} = 3.45$ , S.D. = 0.60) with the quality of academic and physical aspects of the developed English content-based reading materials in terms of content, organization of content, presentation of content, language use, activities applied, and layout and design. The attitude of student of MCU towards the quality of the English content-based reading materials in terms of academic and physical aspects were further analyzed based on student of MCU.

The results of whilst-used evaluation questionnaire yield positives attitude or greater satisfaction towards the materials' quality in terms of academic and physical aspects including content, organize of content, presentation of content, language use, activities applied, and layout and design. Also, the results of post-used evaluation questionnaire yield positives attitude or greater satisfaction towards the materials' quality in terms of the effectiveness in enhancing their reading comprehension. Moreover, the student monks who have higher English proficiency tend to have stronger positive attitude or greater satisfaction than those who have medium and low proficiency.

## Research Discussion

The findings indicated that the effective English content-based reading materials could be successfully developed by using principles of materials development by Tomlinson and Six-T's approach by Stoller and Grabe as the underlying principles. These developed materials positively affected on student monks attitude or satisfaction towards the quality of the English content-based reading materials in terms of academic and physical aspects and the effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension for student monks.

### Research Discussion

In view of the results reported earlier, the English content-based reading materials were successfully and effectively designed by Tomlinson and Six-T's approach suggested by Stoller and Grabe can be integrated and used as the underlining principles. It was found that the results of whilst-use evaluation questionnaires and post use evaluation questionnaires from student monk were positive.

## Research Discussion

1. When teachers take role of materials writers, they should not develop instructional materials based only on their teaching experiences but also on theories of second language acquisition and materials development that may help them improve teaching and learning conditions.

2. To improve reading comprehension, materials writer should provide a wide variety of genres for students to read.

3. To deal with students with different level of English proficiency, materials developers should provide flexible lesson plan probably by indicating optional tasks and compulsory tasks.

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