

The Enhancement of Reading Comprehension by Using Buddhist History Books

ถาวร วรบุตร¹, สมควร ข่าสะ蓬²

Thaworn Worabuttara¹, Somkuan Khasapone²

คณะศึกษาศาสตร์, มหาวิทยาลัยมหากรุณาธิราชวิทยาลัย วิทยาเขตอีสาน

Faculty of Education, Mahamakut Buddhist University Isan Campus

Author for Correspondence: Email: thaworn.wor@mbu.ac.th

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ (1) เพื่อศึกษาเปรียบเทียบการเสริมทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจโดยใช้หนังสือประวัติศาสตร์พุทธศาสนา ก่อนและหลังเรียน (2) เพื่อศึกษาดัชนีประสิทธิผลการเสริมทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจโดยใช้หนังสือประวัติศาสตร์พุทธศาสนา และ (3) เพื่อศึกษาความพึงพอใจในการเสริมทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจโดยใช้หนังสือประวัติศาสตร์พุทธศาสนา ผู้ร่วมวิจัยครั้งนี้ คือนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 1 สาขาวิชาการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหากรุณาธิราชวิทยาลัย วิทยาเขตอีสาน จำนวน 30 คน ที่ได้มาโดยวิธีการเลือกแบบเจาะจง ระยะเวลาในการทดลอง ทั้งหมด 10 สัปดาห์ สัปดาห์ 3 ชั่วโมง เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ได้แก่ แบบทดสอบการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ และแบบวัดความพึงพอใจ สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลได้แก่ ค่าเฉลี่ย ร้อยละ ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และการทดสอบแบบที่ไม่เป็นอิสระต่อ กัน (T-test Dependent)

ผลการวิจัยด้านการเสริมทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักศึกษาโดยใช้หนังสือประวัติศาสตร์พุทธศาสนา พบว่า นักศึกษามีทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจโดยมีคะแนนเฉลี่ย ก่อนเรียนเท่ากับ ($\mu = 11.60$, $\sigma = 3.29$) คิดเป็นร้อยละ 38.66 และคะแนนเฉลี่ยหลังเรียนเท่ากับ ($\mu = 21.73$, $\sigma = 2.93$) คิดเป็นร้อยละ 72.44 ซึ่งสูงกว่าเกณฑ์ร้อยละ 70 ผลการศึกษา พบว่า ทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ เพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนเพิ่มขึ้นอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.05 ด้านการศึกษาความพึงพอใจต่อการสอนอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจโดยใช้หนังสือประวัติศาสตร์พระพุทธศาสนา พบร่วมนักศึกษามีความพึงพอใจต่อในระดับมาก ($\mu = 4.51$, $\sigma = 0.64$) นอกจากนี้ การใช้หนังสือประวัติศาสตร์พระพุทธศาสนาเพื่อเสริมทักษะการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนส่งผลดีต่อความรู้คำศัพท์และความรู้ด้านไวยากรณ์ของนักเรียน ตลอดจนความรู้ด้านเนื้อหาในพระพุทธศาสนา

คำสำคัญ: การอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ; หนังสือประวัติศาสตร์พุทธศาสนา ; การเสริมทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were (1) to compare students' English reading comprehension ability before and after using Buddhism history books as learning material, (2) To study the effectiveness of enhancing English reading comprehension through Buddhism history books, and (3) To study the students' satisfaction towards enhancing English reading comprehension utilizing Buddhism history books. The participants consisted of thirty 1st year students studying in the Faculty of Education majoring in Teaching English at Mahamakut Buddhist University Isan Campus. The participants were selected utilizing the purposive sampling method. The instruction was conducted for three hours a week and lasted ten weeks. The data were statistically analyzed employing the mean, percentage, standard deviation, and t-test for dependent samples.

