



การอ่านสื่อดิจิทัลภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติสำหรับนักศึกษาปริญญาตรี EIL Digital Reading Materials for Thai Undergraduate Students

นพพันธ์ อะดุงเดชจรูญ^{1*} และ อาภัสรา ชินวรรณ²
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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยแบบสำรวจนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อ 1) ศึกษาการอ่านสื่อดิจิทัลภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติสำหรับนักศึกษาปริญญาตรี 2) สำรวจการรับรู้ของนักศึกษาปริญญาตรีต่อการอ่านสื่อดิจิทัลภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติโดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ได้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยนี้ได้แก่นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีหลักสูตรการจัดการธุรกิจการบิน จำนวน 299 คน โดยการเลือกแบบเจาะจงซึ่งเลือกเฉพาะคนที่เรียนในคณะที่กำหนดสำหรับการทำแบบสอบถาม และ 3 คนที่ใช้เวลากับสื่อดิจิทัลนานที่สุดถูกเลือกสำหรับการสัมภาษณ์ ผลการวิเคราะห์ทางสถิติเชิงลึกของแบบสอบถามการอ่านสื่อดิจิทัลภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติและการวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระของการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างรายงานว่านักศึกษาที่มีแนวโน้มที่พบ (encounter) มีส่วนร่วม (engage) ประเมิน (evaluate) หลากหลายสื่อดิจิทัลภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติบ่อย ในกิจกรรมย่อยของการอ่านสื่อดิจิทัลถูกใช้บ่อยมากขณะที่บางอย่างถูกใช้บางครั้งกับสื่อภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติ นอกจากนี้ นักศึกษาเกือบเห็นด้วยอย่างมากในการรับรู้ในเชิงบวกกับการใช้กลยุทธ์การอ่านสื่อดิจิทัลภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติซึ่งรวมถึงการพบเจอ การมีส่วนร่วม และการประเมิน ผลของการวิจัยนี้สามารถนำไปสู่การวางแผนและการพัฒนาสื่อสำหรับการเรียนการสอนของหลักสูตรการจัดการธุรกิจการบิน โดยเน้นการอ่านดิจิทัลภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติ

คำสำคัญ: การอ่านสื่อดิจิทัล, ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานะภาษานานาชาติ

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Abstract

This exploratory study aimed to 1) investigate EIL digital reading materials for Thai undergraduate students and 2) explore Thai undergraduate students' perceptions towards EIL digital reading materials. Two hundred and ninety-nine undergraduate students from the aviation business management program participated in this study. The participants, who were aviation business management students, were selected by purposive sampling for the questionnaire. Three participants were selected based on their highest years of experience using digital materials for the semi-structured interview. Results from descriptive statistics of the EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire and thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews reported that students tended to frequently encounter, engage, and evaluate a variety of EIL digital reading materials. Some sub-reading practices of digital reading were used very frequently, while some were applied on EIL materials at the sometimes level. They almost strongly agreed on their perception toward the use of these EIL digital reading strategies, including encountering, engaging, and evaluating. Implications applied to propose and develop materials for aviation business management instructional practices with an emphasis on reading digital English as an International Language.

Keywords: digital reading, EIL materials

Introduction

In the 21st century, various reading platforms, such as web pages or social media, offer different ways of interacting with digital texts. Digital technology has undoubtedly impacted the reading habits of readers of all ages in the present world (Turner et al., 2020). Due to the vast amount of digital information available, digital reading requires various skills, including accessing, interpreting, and evaluating information via non-linear information from many digital sources (Coiro, 2021; Li, 2020). Digital reading may result in different outcomes based on the activities that readers participate in and the academic setting (Jang et al., 2022). Son et al. (2017) found that exploring the extent of specific practices students have implemented is necessary since it could reveal students' expectations and needs for digital literacy skills. Likewise, Pavek and Vaughan (2023) stated that teachers should consider students' reading practices or behaviors in order to improve instruction.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have been increasingly exposed to a broader range of English speakers from various cultural backgrounds (Friedrich, 2020; Rose et al., 2021). Experience with and varied use of English as an international language (EIL) has been found to improve people's readiness to deal with different English standards, such as accents and pronunciation (Buckingham, 2015). With the

