

## การสอนอ่านภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้กลยุทธ์การอ่านเพื่อส่งเสริมความสามารถ ในการอ่านของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรี

### Using Reading Strategy-based Instruction to Promote EFL Undergraduates' Reading Ability

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#### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเปรียบเทียบความสามารถในการอ่านก่อนและหลังเรียนของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรีโดยใช้การสอนอ่านที่เน้นกลยุทธ์การอ่าน และเพื่อหากลยุทธ์การอ่านของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรี มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏลำปาง กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 4 สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะครุศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏลำปาง จำนวน 30 คน โดยการสุ่มอย่างง่าย เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ได้แก่ 1) แผนการสอนที่เน้นกลยุทธ์การอ่าน 2) แบบทดสอบก่อนเรียนและหลัง 3) แบบสำรวจกลยุทธ์การอ่าน และ 4) แบบสัมภาษณ์แบบมีโครงสร้าง วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และค่าทดสอบที

ผลการวิจัย ดังนี้ 1) คะแนนทดสอบหลังเรียนมีคะแนนสูงกว่าคะแนนทดสอบก่อนเรียนอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 2) ผลสำรวจกลยุทธ์การอ่านที่ใช้มากที่สุด ได้แก่ ก่อนอ่านใช้ความรู้และประสบการณ์ที่มีทำความเข้าใจบทอ่าน ( $\bar{x}=1.93$ , S.D.=0.50) ระหว่างอ่านใช้การอ่านคร่าว ๆ ( $\bar{x}=1.93$ , S.D.=0.58) และหลังอ่านใช้การตรวจสอบเวลาที่ใช้ในการอ่าน ( $\bar{x}=1.96$ , S.D.=0.41) ตามลำดับ ผลการสัมภาษณ์แบบมีโครงสร้างพบว่ากลยุทธ์การอ่านช่วยพัฒนาความสามารถในการอ่านของผู้เรียน งานวิจัยนี้ส่งเสริมการพัฒนาความสามารถในการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจและการพัฒนาอาชีพของผู้เรียน และผู้สอนใช้เป็นแนวทางในการพัฒนาความสามารถในการอ่านของผู้เรียน

**คำสำคัญ :** การอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ การสอนอ่านโดยใช้กลยุทธ์การอ่าน กลยุทธ์การอ่าน ความสามารถในการอ่าน

#### Abstract

The objectives of this research were to compare the reading ability of the undergraduates before and after using a strategy-based instruction and to find out the undergraduates' reading strategies. The samples were 30 fourth year English major students studying at Lampang Rajabhat University in the first semester, 2020 academic year, selected by using simple random technique. Instruments used in this study were: 1) a strategy-based instruction lesson plan, 2) a reading comprehension pretest and posttest, 3) a reading strategy survey, and 4) a structural interview. The data was analyzed by using mean, standard deviation, and t-test.

Findings revealed that: 1) the students' posttest reading comprehension scores were significantly higher than their pretest scores at alpha level of .05, and 2) the students' reading strategy were using background knowledge ( $\bar{x}=1.93$ , S.D.=0.50) for pre-reading, skimming for the key point ( $\bar{x}=1.93$ , S.D.=0.58) for while-reading, and checking reading time ( $\bar{x}=1.96$ , S.D.=0.41) for post-reading respectively. The structural interview confirmed that the strategy-based reading instruction helped improve their reading ability. This research helps students in empowering their reading comprehension and their future career development. Teacher can also use it as a guideline to improve students' reading ability.

