



การนำการสอนการอ่านอย่างลึกซึ้งสู่การปฏิบัติเพื่อส่งเสริมการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ เพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนมัธยมศึกษา

An Implementation of Close Reading Instruction to Promote English Reading Comprehension of Secondary School Students

อภิวัฒน์ ปิยะสกุลชัย¹ และ อาภาสรา чинวรรณโน^{2*}

Apipat Piyasakulchai¹ and Apasara Chinwonno^{2*}

บทคัดย่อ

การอ่านอย่างลึกซึ้งเป็นวิธีการที่นำไปที่จะช่วยให้ผู้อ่านสามารถทำความเข้าใจการอ่านที่ซับซ้อนมากขึ้น การศึกษาครั้งนี้นำการสอนการอ่านอย่างลึกซึ้งมาประยุกต์ใช้กับนักเรียนระดับมัธยมศึกษาชาวไทยและสำรวจความคิดเห็นการใช้กลยุทธ์การอ่านอย่างลึกซึ้งในกลุ่มตัวอย่างดังกล่าว โดยมีนักเรียนมัธยมศึกษาจำนวน 18 คนเข้าร่วมการทดลองการสอนการอ่านอย่างลึกซึ้งเป็นระยะเวลา 11 สัปดาห์ เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบที่มีต่อความเข้าใจในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ได้แก่ (1) แบบทดสอบความเข้าใจในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ (2) แบบสอบถามกลยุทธ์การอ่านอย่างลึกซึ้ง และ (3) คำถamentในการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ผลการศึกษาจากการทดสอบความแตกต่างของค่ากลางของสองประชากรที่ไม่อิสระ (paired sample t-test) พบว่า นักเรียนพัฒนาความเข้าใจในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 เป็นผลเนื่องจากการเข้าร่วมการสอนการอ่านอย่างลึกซึ้ง นักเรียนส่วนใหญ่มักจะใช้กลยุทธ์การอ่านบทความเข้าใจ นักถึงความหมายที่ผู้เขียนต้องการสื่อ และขีดเส้นใต้ เมื่อพากษาเจอบทความยาก จากการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา นักเรียนรายงานว่าพากษาใช้กลยุทธ์การจดบันทึกในการอ่านครั้งแรกเพื่อจับประเด็นและรายละเอียดที่สำคัญ

คำสำคัญ : การสอนการอ่านอย่างลึกซึ้ง, กลยุทธ์การอ่าน, ความเข้าใจในการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ

¹ นิสิตมหาบัณฑิตสาขาวิชาการสอนภาษาต่างประเทศ ภาควิชาหลักสูตรและการสอน คณะครุศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Graduate Student of Teaching English as a Foreign Language Division, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, E-mail: apwphyski@gmail.com

² อาจารย์ประจำสาขาวิชาการสอนภาษาต่างประเทศ ภาควิชาหลักสูตรและการสอน คณะครุศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
Lecturer of Teaching English as a Foreign Language Division, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, E-mail: apasara.c@chula.ac.th

* Corresponding author

Abstract

Close Reading has become a common means of helping improve readers' comprehension of complex texts. This study implemented Close Reading instruction for Thai EFL secondary school students and explored their opinions towards Close Reading strategies. Eighteen secondary school students participated in the Close Reading instruction for eleven weeks and the effects on their English reading comprehension were examined. The research instruments were (1) English Reading Comprehension Test, (2) Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire, and (3) Semi-Structured Interview. Results from a paired sample t-test showed a significance level of .05, revealing that students significantly improved reading comprehension by participated in the Close Reading instruction. Almost all of them reread the texts, thought about the author's intended meaning, and underlined difficult portions of texts that they encountered. According to the content analysis, students reported using the annotating strategy at the first reading for key ideas and details.

