

The Development of English Reading Comprehension Ability of Grade 11 Students Using Metacognitive Strategies

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Abstract—The purposes of this study were to compare the English reading comprehension abilities of Grade 11 students before and after using metacognitive strategies and to study the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using metacognitive strategies. The sample group consisted of 21 Grade 11 students in a secondary school in Udon Thani, Thailand during semester 2 of the 2011 academic year. A cluster random sampling technique was used. The research instruments were comprised of 9 lesson plans, an English reading comprehension ability test and an attitude questionnaire. The instruments in each cycle of the action research consisted of a teaching observation form, a learning observation form, lesson plan quizzes, cycle quizzes and a student interview form. Percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-test for dependent samples were used to analyze data. Three cycles of action research were employed in this study. The findings revealed as follows. 1. the students' average pretest and posttest scores on English reading comprehension ability were 55.83% and 80.24%, respectively. The students' English reading comprehension found to be significantly higher after learning using metacognitive strategies at the .05 level. 2. The students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension was at a good level. ($\bar{x} = 4.64$).

Index Terms—English reading comprehension, metacognition, metacognitive strategies in english reading comprehension, reading comprehension.

I. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning plays an important role in the global community since it is an essential tool for communication, further study, seeking for knowledge, career, good understanding for culture and worldwide vision [1]. Reading skill is an important factor in development of the quality of human life. Foreign language study broadens students' vision and enables them to communicate with foreigners appropriately and confidently [2]. As stated in [3], reading skill plays an important role in teaching English as a second language. Learners who have good reading ability will progress in their careers and their further studies. For those who study English as a second language, ability in English reading comprehension is a must. Learners need reading comprehension to be able to continually increase their knowledge [4].

Manuscript received October 5, 2012; revised November 20, 2012. This work was supported in part by the Research and Development Institute, Udon Thani Rajabhat University.

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Many language theorists reported that use of metacognitive strategies is a method to develop students' reading ability [5]. This is a self-based method by which learners develop their own communicative competence. It encourages learners to achieve and be confident. In addition, [6] studied the use of metacognition strategies in teaching for development of reading comprehension and formation of positive attitudes towards the reading strategies. The findings were that efficient readers used the strategies in developing their comprehension of various kinds of reading.

Results of the National Testing of the Educational Basic Level (2011) indicate that the average English language score of Nonghanwittaya School students was 19.22%. English language reading comprehension of Grade 11 students was at a very low level [7]. Reference [8] also found that some Thai students did not succeed in their studies because of their deficient reading skills. Also from this study, it was found that students' other English language abilities were unsatisfactory and reading was the skill that most urgently required development. Reading comprehension is the most important skill in language learning. It is therefore essential for a learner who studies English as a foreign language to acquire reading ability [9].

Much research has been done to find effective strategies for developing the students' English reading ability. Metacognition strategies are one approach that can potentially improve the student's reading ability in the EFL context. The goal of this study was to employ these strategies in order to determine the effectiveness of these methods. A further goal was to assess students' attitudes towards English language learning when these strategies were used.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study had two objectives. They were the following.

- To study and compare the English reading comprehension abilities of Grade 11 students before and after using metacognitive strategies, and,
- To study the students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using metacognitive strategies.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Scope of the Study

The study population consisted of 79 Grade 11 students at Nonghanwittaya School during semester 2 of the 2011 academic year in Udon Thani, Thailand. The samples of the study were 21 Grade 11 students at this school. A cluster

random sampling technique was used.

B. Instruments

The research instruments were comprised of 9 lesson plans, an English language reading comprehension test and an attitude questionnaire. Instruments for documenting each cycle of the action research consisted of a teaching observation form, a learning observation form, lesson plan quizzes, cycle quizzes and a student interview form.

C. Data Collection

Data were collected from the three cycles of action research using metacognitive strategies in teaching English reading comprehension. English reading comprehension pretests and posttests were administered. There were 9 lesson plans. While conducting the teaching cycles, the teacher and the students were observed by a researcher using an observation form. After the completion of the teaching cycles, an attitude questionnaire was administered. At the conclusion of the teaching, the students were interviewed.

D. Data Analysis

Data from the English reading comprehension ability test as pretest and posttest were analyzed for percentage, mean, standard deviation, and t-test for dependent samples for hypothesis testing. The students' attitude towards the teaching was also analyzed. The data from the observations of the teacher and the students, and the interview were investigated using a triangulation technique.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings revealed the following.

- The students' pretest and posttest score on English reading comprehension ability were 55.83 % and 80.24% respectively. The students' English reading comprehension ability after learning with metacognitive strategies was found significantly higher than before with significance at the .05 level.
- The students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension using metacognitive strategies was at a good level. ($X =$)

V. DISCUSSION

The result of the study from the three teaching cycles showed that the students' mean scores increased after each cycle. This resulted from application of metacognitive strategies [10] in teaching English reading comprehension combined with the four steps of the cycle of action research: plan, action, observation, and reflection [11]. The students were trained to focus on using the strategies to call attention to reading the texts. Techniques were employed to link the reading to what the students already knew. Then in running the activities, students arranged and planned their own read. This led them evaluating their reading abilities. In addition, the scores from the test after each cycle was used support their motivation in learning, enhancing desire to develop their English reading abilities. This is in accordance with a previous study [12], finding that learners' emotions and

feelings affected their success by creating motivation and confirmation in the classroom. The result of this study was also consistent with [13] who applied metacognition strategy in teaching reading. Learners could realize themselves in learning successfully using this strategy. A further study [14] investigated students' reading abilities using metacognition strategy. It is consistent with the results of this work.

The students' attitude towards teaching English reading comprehension with metacognitive strategies was at a good level. There were a number of reasons for this. First, a specific set of metacognitive strategies was employed [15]. This strategy can help the process of language learning by fostering enjoyment and effectiveness. Learners can successfully arrange their self-learning activities. This idea was combined with the three teaching cycles of action [16]. It reflects a continual process of teaching reading that leads to interaction in the classroom. The students have opportunities to participate in the learning process. They become satisfied with their studies and also enjoy the activities proposed by the teacher. Attitude creates motivation in learning and leads to good impressions of learning activities [17].

VI. CONCLUSIONS

In order to develop English reading comprehension abilities, metacognitive strategies are valuable. Centering, arranging, planning and evaluating one's learning are particularly effective in enhancing English reading comprehension. In applying metacognitive strategies in teaching, a teacher should fully understand the theory. Students should receive orientation to the processes and activities before starting the program. Learner participation should be a focus. Duration of each activity should be carefully considered and remain flexible. The selection of the reading texts should be varied and appropriate for the level of the students. This technique is a key tool for students to develop efficient reading skill. Students can engage in thinking skill practice in order to encourage them to actively participate in the learning process.

These research findings provide practical information about developing English reading comprehension abilities using metacognitive strategies. They improve reading skill by enabling more enjoyable and easier language learning.

The limitation of this study is its small sample size. This should be extended to other contexts. It should be compared with other reading strategies to seek a set of best practices for effectively improving students' English language comprehension

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