**Keywords :** Reading Comprehension, Strategy-based Instruction, Reading Strategies, Reading Ability

## Introduction

Reading strategy practice is one of the essential trainings for students who use English as foreign language (EFL) to accomplish their English competency. It is also important for EFL undergraduates to prepare themselves for their future career. According to the 20-year National Education Plan (2017 – 2036) focusing on the learner aspiration target, Thai government has a plan to develop Thai students' reading competency in order to solve students' low reading rate problem [1]. However, empirical studies showed that Thai FFL undergraduates still need more opportunities to practice their reading comprehension. Studies on EFL reading pedagogy found that Thai university teachers focused on the bottom-up reading approach which emphasizing their teaching on grammar, vocabulary, and translation. Teachers also provided less opportunity for their students to practice their reading comprehension in the top-down approach which focusing on skimming for topic and main idea out of their classrooms. Focusing on students, they also had their basic problems in vocabulary recognition, sentence structure recognition, and using reading comprehension strategies to understand the reading text contents. As students had less opportunity in reading comprehension strategies practice, they failed to accomplish their reading goal effectively [2][3][4][5]. According to the preliminary survey, Thai EFL English major undergraduates in Lampang Rajabhat University gained lower scores from their reading comprehension quizzes in their classroom practice. The informal survey results indicated that they had less opportunity to practice reading comprehension, especially, reading strategies.

Reading comprehension is a key concept to improve EFL undergraduates' reading ability for their learning and their future career development. According to Miller [6], reading comprehension needs strategic reading to understand the text more than words and sentence structures recognition as it relates to reader's behavior and thinking process while reading. Whereas, Day and Park [7] emphasize that reading comprehension is an interactive reading process, especially it needs reader's strategic reading to understand the text clearly through sharing opinions, summarizing, and related tasks.

To empower EFL students' reading comprehension, the processing reading is one of the effective ways to understand the text, especially, the top-down and the interactive reading process according to Kintch and van Dijk [8]. Grabe [9] also pointed out that it is essential for teachers to encourage reading strategies through three steps in teaching reading comprehension: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. In the pre-reading step, planning, setting goal, predicting, and using reader's background knowledge are suggested to activate students' reading strategies. For the while-reading step, the following active reading techniques are recommended: detecting meanings from context clues, understanding text structures, inferring, summarizing, and evaluating. To encourage students' better text understanding, techniques of summarizing, inferring, problem-solving, giving feedback, and evaluating the text are also emphasized in the post-reading step. Teacher's role also plays important part in supporting students' reading ability by demonstrating reading strategies, activating students' reading strategies, and doing the follow-up on how the strategies work in students' reading ability improvement through observations, language diaries, questionnaires, interviews, or others [10]. Consequently, strategy-based instruction supports students to learn how to improve their reading strategies and find how to solve their reading problem by themselves.

Reading ability can be indicated students' reading comprehension task accomplishment by considering their reading comprehension test scores. A number of studies showed how strategy-based instruction worked effectively on students' reading comprehension. For instance, Hatami & Asl [11] and Par [12] found that explicit reading strategic instruction encouraged students to achieve their reading task targets. Amir [13] also found that students' strategic reading accomplishment related students' speed reading ability.

In addition, empirical studies revealed that students gained benefits from attending the explicit strategic reading comprehension training. For example, students developed their reading strategy awareness during strategic reading training, they learned how to solve their own reading problems, they gained positive attitudes

toward reading according to Lee [14] and Akkakoson and Setobol [15], and they became independent readers [16]. Strategic reading promoted students' better memory retention [17]. Moreover, they used their reading strategies in their other extensive reading tasks [18].

To sum up, the strategy-based instruction not only encourages students' reading comprehension ability to accomplish their reading task, but also promotes them to find how to solve their reading problems independently. The explicit strategic reading training would succeed under the teacher's role in modeling reading strategies, encouraging students to use their strategies, and doing the follow-up of students' reading strategies results.

### Research Objectives

The research objectives were:

- 1) to compare students' reading comprehension ability before and after using the strategy-based instruction, and
- 2) to find out the strategies students used in their reading process.

### Methodology

A one group pretest-posttest experimental design was organized to find the results of the effects of using reading strategy-based instruction on the students' reading ability. The overall design and process was illustrated in Figure 1.