Keywords: Close Reading, reading strategies, English reading comprehension

Introduction

English is taught and applied as a foreign language worldwide, including Thailand. It is a compulsory subject for Thai students at both primary and secondary levels. However, their English proficiency is still lower than other ASEAN countries (Education First, 2020). As an evidence from the EF Education First (2020), Thailand substantially decreased from 74th in 2019 to 89th in 2020.

As reported by Stone (2017), Thai teachers who teach English prefer to use teacher-centered teaching approach and most teachers prefer to follow a commercial book to complete their tasks on time (Bunyakarte, 2008). Moreover, Rattanamung (2015) claimed that many factors, for instance inadequate vocabulary knowledge and inadequate reading strategies, cause students to perform badly on the English Standard Test in Thailand.

The Ministry of Education in Thailand has launched the Basic Education Core Curriculum (A.D. 2008) (Ministry of Education Thailand 2017), which underlined reading to interpret what had been heard or read from many media types to be one of the core strands and standards for learning a foreign language. In addition, the Common Core State Standards or CCSS initiated a new standard in 2011 that readers should comprehend more complex information (Brewer, 2018; Fisher & Frey 2012). The causes of success or failure in

learning a language might depend on the applications of language instruction (Mulatu & Bezabih, 2018).

Reading comprehension, as a significant part contributing to levels of students' language proficiency, was one of the most important skill for students seeking to improve their use of English language, particularly those who learned English as a second or foreign language (Yusuk, 2020). Grabe and Stoller (2019) claimed that around 89% of the world's population were competent of reading text-only English at a basic level. August and Shanahan (2006) and Mokhtari (2018) coincided that many readers, particularly adult readers tended to read text without understanding what they have read.

In accordance with Shanahan on Literacy (2019), reading comprehension was the capacity to express an idea through the guided question provided in the given texts. To support this, Grabe and Stoller (2019) have summed up that reading comprehension referred to a process of making the meaning from the text. Moreover, reading comprehension consisted of the components of reading abilities; for instance, inferencing, background knowledge use, and text meaning (Grabe & Jiang, 2018).

To advocate this, Grabe and Jiang (2018) further proposed that both first and second language readers acquired the same components of reading abilities. Both readers might confront similar difficulties due to cognitive and linguistic components; however, they tended to differ from each other due to limited lexicon, grammar and discourse structure in reading another language.

Fisher and Frey (2012) and Shanahan on Literacy (2012) introduced the Close Reading instruction so as to improve reading abilities among students. Close Reading has been an intensive analysis of a given text with the text-dependent questions, which required students to reread the text at least three times; for instance, what the text said, how it said, and what it meant in the given text. In other words, Close Reading required not only an instructional framework to direct students for inspecting the text critically but also encouraged readers to read multiple times (Fisher & Frey, 2012).

Apart from that, Fisher and Frey (2012) mentioned that the focus of Close Reading is to find information in the given, which should be drawn from authentic materials, such as newspapers or websites and limited frontloading applied in this instruction. To support this,

Santori and Belfatti (2017) also revealed that Close Reading can engage students to enhance their reading comprehension when they answering text-dependent questions.

Close Reading might be an alternative instruction for Thai secondary school students to apply the close reading strategies to overcome those difficulties for reading English as a foreign language. Thus, this study implemented Close Reading instruction to enhance Thai EFL secondary school students' reading comprehension and explored their use of close reading strategies.

Objectives

1. To examine the effects of Close Reading instruction on English reading comprehension of Thai secondary school students from the private school in Bangkok
2. To explore opinions of Thai secondary school students' close reading strategies

Methodology

Research Design

This study applied a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design to investigate the effects of Close Reading instruction on Thai secondary school students' English reading comprehension. Furthermore, the Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire was distributed to explore their use of close reading strategies after participating in the Close Reading instruction. Later, the Semi-Structured Interview was conducted to triangulate the quantitative results and gain insight information for the implementation of Close Reading instruction and the use of close reading strategies.