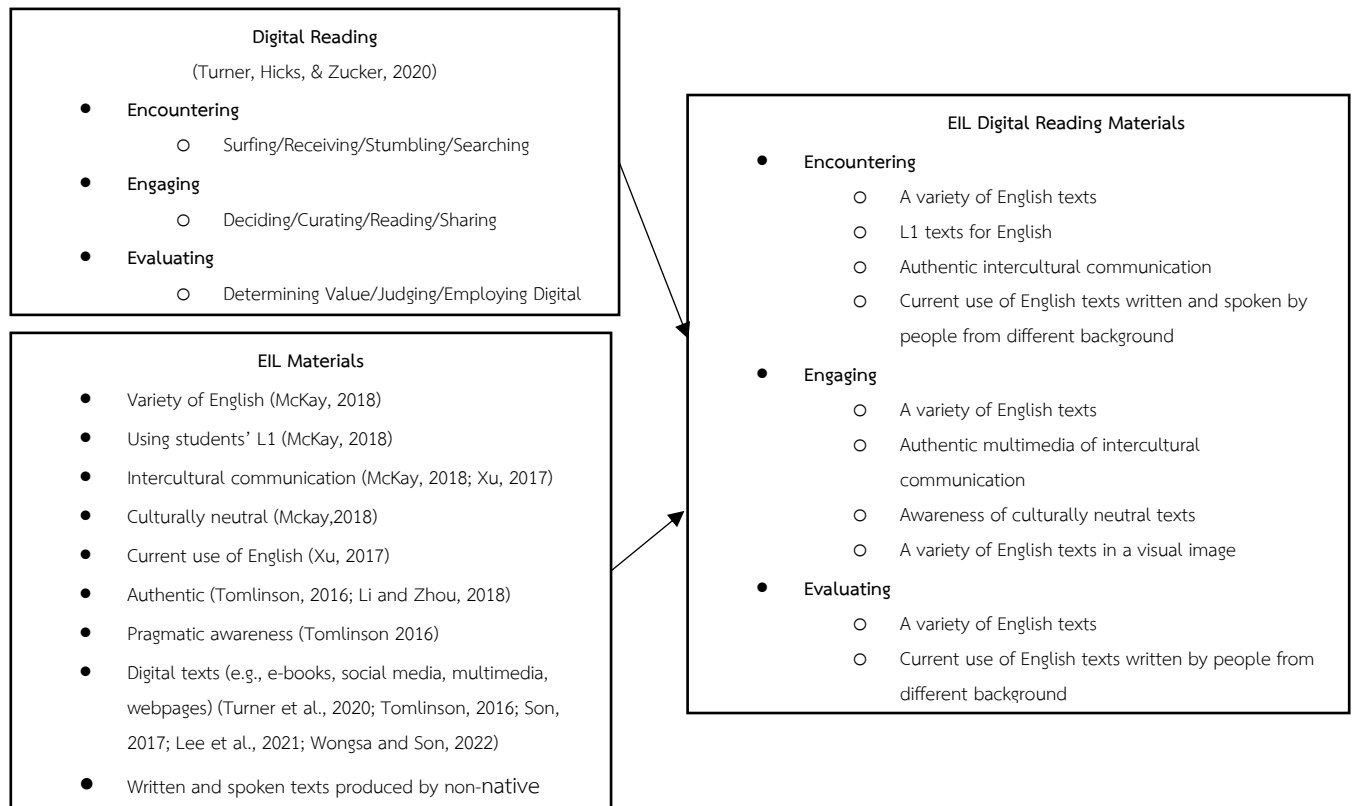
advancement of communications technology, there is a wide variety of digital texts, such as multimedia, social media, e-books, and webpages, that students may interact with (Turner et al., 2020). Furthermore, EIL can be found in a wide variety of materials, which are referred to in this study simply as 'EIL materials. These types of EIL materials should be included in educational programs (Galloway, 2017; Marlina, 2017) because as instructional materials they are theoretically and practically powerful tools for improving teaching to attain course objectives (Tonawanik & Donavanik, 2019). Additionally, one of the most significant challenges for EIL is the lack of awareness and occasionally negative perceptions among students (Foley, 2021). Therefore, an exploratory study of students' perceptions would be beneficial for revealing students' needs and deficiencies to be overcome in the future (Kerkhoff & Makubuya, 2022).