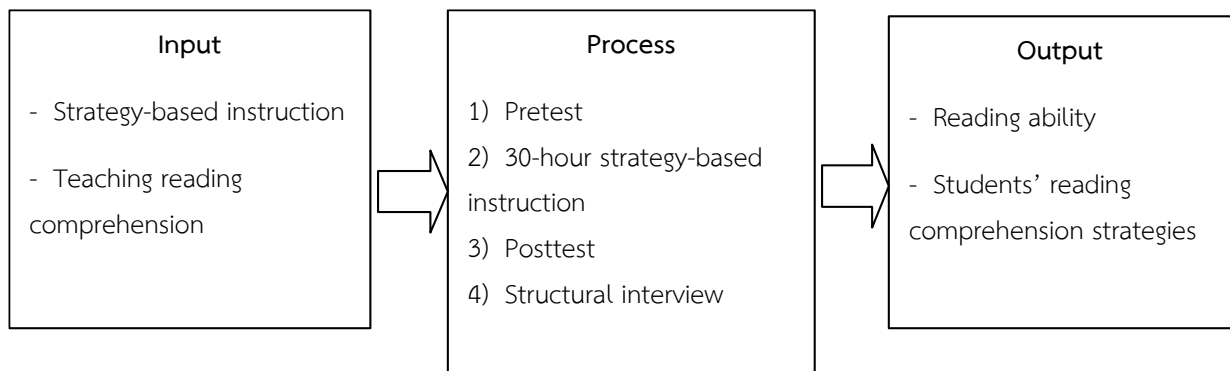


Figure 1: Research method and process

The research participants were thirty fourth year students studying in the English major, Faculty of Education, Lampang Rajabhat University. The samples were selected by using the simple random technique. The research experiment started from May and finished in September 2020.

Four research instruments in this study were: 1) a 30-hour strategy-based instruction lesson plan, 2) a 60-item reading comprehension pretest and posttest, 3) a reading strategy survey, and 4) a structural interview.

The strategy-based instruction was conducted in 5 steps procedure as following

- 1) Analyzed documents and research studies focusing on strategy-based instruction for reading comprehension.

- 2) Analyzed students' needs to improve their reading ability and analyzed the university curriculum.

- 3) Conducted lesson plans and classroom activities according to Brown [19] and Harmer [20] focusing on: teaching materials, reading texts, activities, and the teacher's role. The lesson plan contents consisted of reading strategies practice in recognizing meaning from context clues, reading for topic and main idea, reading for details, inferring and recognizing pronoun references.

- 4) Examined the lesson plans validity by 3 experts in the field of reading instruction, curriculum and instruction, and assessment and evaluation, respectively. The results came with the validity values of 0.78. The lesson plans were adjusted according to the experts' suggestion and then the implementation was made.

5) The 30-hour intervention was conducted during August and September 2020. The class meeting was arranged on Wednesday and Friday afternoon and students spent 3 hours for each class meeting.

The teacher-made pretest and posttest were designed based on the 2016 Faculty of Education bachelor degree curriculum and the tests were relevant to the TOEFL ITP standardized test in the CEFR scope. Each test consisted of 60-item multiple-choice questions focusing on vocabulary, topic, main idea, inferring, summarizing, and references. Both pretest and posttest were checked for the content validity values by 3 experts in the field of reading instruction, curriculum and instruction, and assessment and evaluation, respectively. The value came out with 0.78 for the pretest, and 0.80 for the posttest.

The reading strategy survey focused on reading strategy behaviors which students used in three reading steps: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading adapted from Lee [14], Akkason and Setobol [15], and Hung and Ngan [21]. The survey consisted of 3-level scales of reading strategies behavior which students used in their reading comprehension: level 1 for seldom use, level 2 for moderate use, and level 3 for most use. The reading strategy survey was examined by 3 experts in the field of reading instruction, curriculum and instruction, and assessment and evaluation respectively and gained the content validity values of 0.90. This survey was used after students finished their reading exercises in order to make them familiar with the survey format. It was also used again after students finished their posttest.

The structural interview was conducted to explore students' opinions toward the strategy-based instruction. The interview topics included students' opinions in 5 topics: 1) the strategy-based instruction activities, 2) text contents, 3) teaching materials, 4) tests, and 5) the instruction usefulness. The interview contents were based on the reading strategy-based instruction usefulness for both teacher and students according to Lee [14], Huang & Ngan [20] and Kucukoglu [22]. The validity values were inspected by 3 experts in reading instruction, curriculum and instruction, and assessment and evaluation, respectively. The validity value was 0.86.

The primary data was collected in August 2020 by using a 60-item pretest with 30 samples, followed by the 30-hour intervention focusing on reading strategies training. The procedures were as followed:

1) At the beginning of the study, teacher made the orientation by informing the course objectives. Students then did the 60-item pretest in 1 hour 20 minutes.