Contexts and Participants

Eighteen Thai upper-secondary school students studying in the Arts – English program participated in this study. They were selected by purposive sampling from the private school in the urban community, Bangkok. Even though they were mixed-ability students with the low-intermediate English proficiency level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the school curriculum.

Research Instruments

There were three research instruments. They comprised (1) English Reading Comprehension Test, (2) Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire, and (3) Semi-Structured Interview.

1) English Reading Comprehension Test

The English Reading Comprehension Test was constructed according to Fisher and Frey (2012) and Grabe and Jiang (2018). It was applied to assess secondary school students' reading comprehension before and after the Close Reading instruction. There were 22 questions to measure five areas of reading comprehension: 1) general understanding and key details (14 items), 2) vocabulary and text structure (1 item), 3) author's purpose (3 items), 4) inferences (1 item), and 5) opinions, arguments, and intertextual connections (3 items). This test format contained three reading texts with approximately 250 to 300 words, each text was extracted from authentic texts and analyzed to ensure appropriate text readability. The readability of each text was at the B2 level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which is followed the criteria of Shanahan (2012) and Fisher and Frey (2012). Additionally, it was validated by three experts with the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) and pilot tested to ensure its reliability using KR-20 ($r = 0.78$).

2) Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire

The Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire was adopted from Victor (2017). It was distributed to secondary school students after they had completed the Close Reading instruction. The questionnaire was translated to Thai to make it more comprehensible to students using the back-translation method. Students required roughly ten minutes to complete seven items. It was used to identify how students used the close reading strategies after they participated in the Close Reading instruction. Students rated each statement on a 4-point Likert scale where 4 corresponded to "often," 3 corresponded to "sometimes," 2 corresponded to "rarely," and 1 corresponded to "never." Further, it was validated by three experts with the Evaluation Form for Questionnaire so as to check the correctness of using back-translation method.

3) Semi-Structured Interview

The interview was conducted with six students based on the results of students' English reading comprehension post test scores. Participants included two students at the highest post-test score, two students at the average mean post-test score, and two students at the lowest post-test score. The purpose of this interview was to elicit more in-depth discussions about the Close Reading instruction. The interview was conducted in Thai so as to overcome students' language barriers. To assure its construct, it was validated by three

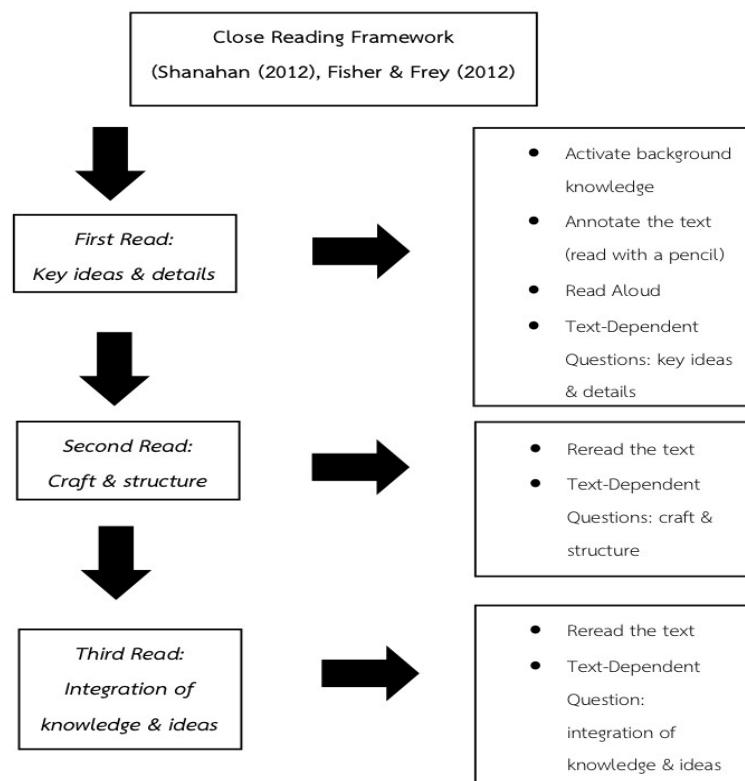
experts to ensure the appropriateness of the interview questions. The qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis based on Close Reading framework.