In the Thai context, it is undeniable that Thailand is becoming a digital society as it already has a thriving digital community a trend which positively enhances Thai people's quality of life. There currently are approximately 54.6 million internet users in Thailand, and this is expected to rise to 60 million by 2026 (IH Admin, 2022). Although Thai students are increasingly exposed to English spoken by non-native speakers, many have been found to still prefer the teaching of standard American English and British English for speaking and writing in the classroom (Tarrayo et al., 2021). On the other hand, EFL students in some countries tend to accept different varieties of English more readily, especially listening materials that contain interaction between non-native English speakers (Lee & Chen Hsieh, 2018). Nevertheless, in-depth studies on digital reading and EIL materials are lacking. Investigating the types and frequency of reading practices of students in the local context is necessary to best determine how to improve their literacy skills (Coiro, 2011, 2021). Therefore, it is essential to examine the specific practices regarding EIL digital reading materials that are being implemented, as well as students' perceptions toward EIL digital reading materials for teachers to expand their instructional practices effectively.

Research Framework

Figure 1

The conceptual framework



Research Objectives

1. To investigate EIL digital reading materials for Thai undergraduate students
2. To explore Thai undergraduate students' perceptions towards EIL digital reading materials

Literature Review

Digital Reading

Digital reading refers to reading practices that conceptualize readers' interactions with digital texts when they read via digital devices such as smartphones or laptops. It encompasses three major components: 1) encountering (the way readers seek or receive digital texts), 2) engaging (the way readers decide and share digital texts), and 3) evaluating (the way readers make judgments on how the usefulness of digital texts) as a non-linear recursive model (Turner et al., 2020). As Turner et al. (2020) proposed, there are four sub-practices for each main component. First, encountering contains surfing, receiving, stumbling, and searching texts while engaging has deciding, curating, reading, and sharing as sub-practices. Lastly, evaluating includes determining value, judging, employing digital tools, and

managing distractions. Digital reading can be viewed as part of the broader reading framework as digital literacy conceptualizes literacy. It has been defined as the various experiences in which readers interact or engage with different texts for specific objectives situated in a wide range of contexts (Coiro, 2021).

English as an International Language Materials

In the modern world, the English language is generally recognized as an international language, and the concept of English as an international language (EIL) is gaining prominence in English language teaching (ELT). McKay (2002), one of the first scholars to shed light on the functional diversity of English, described EIL as a language for broader communication among individuals from different cultures. EIL integrates two crucial features of the concepts of World Englishes (WE) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Those are content and interactions to promote the English language in a global and local community (McKay, 2018).

In the language pedagogical field, EIL is based on four main principles: varieties of English considering local language demands, using students' first language (L1) for learning English, intercultural communication reflecting the individual's culture, and being culturally neutral by not connecting the language learning to a specific cultural context (McKay, 2018). Likewise, as Xu (2017) proposed, the current use of English should be acknowledged to be ready for engaging in real intercultural communicative situations. EIL materials (e.g., multimedia, social media, e-books, and webpages) must include English used among non-native speakers and native English speakers from different cultural backgrounds to be considered EIL materials (Tomlinson, 2016; Turner et al., 2020). Importantly, authentic interactions between non-native English speakers in the form of spoken and written texts could increase pragmatic awareness—for example, a YouTube video about greeting with diverse English accents from people of different cultural backgrounds in a real situation (Lee et al., 2021; Li & Zhou, 2018; Tomlinson, 2016).

Methodology

Context and Participants

This exploratory study was conducted at an autonomous university in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The participants were 299 Thai undergraduate students from all academic years (i.e., freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) majoring in the Aviation Business Management program in the academic year 2022. The participants were selected by using a purposive sampling method.