The results of the research on the enhancement of reading comprehension by using Buddhist History Books revealed that the students had English reading comprehension skills with the mean score before learning was ($\mu = 11.60$, $\sigma = 3.29$), representing 38.66% and the mean score after learning was ($\mu = 21.73$, $\sigma = 2.93$) representing 72.44, which is higher than the criteria of 70%. The results suggested that the students' English reading comprehension skills were significantly increased at the 0.05 level. Regarding the satisfaction of the students towards the enhancement of reading comprehension by using Buddhist History Books was found highly satisfied ($\mu = 4.51$, $S.D. = 0.64$). Last but not least, the finding indicated that the use of Buddhism history books contributed enhancing students' reading comprehension skills along with their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge; as well as increasing their knowledge of Buddhism.

Keywords: English Reading Comprehension; Buddhist History Books; The Enhancement of English Reading

Introduction:

Reading is a significant learning process that contributes to students learning both inside and outside of the classroom. Reading is not just a skill supporting a particular subject, it is a fundamental skill for all literacy learning. Through reading, learners widen their knowledge and keep abreast of new information and change. Reading helps foster other learning skills such as writing, listening, and speaking. In addition, reading also enhances vocabulary knowledge (Krashen, 1989) and facilitates reading comprehension (Stoller & Grabe, 1993). The process of reading requires readers' prior knowledge to interpret the meaning of the text (Anderson, 1999, Harmer, 2001). It refers to the understanding of symbols and characters in a piece of writing (Cobb, 2007).

Reading comprehension is a cognitive process by which the reader interprets meaning from letters or symbols the author wants to convey (Smith, 1985), it requires prior knowledge and experience of the reader (Harris and Smith, 1980) as well as the knowledge of morphology, semantics, linguistic structure and cultural context (Finocchiaro & Sako, 1983; Anderson, 1985) to fully understand the meaning of the text. Reading comprehension is a very crucial skill for students to study and learn in their daily life to become effective readers (Grabe & Stoller, 2002) and to achieve academic success and career goals.

In the EFL context, reading comprehension is one of the most challenging tasks for all levels of students and it requires more energy and motivation to carry on reading tasks. Furthermore, reading skills are developed separately from other skills. However, reading skills and metacognitive development in the first language (L1) can aid in a second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) (Grabe, 2009; Chiappe, Siegal, & Gottardo, 2002). Although the metacognitive process of L1 and L2 or EFL reading is not different, EFL students yet struggle with the different linguistic systems, in terms of, vocabulary, grammar, semantics, pragmatics, and also cultural context can be problematic for comprehension (Grabe, 2009). The limit of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar relatively affect the understanding of the whole text. Students, therefore, need more than one methodology to assist in reading comprehension.

Research Objectives:

The purposes of this research study were:

- 1) To compare students' English reading comprehension ability before and after using Buddhism history books as learning material,
- 2) To study the effectiveness of enhancing English reading comprehension through Buddhism history books, and
- 3) To study the students' satisfaction towards enhancing English reading comprehension utilizing Buddhism history books.

Methodology

Participants: The participants consisted of thirty 1st year students studying in the Faculty of Education majoring in Teaching English at Mahamakut Buddhist University Isan Campus, Khon Kaen province, in the academic year 2020. The participants were a mixed-gender group with different levels of English proficiency, selected by means of the purposive sampling method; due to there being only one class studying reading over the first semester. The instruction was constructed for three hours a week and over a period of ten weeks.

Research instruments: The instruments employed in the present study included 1) a questionnaire utilized for gauging students' satisfaction towards enhancing reading comprehension, 2) pre-and post-reading comprehension tests (30 items) were employed before and after the instruction of reading for comprehension to evaluate students' reading

proficiency, and 3) Buddhist history books were used as reading materials covering Buddha's ten important stories.

Data collection: Quantitative data was identified to collect the data including pre-and post-reading comprehension tests and subsequently complete a questionnaire gauging students' satisfaction. The participants took the pre-test before the instruction and the post-test afterwards along with the questionnaire dealing with the students' satisfaction towards enhancing reading comprehension.

Data Analysis: The data from different sources were analyzed quantitatively as follows:

To evaluate students' reading comprehension ability through an interactive reading method and analyzed by comparing the scores of the pre-and post-test using mean, standard deviation, and t-test for the dependent sample, and the results were compared among participants in the group.