2) Students attended a 30-hour strategy-based instruction focusing on reading comprehension. In each reading class meeting, teacher informed the unit objectives and demonstrated reading strategies.

3) Students practice their assignment focusing on using reading strategies. Then they completed the reading strategy survey.

4) When students completed the 30-hour strategy-base instruction intervention in September 2020, they did the 60-item posttest in 1 hour 20 minutes again. After they finished their posttest, they were asked to complete the reading strategy survey.

In order to explore students' opinions toward the intervention, three students who gained top scores were invited for the structural interview focusing on 5 topics: the strategy-based instruction, the text contents, teaching materials, tests, and the instruction usefulness.

## Research Results

The mean difference, standard deviation, and paired sample t-test were used in the pretest and posttest comparison analysis. The research results considered 3 findings as follows: 1) the pretest and posttest comparison, 2) students' reading strategy, and 3) the structural interview.

Focusing on the pretest and posttest comparison, t-test results showed that 30 students' posttest scores were significantly higher than pretest scores at the alpha values of .05, according to the table 1

**Table 1:** The pretest and posttest scores

Test	Total Scores	Test Scores $\bar{x}$	S.D.	Mean Differences	Standard Deviation Differences	t	Sig (one-tailed)
Pretest	60	26.43	7.94	5.87	4.32	7.44	0.025
Posttest	60	32.30	6.59				

\* $p < .05$ 

After 30 students finished their posttest consisted of 3 parts: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. It was analyzed by using mean, standard deviation and ranking. The results revealed pre-reading strategies which 30 students used as following: 1) using background knowledge to understand the text ( $\bar{x}=1.93$ , S.D.=0.50), 2) predicting ( $\bar{x}=1.90$ , S.D.=0.53), 3) setting purpose ( $\bar{x}=1.83$ , S.D.=0.59), and 4) surveying ( $\bar{x}=1.70$ , S.D.=0.63), respectively. The survey results were shown in Table 2

**Table 2:** Pre-reading strategy survey

Pre-reading strategies	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Rank
I use my background knowledge to understand the text.	1.93	0.50	1
I predict the content before reading.	1.90	0.53	2
I set my purpose for reading.	1.83	0.59	3
I survey before reading.	1.70	0.63	4

The While-reading strategy which 30 students used were as following: 1) skimming to find the key concept of the text ( $\bar{x}=1.93$ , S.D.=0.58), 2) using their imagination to understand the text ( $\bar{x}=1.86$ , S.D.=0.50), and 3) guessing for the meanings by using context clues ( $\bar{x}=1.83$ , S.D.=0.59), 4) reducing reading speed when they don't understand the text ( $\bar{x}=1.76$ , S.D.=0.56), 5) using dictionary to find the vocabulary meaning ( $\bar{x}=1.66$ , S.D.=0.47), 6) taking note for clearer understanding ( $\bar{x}=1.63$ , S.D.=0.66), 7) reading aloud when they don't understand ( $\bar{x}=1.60$ , S.D. =0.56), 8) reading the text again when they don't understand the text ( $\bar{x}=1.43$ , S.D.=0.50), 9) reading the text again to find the answer for their questions ( $\bar{x}=1.40$ , S.D. =0.49), and 10) trying to find the key points and read them carefully ( $\bar{x}=1.26$ , S.D.=0.44), respectively. The results were shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** While-reading strategy behaviors survey

While-reading strategies	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Rank
I skim the reading to find the key concept of the text	1.93	0.58	1
I use my imagination to understand the text while reading.	1.86	0.50	2
I guess for the meaning by using context clues.	1.83	0.59	3
I reduce my reading speed when I don't understand the text.	1.76	0.56	4
I use dictionary or other materials to find the vocabulary meanings.	1.66	0.47	5
I take notes for my clearer understanding.	1.63	0.66	6
I read aloud when I don't understand the text.	1.60	0.56	7
I read the text again when I don't understand the text.	1.43	0.50	8
I read the text again to find the answer for my questions.	1.40	0.49	9
I try to find the key points and read them carefully.	1.26	0.44	10

The strategy which 30 students used in their post-reading were: 1) checking their reading time ( $\bar{x}=1.96$ , S.D.=0.41), taking notes after reading ( $\bar{x}=1.56$ , S.D.=0.52), and 3) summarizing the text according to their understanding ( $\bar{x}=1.53$ , S.D.=0.50), respectively. The results were shown in the Table 4.