Research Instruments

EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to investigate EIL digital reading materials and explore students' perceptions toward EIL digital reading materials. The questionnaire was partially adopted from Son (2015) and Lee et al. (2021)'s questionnaire. The questionnaire for this study was divided into three sections: 1) background information, 2) EIL digital reading materials, and 3) perceptions toward EIL digital reading materials. The first section was to collect demographic information such as the student's academic year and the usage of digital materials. In the second section, there was one question with 32 sub-questions representing sub-practices of the EIL digital reading material framework. The data was rated on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating 'never' to 5 indicating 'very frequently' to determine how often the participants used EIL digital reading materials. The third section had one question with 12 sub-questions focusing on perceptions toward EIL digital reading materials. The data was rated on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' to 5 indicating 'strongly agree.' Content validity and construct validity of all questions were thoroughly validated by 3 experts and pilot-tested with 32 students before implementing the main study. The item reliability in section 2 and 3 using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients was 0.98 and 0.94, respectively, indicating high internal consistency. The range of item-total correlation (ITC) was 0.47 to 0.88 in section 2, while section 3 was 0.54 to 0.81. Moreover, both sections of the EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire were tested through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with 299 participants from all academic years. The results of the EFA using Principle Components Analysis (PCA) and Varimax with KMO and Bartlett's test based on 32 items in Section 2 determined the value of factor loading at 0.45. The questionnaire of 32 questions had three main components, with data variation at 71.87 percent of cumulative. The chi-squared test indicates a statistically significant relationship between encountering and engaging ($X^2 = 2306.84$, $df = 1254$, $P < .001$), encountering and evaluating ($X^2 = 2406.51$, $df = 1386$, $P < .001$), and engaging and evaluating ($X^2 = 2406.51$, $df = 1386$, $P < .001$). The result of EFA based on 12 items in Section 3 of the EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire had one main component, with data variation at 75.90 percent of cumulative. The chi-squared test of components related to perceptions reveals significant association between perception of encountering and engaging ($X^2 = 1360.38$, $df = 169$, $P < .001$), encountering and evaluating ($X^2 = 1187.06$, $df = 169$, $P < .001$), and engaging and evaluating ($X^2 = 1278.11$, $df = 169$, $P < .001$). The p-value between components for both sections in the questionnaire was determined to be less than 0.001.

Semi-structured Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to triangulate with the EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire findings for confirmation. There were 12 interview questions.

Each question represented each sub-practice of the EIL digital reading material framework. Three experts validated the appropriateness of each question, and the questions were pilot tested with one student before being used in the main study.

Data Collection

The data was collected in two phases. In the first phase, a number of studies and documents regarding digital reading and EIL materials were reviewed and analyzed to design the study's framework and research instruments. The content and construct of EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire and the semi-structured interview questions were checked for validity and reliability by experts, as was the pilot study. Next, an online questionnaire was administered to the participants in the second phase for the implementation of the main study. Then, three participants who had the highest number of years using digital materials were selected for the semi-structured interview.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were applied to report mean scores, and standard deviation (SD) for the quantitative data from the questionnaire. The qualitative data from the semi-structured interview was analyzed using the thematic analysis method. The data was recorded and transcribed to triangulate with the questionnaire findings for section 3.

Results

Research Objective 1: To investigate EIL digital reading materials for Thai undergraduate students. To ascertain whether Thai undergraduates used EIL digital reading materials, all data from questionnaire were analyzed to show mean scores, and standard deviation (S.D.).

Table 1 shows that students from all academic years used a variety of EIL digital reading materials. They encountered ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.78$), engaged ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.93$), and evaluated ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.91$) EIL materials frequently. Therefore, it could assume that students already accessed EIL digital reading materials frequently to become exposed to EIL materials.