To assess the effectiveness of enhancing English reading comprehension skills.

The satisfaction towards enhancing English reading comprehension skills was investigated by agreement level, and rating scale and analyzed by the mean and standard deviation.

Results

The first objective of this study was to study and compare the enhancement of English reading comprehension skills before and after using Buddhism history books as teaching material. The researcher employed a reading comprehension test which the research created comprising 30 items before and after giving treatment then took the scores of both tests to analyze statistically utilizing a t-test for dependent samples and the results can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: Pre-post comprehensive reading scores

No.	Pre-test	Post-test	Differential
1	14	20	6
2	13	25	12
3	10	19	9
4	9	21	12
5	19	26	7
6	15	24	9
7	8	18	10
8	10	21	11
9	16	23	7
10	12	25	13
11	9	23	14
12	10	21	11
13	7	20	13

Table 1: Pre-post reading for comprehension scores (CONT.)

No.	Pre-test	Post-test	Differential
14	10	20	10
15	12	21	9
16	18	26	8
17	17	24	7
18	16	19	3
19	13	23	10
20	10	19	9
21	9	21	12
22	10	25	15
23	8	23	15
24	7	19	12
25	9	20	11
26	11	21	10
27	14	20	6
28	13	21	8
29	10	25	15
30	9	19	10
μ	11.60	21.73	10.13
σ	3.29	2.93	0.89
%	38.66	72.44	33.78

According to table 1, the result of the tests showed that, all students gained higher score of the post-test. The average score of all students' pre-test was ($\mu = 11.60$, $\sigma = 3.29$), representing 38.66 percent, and the post-test score was ($\mu = 21.73$, $\sigma = 3.29$), representing 72.44 percent. The result of the study showed that the students' post-test scores were increased. Taken as a whole, the score of the post-test was increased by ($\mu = 10.13$) or 33.78 percent of increase and the result will be discussed more in the following section.

Table 2: Comparison of reading comprehension tests

Tests	N	μ	σ	t	Sig.
Before	30	11.60	3.29	19.00*	.00*
After		21.73	2.39		

* statistically significant at 0.05

The finding from the comparison of the pre-and post-test scores revealed that all students who were taught reading English for comprehension though the interactive reading model had higher scores after learning. They all have higher score of the post-test than that of the pre-test. The study, thus, denoted that the interactive reading model contributed students to comprehend the content of Buddhist history books in a certain level of comprehension.

Table 3: The findings of a study on the achievement of English reading comprehension using Buddhist history books.

No	Total score (30)	Percentage	Criterion score 70%
1	20	67	Not passed
2	25	83	Passed
3	19	63	Not passed
4	21	70	Passed
5	26	87	Passed
6	24	80	Passed
7	18	60	Not passed
8	21	70	Passed
9	23	77	Passed
10	25	83	Passed
11	23	77	Passed
12	21	70	Passed
13	20	67	Not passed
14	20	67	Not passed
15	21	70	Passed
16	26	87	Passed
17	24	80	Passed
18	19	63	Not passed
19	23	77	Passed
20	19	63	Not passed
21	21	70	Passed
22	25	83	Passed
23	23	77	Passed
24	19	63	Not passed
25	20	67	Not passed
26	21	70	Passed
27	20	67	Not passed
28	21	70	Passed
29	25	83	Passed
30	19	63	Not passed
Average score		21.73	
Percentage			72.44

Table 3 showed the results of analyzing the English reading comprehension test scores of 30 students after teaching reading comprehension through the interactive reading model and the use of Buddhist history books as the medium of teaching. The result of the study revealed that 19 students (or 63%) passed the 70% criteria while 11 students (or 37%) failed.

However, the finding showed that all students obtained higher score of the post-test, even though some of the students do not pass the criteria. Taken as a whole, the overall of the students' post-test score revealed ($\mu=21.73$), representing 72.44 percent, which passed the criteria of 70 percent.

Satisfaction toward teaching reading for comprehension:

The researcher used a questionnaire to assess students' satisfaction with the teaching reading for comprehension through Buddhist history books after the teaching was over. The

result of the study of students' satisfaction was analyzed utilizing the mean and standard deviation presented in table 4 below.