**Table 4:** Post-reading strategy behaviors survey

Post-reading strategies	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Rank
I check my reading time I spend in my reading task.	1.96	0.41	1
I take note after my reading.	1.56	0.52	2
I summarize the text according to my understanding.	1.53	0.50	3

The structural interview was made after the students' posttest to extend the results of using strategy-based instruction by inviting the three-top score students from the posttest to the interview. The interview topics considered the following lists: 1) the strategy-based instruction, 2) text contents, 3) teaching materials, 4) tests, and 5) instructional benefits. The interview results were synthesized and summarized as following:

1) The strategy-based instruction provided guidelines for students to reach their reading task targets. It helped students to improve their reading abilities.

2) Text contents encouraged students' confidence to practice their reading tasks, especially the texts made them familiar with the variety of reading types with clear explanation.

3) Teaching materials including classroom materials and video clips were helpful for students to study and to use in their self-study practice.

4) Both pretest and posttest were varied in the test contents.

5) The instruction was useful for students to improve their reading ability and they were able to practice their reading independently.

## Discussion

This study aimed to investigate fourth year English major students studying in the Faculty of Education, Lampang Rajabhat University in order to find the answers for two research questions: 1) After the strategy-based instruction, are the students' posttest scores higher than the pretest scores? 2) What reading strategies did students' use in their reading task? The results obviously showed effects of strategic reading toward students' reading ability as discussed below:

1. There was an obvious result that after the 30-hour intervention, students' posttest reading scores were significantly higher than their pretest scores. The finding revealed the correlation between the strategy-based instruction and students' reading ability. It indicated that during the explicit reading comprehension training students were encouraged to use interactive reading approach according to Grabe [9]. Teacher's role also supported students to achieve their reading task efficiently according to Akkakoson & Setobol [15], Chumworatoyee [16], and Par [17].

2. The research revealed that the most strategy used in their pre-reading was using background knowledge, the while-reading was skimming, and the post-reading was checking reading time. According to Miller [6] strategic reading was necessary for students to improve the reading comprehension. Students' background knowledge was an essential strategy for students to understand the text effectively, according to De Debat [10]. Helping students to find their appropriate strategies also supported them to understand the text effectively and it could help them solve their reading problem on their own [13].

3. The structural interview results confirmed that strategy-based instruction supported students to complete their reading goal. The variety of reading exercise encouraged them to practice reading and promoted students' reading strategy awareness when they encountered their reading problem according to Akkakoson & Setobol [15], Hatami&Asi [11], and Par[12]. Moreover, teaching strategic reading activities, materials, and doing the follow-up also played important role to improve students' reading performance according to Simpson [18].

## Conclusions

This study focuses on the effects of EFL reading comprehension teaching by using 30-hour strategy-based instruction. The results clearly reveal that explicit strategy-based instruction promotes not only students' reading ability but also students' awareness in reading strategy techniques. Generally, the posttest results indicate that the students' reading scores were significantly higher than the pretest scores at the statistical level of .05. The reading strategy survey encourages students to realize that they use their reading strategies in pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages to complete their reading achievement. The structural interview also confirms that during the strategic reading intervention students have gradually improved their reading abilities, and this intervention encourages students' awareness to solve their reading problems by themselves.

## Recommendations

This study highlights the effects of using strategy-based instruction to improve EFL reading comprehension ability. Generally speaking, two suggestions for conducting a reading comprehension classroom are:

First, reading instruction needs to prepare reading passage step-by-step, from basic to more complex step. In reading strategy practice, it should include speeded reading practice for students to do at the same time in order to make them familiar with the reading strategies and the speed reading practice.

Second, it is suggested for the future research that reading strategy-based instruction should be conducted among first year EFL students in order to prepare them for their future reading competency test. The speed reading practice preparation should be organized among the first year students for their fundamental reading competency preparation.

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