Table 1

The Results of the EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire

| Components | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Skewness | Std. error of skewness | Kurtosis | Std. error of Kurtosis |
|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Encountering | 3.93 | 0.78 | -0.75 | 0.14 | 0.28 | 0.28 |
| Engaging | 3.52 | 0.93 | -0.30 | 0.14 | -0.22 | 0.28 |
| Evaluating | 3.62 | 0.91 | -0.48 | 0.14 | -0.60 | 0.28 |

Table 2 reveals the three highest and lowest levels of usage of EIL digital reading materials. Item 3 ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.97$), 5 ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.90$), and 6 ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.86$) received the highest mean score. This indicates that students surf and receive information from social media very often while they less often receive it from webpages. On the other hand, item 2 ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.13$), 11 ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.13$), and 25 ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.23$) received lowest mean score, indicating that students sometimes surf and filter EIL materials from e-books as well as criticize information from social media.

Table 2

The highest and lowest scores of EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire

| Main components | Items | M | SD | Meaning |
|-----------------|--|------|------|-----------------|
| Encountering | 2. Surf information for amusement from e-books | 3.27 | 1.13 | Sometimes |
| | 3. Surf information for amusement from social media | 4.23 | .97 | Very Frequently |
| | 5. Receive information that contains both Thai and English from webpages | 4.18 | .90 | Frequently |
| | 6. Receive information that contains both Thai and English from social media | 4.23 | .86 | Very Frequently |
| Engaging | 11. Filter information from e-books to know when to read | 3.39 | 1.13 | Sometimes |
| Evaluating | 25. Criticize information written in English from social media | 3.35 | 1.23 | Sometimes |

Research Objective 2: To explore Thai undergraduate students' perceptions towards EIL digital reading materials. The students' perceptions data were statistically analyzed using the standard deviation (S.D.), and mean scores and the result was triangulated with the interview findings.

Table 3 shows the levels at which students found encountering ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 0.78$), engaging ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.82$), and evaluating ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.83$) EIL materials enjoyable.

Table 3

The Results of the Perceptions toward EIL Digital Reading Materials Questionnaire

| Components | M | SD | Skewness | Std. error of skewness | Kurtosis | Std. error of Kurtosis |
|--------------|------|------|----------|------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Encountering | 4.14 | 0.78 | -0.85 | 0.14 | 0.56 | 0.28 |
| Engaging | 4.03 | 0.82 | -0.71 | 0.14 | 0.46 | 0.28 |
| Evaluating | 4.00 | 0.83 | -0.60 | 0.14 | 0.06 | 0.28 |

The transcriptions from the semi-structure interviews illustrated some digital reading sub-practices based on the components of EIL digital reading materials. They included excerpts from students' perception towards each component.

Encountering EIL materials. The students were pleased and preferred to encounter EIL materials because they found learning and gaining new knowledge enjoyable. The materials also provided up-to-date news and multimedia regarding authentic situations.

S1: I felt very good when I received both Thai and English texts from the materials because it was more convenient to understand new terms.

S2: I feel very okay with following the multimedia links because it is more useful than merely reading texts.

Engaging with EIL Materials. The students reported learning how to filter texts and deciding when to read. They also preferred to save the multimedia of intercultural communication materials in real situations from the digital materials.

S1: I filter texts by reading the introduction and conclusion first to know what it is about. They already provide inclusive information. I ignore the body part of the E-books if I'm not really interested in that information.

S3: I prefer to curate the multimedia from digital materials because I will not know when it will come across again. Downloading it into the folder, I can watch it offline as my collection.

Evaluating EIL Materials. The students' responses showed that they were willing to assess the value of EIL materials as to whether it would be useful or not at a specific time. They could manage distraction in many ways while they were reading digitally.

S2: Before I share something, I always determine the value of the information, whether it will be useful for me in the future or not. I can come back and read what I share.

S3: For the distractions, such as ads that pop up while I watch YouTube, I will click skip immediately. If there is a loud noise, I will choose to listen to music by using my headphones. Therefore, it can be concluded that students had positive perceptions toward the EIL digital reading materials.