Table 4 The result of the student's satisfaction with enhancing English reading comprehension by utilizing Buddhism history books

The students' satisfaction with enhancing English reading comprehension by utilizing Buddhism history books	μ	σ	Level of satisfaction
1. Teaching English reading for comprehension using Buddhist history books is interesting.	4.40	0.66	agree
2. Buddhist history books help me increase my reading skills, knowledge of Buddhism, vocabulary, and grammatical structures.	4.37	0.70	agree
3. Telling stories about the history of Buddhism before starting reading helped me to have a good interest in reading English.	4.10	0.80	agree
4. I have more comprehension when the teacher explains to me the history of Buddhism.	4.23	0.76	agree
5. In my opinion, reading Buddhist historical works is crucial for reading comprehension.	4.30	0.69	agree
6. Buddhist history books, in my opinion, aid in improving reading comprehension.	4.60	0.50	strongly agree
7. Working alone, in my opinion, improves reading English more than working in a group.	4.00	0.82	agree
8. In my point of view, summarizing the content in Buddhist history books assists reading comprehension.	4.00	0.71	agree
9. The text summary from the Buddhist history books, in my opinion, is worthwhile reading.	4.50	0.50	strongly agree
10. In my opinion, explaining the words' meanings aids in improving word retention.	4.60	0.49	strongly agree
11. Answering questions from Buddhist history books, in my opinion, help enhance reading comprehension.	4.50	0.50	strongly agree
12. In my opinion, reading Buddhist history books helps improve my English reading skills.	4.40	0.50	agree

Table 4 The result of the student's satisfaction with enhancing English reading comprehension by utilizing Buddhism history books (CONT)

The students' satisfaction with enhancing English reading comprehension by utilizing Buddhism history books	μ	σ	Level of satisfaction
13. In my opinion, reading Buddhist history books helps improve my English reading skills.	4.40	0.50	agree
14. In my opinion, allowing the students to infer the meaning of the story in Buddhism from the images sparks curiosity and improves their comprehension.	4.20	0.62	agree
15. Group reading enhances classroom relationships.	4.60	0.61	strongly agree

16. The procedure for reading Buddhist history books, in my opinion, is appropriate.	3.80	0.84	agree
17. In my opinion, the use of Buddhist history books in teaching reading is appropriate for first-year students.	4.70	0.47	strongly agree
18. The Interactive Model, in my opinion, helps enhance reading comprehension.	3.80	0.84	agree
19. The Interactive Model, in my opinion, improves better comprehension of the terminology and main idea of the text.	4.30	0.47	agree
20. In my opinion, Buddhist history books are useful material for improving reading skills.	4.20	0.37	agree
Total	4.51	0.64	strongly agree

According to Table 4, the study of the students' satisfaction towards enhancing English reading comprehension utilizing Buddhism history books, students obtained the mean satisfaction rating of ($\mu=4.51$, $\sigma=0.64$), which denoted strongly agree. The result suggested that the students who were instructed reading comprehension with the interactive model and the use of Buddhist history books as a teaching medium were found experiencing satisfaction throughout the process of teaching.

Conclusion:

The goals of this research study were (1) to study the effectiveness of enhancing English reading comprehension through Buddhism history books, (2) to compare students' English reading comprehension ability before and after using Buddhism history books as learning material, and (3) to study the students' satisfaction towards enhancing English reading comprehension utilizing Buddhism history books. The study was conducted with thirty 1st year students studying in the Faculty of Education majoring in Teaching English at Mahamakut Buddhist University Isan Campus, Khon Kaen province, in the academic year 2020. The duration of the experiment was 10 weeks and the result concluded as follows.

1) To compare students' English reading comprehension ability before and after using Buddhism history books as learning material showed that the students had English reading comprehension skills with the mean score before learning was ($\mu=11.60$, $\sigma=3.29$), representing 38.66% and the mean score after learning was ($\mu=21.73$, $\sigma=2.93$) representing 72.44, indicating that the students' English reading comprehension was significantly improved.