Research Framework

Close Reading instruction was designed and adapted based on three steps of reading framework as proposed by Fisher and Frey (2012) and Shanahan on Literacy (2012). The instruction aimed to promote Thai secondary school students' reading comprehension. It was implemented to assess five types of reading comprehension as suggested by Fisher and Frey (2012), Grabe and Jiang (2018) and Shanahan on Literacy (2012). Figure 1 illustrates the framework of Close Reading instruction.

Figure 1

Close Reading Framework



The first step of close reading was to activate the background knowledge of students with guided questions involved in the given text, teach some necessary vocabulary, introduce the concept of annotating the text. The annotation referred to how to read with a pencil which comprised how to circle, underline, and write in the text. After that, the teacher reviewed difficult words using annotating to check their understanding. Then, they worked in groups to locate key ideas and details.

The second step of close reading required students to reread the given text for exploring its craft and structure. To do this, the teacher assisted students to recall what they have read and perform the matching task. Next, the text-dependent questions strategy was introduced. This strategy referred to how to elicit questions depending upon the complex text for comprehension.

The third step of close reading focused on rereading the given text multiple times to support their opinions as well as relating to their daily lives. In this step, the mind-mapping activity was introduced to enhance deeper comprehension of the text. After that, the teacher used the text-dependent questions to connect with evidences from the given text.

Data Collection

This study was conducted online via Zoom application for eleven weeks. Each period lasted for 40 minutes per week. An overview of the Close Reading instruction was introduced to Thai secondary school students and the students were asked to sign with the consent form before they participated in this instruction. After that, a pre-test of the English Reading Comprehension Test was given to check students' reading comprehension.

After students participated in the Close Reading instruction, a post-test was distributed to investigate the effects of Close Reading instruction on the English reading comprehension of these Thai secondary school students. Moreover, the Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire was allocated after the instruction. Finally, six students who gained the highest, mean, and lowest scores from the post-test English reading comprehension test were interviewed during the semi-structured interview session.

Data Analysis

This study was applied using the SPSS version 22 to analyze quantitative data by using a paired sample t-test at a significance level of 0.05 to compare group mean scores on both pre-test and post-test of English reading comprehension. Additionally, the scores from both pre-test and post-test were also calculated to report as descriptive statistics; including, means and standard deviation. Furthermore, the Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire was used to explore opinions of students' close reading strategies. This questionnaire was computed to report with the means, standard deviation and their meaning. There criteria are as followed: '1' means 'I never do this', '2' means 'I rarely do this', '3' means 'I sometimes do this', and '4' means 'I often do this'. Lastly, the semi-structured interview was analyzed using content analysis based on Close Reading framework.

Results

Research Objective 1: To examine the effects of Close Reading instruction on English reading comprehension of Thai secondary school students from the private school in Bangkok.

This study investigated the effects of Close Reading instruction on English reading comprehension of Thai secondary school students from the private school in Bangkok. Results from the paired-sample *t*-test indicated significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores. Therefore, the vital information is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Students' English Reading Comprehension Test Scores.

	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)	Effect Size
Pre-Test	5	16	10.06	3.32	6.059	.00	1.41
Post-Test	7	20	13.89	3.45			

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of students' English reading comprehension test scores. Students made a noticeable improvement ($t = 6.059$) on their English Reading Comprehension Test pre- and post-tests after eleven weeks of the instruction. The effect size of these two mean scores using Cohen's *d* was depicted as large ($d = 1.41$).