Discussion

EIL Digital Reading Materials

This study aimed to investigate EIL digital reading materials for Thai undergraduate students. The students were found to have interacted with a variety of EIL digital reading materials. They used them

frequently for different purposes such as amusement, assignments, or projects. The current findings were consistent with previous studies by Turner et al. (2020), who reported that students encountered, engaged, and evaluated digital materials in various ways. Zucker (2018) asserted, which were consistent with the results of this study, that students almost exclusively used digital reading; at the same time, some sub-practices were used more than others. In higher education, students could be exposed to EIL materials more frequently than at other levels (Lee et al., 2021). Exposure to EIL digital reading materials could increase awareness of highlighting English for an international language. According to Lee et al. (2021), the higher exposure led to higher awareness to making English as an international language ready for incorporating into the classroom. Thus, this concluded with Son (2017) suggestion in that reading materials should integrate students' experiences with the use of digital technologies for language learning.

Perceptions toward EIL Digital Reading Materials

The study was to explore Thai undergraduate students' perceptions toward EIL digital reading materials. From the results, it was notable that students had positive perceptions toward the materials. The results from this study aligned with Son et al. (2017) and Wongsas and Son (2022). Son et al. (2017) reported that most students had positive perceptions of using digital devices to encounter, engage and evaluate digital materials. Wongsas and Son (2022) supported that digital materials could increase Thai students' motivation, and that students would become more active in receiving information digitally. The results also correlated with Lee et al. (2019)'s study in that EIL principles, including the current status of English, a variety of English, and intercultural communication gained positive perceptions. Lee et al. (2021) implied that when participants encountered EIL materials, even if they were provided information to be consumed passively, it encouraged them to generate English and that they would embrace EIL materials more. Tokumoto and Shibata (2011) found that Japanese and Korean students had negative perceptions toward varieties of English, while Malaysian students accepted them. In this study, the students were found to enjoy and prefer interacting with EIL digital reading materials. Therefore, EIL digital reading materials that students interact with should be considered in making pedagogical decisions. This was in line with the EIL principles as proposed by McKay (2018) in that the use of EIL materials allow students to engage in intercultural exchange and gain a wide range of knowledge. As a result, the current study added to confirm Thai undergraduate students' positive perceptions toward EIL digital reading for the aviation business management materials.

Pedagogical Implications

This study can be implied to two aspects: 1) digital reading and 2) EIL materials. Although the study was not designed to assess teaching practices for students' reading strategies, it reflected the

reading practices that they had used. It described their reading practices articulately. According to the results, it is recommended that English teachers should consider students' digital reading to expand the instructional practices by including some sub-practices of digital reading, such as surfing, filtering, and criticizing on EIL materials. If students knew the assignments needed to be shared publicly on the internet, they would likely invest more effort into completing them (Murniati & Sanjaya, 2017). Applying EIL digital reading to the class has also been found to prepare students for more dynamic and complex practices; for instance, self-directed reading and multitasking (Turner et al., 2020).

Furthermore, it is important for English teachers to pay more attention to EIL since students have positive perceptions toward it. A variety forms of materials that students interact with could raise awareness of the current status of English. Promoting EIL digital reading materials in the classroom could also prepare students for authentic multicultural and multilingual contexts. The more EIL digital reading materials students encounter, the greater their acceptance of EIL (Lee et al., 2021). Therefore, teachers should increase exposure to EIL materials by incorporating them in various classes, in particular, how to apply to real-life situations.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study shed light on EIL digital reading materials for Thai undergraduate students, which would be beneficial for future research. First and foremost, students may have different levels of frequencies and perceptions regarding using EIL digital reading materials. It may be worth comparing differences among students from different academic programs. In addition to this study, it can be applied to propose and develop materials for aviation business management instructional practices with an emphasis on reading digital English as an International Language. The developed framework in this study can be adapted to match other research contexts. All in all, the results can be attributed to construct guidelines for designing instructional materials and test its effectiveness.

In conclusion, this study provided an insightful application of using EIL digital reading materials for Thai undergraduate students. The results uncovered a variety of digital reading practices that students employed to interact with EIL materials with highly positive perceptions. It offered a better view of the EIL digital reading materials in the undergraduate context. Despite the self-rating questionnaire, the design contributed to expand the use of EIL digital reading materials in any authentic reading contexts.

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