2) To study the effectiveness of enhancing English reading comprehension through Buddhism history books found that, as a whole, the method improved students' scores to 72.44%, which higher than the criteria of 70% of the hypothesis. The results were found that the students' English reading comprehension skills were increased significantly at the 0.05 level.

3) To study the students' satisfaction towards enhancing English reading comprehension utilizing Buddhism history books was found that the students were satisfied with the enhancement of reading comprehension by using Buddhist History Books at the highest level ($\mu=4.51$, $\sigma=0.64$).

Discussion:

The researcher chose Buddhism history books over other media because the researcher believes that students who come to study at Mahamakut Buddhist University Isan Campus, which is a Buddhist university, should have knowledge and understanding of Buddhist terminology and history, and that students should be developed in accordance with the university's philosophy of "academic excellence based on Buddhism."

According to the results of enhancing English reading comprehension using Buddhist history books as the above mention, students' reading comprehension skills were improved after the study comparing to pre-study scores in which they had only a rudimentary understanding of English reading comprehension. The fact that the student lacked knowledge of Buddhist terminology and language structures resulted in lower scores on the pre-test. However, once the students improved their reading comprehension through an interactive approach by using Buddhist history books as a teaching medium, their understanding was improved significantly. In addition to Harris and Sipay's (1979) statement that vocabulary and linguistic structure influence reading comprehension, Haris & Smith, (1976) argued that knowledge of language structure is required for reading comprehension.

The study of satisfaction towards teaching English for comprehension utilizing Buddhist history books was at a high level, with an average score of ($\mu=4.51$) and a standard deviation of ($\sigma =0.64$). The average satisfaction score was high since students in the target group were expected to study Buddhist history in their curriculum, which was part of their education. As a result, students were intrigued by the contents of Buddhist history books.

Due to this underlying interest, all students were driven and eager to absorb the information in Buddhist history books in order to have deeper knowledge. This is in line with Krashen's (1981) assertion that motivation and attitude are components that can enhance learning and increase students' desire to learn and further use the language. In addition to Ganschow et al. (1994) and Visser (2008), attitude plays a crucial role in second language learning which has a certain effect on students' learning process. Students who approach learning a second language with a positive attitude are more likely to succeed than those who approach learning a second language negatively. Karahan (2007) argued that "positive language attitudes let learners have a positive orientation towards learning English." It is also in line with Sakthai Surakijbororn's (2002) assertion that an individual's attitude greatly aids in perfectly enhancing their personality and preparing them for a variety of situations. This notion leads to the conclusion that attitude plays a significant role in learning English since learners feel good about their progress when they have a positive attitude toward learning. Students who have a positive outlook on learning will be more motivated to put more effort into studying, and a great attitude may assist students to lead their learning to success and make more attempts to study. According to the findings of the study, students' attitudes toward teaching English for comprehension by utilizing Buddhist history books have resulted in their pleasure and improved students' ability to read English for better comprehension.

Suggestion:

Due to the time constraint for the research to be conducted, some issues remain of concern, including the following. Firstly, future research should pay more attention to a longer-term study to exact more accurate findings. As noted in the method section, the study took place in a short period of time (10 weeks) and the process of language learning takes time for learners to learn new language structures and words. Secondly, variables such as male and female differences should be taken into consideration. Finally, future research should provide for use of Dhamma principles to develop other communication skills such as speaking and writing so that students can speak or write using Buddhist philosophy which will be useful for explaining and perhaps even propagating Buddhist ethical values.

Finding from the Study:

The results indicated that the students' English reading comprehension skills were increased and the students were satisfied with the teaching reading by using the interactive model. The finding also suggested that the use of Buddhism history books contributed to enhancing students' reading comprehension skills, knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge were increased as well as their knowledge of Buddhist history. In addition to the finding, the reason why Buddhist history texts can enhance English reading comprehension is because of their prior knowledge about Buddhism. The prior knowledge of language principles, that is the organization of previously acquired knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, writing style and conventions, and culture are also contributed to the process of comprehension. Thus, since the students are knowledgeable in the field of Buddhism, it is possible that prior knowledge enhances their comprehension.

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