Besides, after implementing the Close Reading instruction, the students' mean score of the post-test ($M = 13.89$, $SD = 3.46$) was greater than the mean score of the pre-test ($M = 10.06$, $SD = 3.32$). The lowest score of pre-test score was 5 and the highest score was 16, while the lowest score of post-test score was 7 and the highest score was 20. It can be concluded that there was a substantial difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores, at a significance level of .05. In other words, students significantly improved their reading comprehension after participating in the Close Reading instruction.

Research Objective 2: To explore opinions of Thai secondary school students' close reading strategies.

There were two research instruments to attain this objective. They were Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire and Semi-Structured Interview. Thus, the crucial information is demonstrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics of Students' Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire*

No.	Statement	M	SD	Meaning
When I read difficult texts, I use the following reading strategies:				
1.	circle the important words/ phrases.	3.11	0.96	Often
2.	underline the words/phrases that I don't understand or confusing.	3.17	0.71	Often
3.	write down the important thought Inside the text in the left or right margins.	2.78	0.94	Sometimes
4.	reread the text.	3.28	0.90	Often
5.	talk to others about the meaning in the given text.	2.39	0.85	Sometimes
6.	think about what the author means.	3.22	0.81	Often
7.	use the evidence from the given text when answering questions that are complex.	3.00	0.77	Often
Total		3.00	0.85	Often

Table 2 reported the results of students' uses of close reading strategies according to the Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire. The mean scores of the close reading strategies was high after eleven weeks of the instruction ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.85$).

In addition, students reported using some of the close reading strategies at the often level, which meant they preferred to use this close reading strategies. They always use reread the text, which is one of close reading strategies ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.90$), thought about what the author meant ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.81$), and underlined the confused words or phrases ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.71$), respectively.

Aside from the aforementioned quantitative data above, the qualitative data was analyzed by using the semi-structured interview. This interview based on three domains, which were aligned with close reading framework as followed:

The first read for key ideas and details

The data showed that the students preferred to use annotating strategies when they faced difficult texts. The semi-structured interview indicated clear evidences that more than half students preferred to underline the text. As one student expressed:

“Actually, I prefer several strategies, but I think underlining helps me remember easily. It is catching my eyes and easy to find the key point when I make mistakes.”

(Student #5, personal communication, 29 July 2021)

Further, a student with the mid proficiency revealed that, despite he tried to use other strategies, he still preferred to use underline strategies the most:

“Even though I applied all three annotating the text, I prefer underlining because it can help me remember where I do not understand.”

(Student #1, personal communication, 29 July 2021)

For other three students, two students preferred circling the text, whereas the other were likely to write down at the left or right margins in the text.

To summarize, it can be concluded that all of the students preferred to use annotating the text when they encountered with difficult texts.

The second read for craft and structure

At this second stage, all of the students were explicitly taught text-dependent questions, which emphasized on locating vocabulary and text structure, author's purpose, and inference. All of them agreed that they frequently used reread the text to find the answer to respond to the text-dependent questions. Five students added that they were thought about the purpose of writing the text because they really needed to know why the author wrote the given text:

“Sometimes, I applied think about the author's purpose because I really want to know why they wrote this text; for example, the first text that teacher taught me about Songkran Festival. I try to think why the author writes Songkran in many countries.”

(Student #6, personal communication, 29 July 2021)

On the contrary, he also added that inference strategies were quite difficult for him to use:

“For me, I’m not okay with inference strategies because sometimes I think the answer A is the correct answer, but actually the answer B is the correct answer. Even the teacher taught me how to deal with it, I still don’t have any idea at all.”

(Student #6, personal communication, 29 July 2021)

In conclusion, it can be summed up that the students preferred to reread the text in order to answer the text-dependent questions and also they were able to locate the author’s purpose from the given text.

The third read for Integration of knowledge and ideas

At this final stage, it was found that all students usually used rereading the text, which was closely similar to the second reading. From the interview, one student reported that he already knew the contents in Thai so that it was quite simple for him to integrate to his life when he needed:

“I think it is quite easy to match the contents from the given text to my daily life. For example, I have known all four regions food in text 2 that teacher gave to me. Therefore, I can tell teacher which food region that I prefer the most.”

(Student #3, personal communication, 29 July 2021)

In summary, most of the students still preferred to use reread the text so as to answer the text-dependent questions and some of the students tried to match the content from the given text with their knowledge.

Discussion and Implications

Close Reading instruction could improve students’ English reading comprehension. After eleven-week of the Close Reading instruction for secondary school students, the study showed positive effects on reading comprehension. Students significantly improved their English reading comprehension after participating in this study. It can be inferred that the close reading strategies might facilitate students to read with general comprehension, increase vocabulary and text structure strategy, identify author’s purpose, inference, make arguments, and connect to texts. In this reading instruction, students reread the text at least three times. They used text-dependent questions to find key ideas and details at the first reading, to craft and structure at the second reading, and integrate knowledge and ideas to connect to the texts at the third reading.

In addition to the Close Reading instruction, students were encouraged to reread multiple times intensively. As Fisher and Frey (2015) and Lapp (2015) stated that Close Reading supported repeated reading the text with an emphasis upon how to answer text-dependent questions for the given texts. Some researchers suggested that this instruction could improve the persistence and stamina of the reader when they confronted reading difficulty (Beers & Probst, 2013; Brown & Kappes, 2012; Hinchman & Moore, 2013). When students faced complex texts with a lot of unfamiliar words, they tended to encounter reading difficulties. Besides, this instruction was able to shift the role of the teacher by limited frontloading, which promotes a student-centered teaching approach (Fisher & Frey, 2012). To support this, Santori and Belfatti (2017) conducted their study as the proposal of Fisher and Frey (2012), which reduced the role of the teacher, and the consequence was that their students were able to answer text-dependent questions without any arousing from teachers. Hence, Close Reading instruction not only enhanced reading comprehension with intensive reading but also elaborated text-dependent questions to promote critical thinking for the reading texts.

Despite the effects of Close Reading instruction, results from the semi-structured interview from two students at the highest post-test score, two students at the average mean post-test score, and two students at the lowest post-test score preferred to use Close read strategies at the stage of first reading to search for key ideas and details with annotating the text or reading with a pencil. Comparing to results from the Close Reading Strategies Questionnaire, secondary school students were likely to reread the text, think about what the author means, and underline the words or phrases to overcome misunderstanding or confusing texts at the top three highest close reading strategies, respectively. The results of this study were consistent with other studies, students preferred to reread the text the most and followed by underlining the words or phrases to handle text misunderstanding and confusing (Victor, 2017). According to Fisher and Frey (2012) and Shanahan on Literacy (2012), they advocated that rereading multiple times would connect readers to better comprehension of complex words, phrases, sentences, and ideas. It can be implied that students frequently underlined words and sentences to annotate the texts from the first reading for key ideas and details. They always reread the text many times to answer the text-dependent questions during the second reading for crafting and structuring to support more

comprehension. Finally, they integrated knowledge and ideas from the third reading to realize what they have learned from the given texts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the effects of Close Reading instruction on English reading comprehension of Thai secondary school students. It summarized that the students could enhance their English reading comprehension after participating in the study. Close Reading instruction can be beneficial for students to confront with difficult texts. The results showed that students often apply close reading strategies to reread the text, think about what the author means, and underline the words or phrases to deal with misunderstanding or confusing texts. In conclusion, teachers may apply results from this study to implement English Close Reading instruction for secondary school students.

For the recommendations of future studies, there should be another study to compare intensive and extensive close reading instruction to gain more substantial assumptions for the implementation of Close Reading for reading in a foreign language. The other study may be conducted to explore online close reading strategies. Lastly, each close read strategy can be further investigated to employ more participants with a larger scale of participants.

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