

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale and Statement of the Problem

Reading is considered an important skill in learning any language. According to Carrell (1998), reading is a primary source of new information about all sorts of topics. She, moreover, states that reading is the source for learning. That is, learning is from reading as well as reading is from learning, which is the primary goal of a reading program. Similarly, Eskey (2002) stated that reading is the process of acquiring information from written texts and relating it to what you already know in order to construct a meaning for the text as a whole. Thus, to read a text successfully is to know the meaning of that text rather than simply decoding the words in the text.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the role of a reader shifted to more of an interactive role rather than simply a passive one (Nunan & Carter, 2001). The strategies that readers employ in reading to learn and learning to read are significant. There is great value to the strategies, which determine the way readers conceive a task, attend to textual cues, make sense of what they read, and understand what they read (Block, 1986).

To successfully read, readers must be competent. To be competent means to be good in both reading comprehension and reading strategies, which are not inborn ability. Also, proficient readers may draw on the ability to not only understand the events of narratives but also to engage in their implications, to move beyond the text to make critical and cognitive links with the readers' own life experience. To become a competent reader such variables as the reader, the text, and the strategies have to be taken into consideration.

As far as the reader is concerned, reading strategies are vital since they are the most important factors that affect reading comprehension. Reading strategies are tools that help readers to understand what they read. People learn to read and to read better through reading itself (Eskey, 2002). That is, because reading is a dynamic process which can be seen as an interaction between the reader and the text, the use of reading strategies to understand the text is a way of processing information. Therefore, the use of appropriate reading strategies often results in improving proficiency or overall achievement in specific skill areas (Oxford, 1993). Abita (2000) stated that the more readers learn how to use strategic reading tools, the more their understanding of the text will be improved.

In addition, unsuccessful language learners use few reading strategies and they apply those strategies in a chaotic way, which impairs the effectiveness of their reading (Abita, 2000). Many of them read with ineffective and inefficient strategies. Holloway (1999) mentioned that many students lack sufficient proficiency to be a good reader though they have spent

many years in school. They use less sophisticated and inappropriate reading strategies while reading (Brown, Armbruster, & Baker, 1986; Chun & Plass, 1997). The unsuccessful readers, moreover, are limited in experiencing the task demand when they are in high school and lower division college courses.

In Thailand, though college students have had at least eight years of learning English, reading is increasingly a complex task for them as they progress through higher education (Wirotanun, 2002). Students have problems in understanding what they are reading. They read slowly and without realizing what their purposes in reading are (Sosothikul, 1992). Moreover, there is little training for Thai students in using reading strategies. They may be taught some strategies, for instance finding main ideas, summarizing, and referring. It is, however, not enough to make them a competent reader because reading is a complex communication process which requires thought and individual construction of meaning. It is more than the decoding of written words into sound (Saskatchewan Education, 1997). When considering the reading needs, reading strategies are significant to use in order to enhance reading comprehension and overcome comprehension failure. The more they understand the reading strategies, the more they are effective and efficient readers.

Consequently, the current study aims to investigate the strategies that EFL college readers in Thailand use when reading. The second purpose is to examine whether the lower reading proficiency readers and the higher reading proficiency readers use the same of different strategies when reading.

Research Questions

1. What strategies do EFL college readers in Thailand use when reading the English language text?
2. Do lower reading ability readers and lower reading ability readers use the same or different strategies?

Significance of the Study

These days, reading is the most important activity in which language students have to engage. Unfortunately, the fact of the language learning is that most students have problems with reading such as there is too much reading and they never understand what the text is about. As a result some students form the view that if only they could know words while reading, things would be better. Therefore, there were many studies focused on the reading strategies in order to improve the readers in reading. However, most of those studies were intended to study the second language readers. There is still need to study about the reading strategies that the readers really use while reading and the differences of each proficiency level in reading English as a foreign language. So, the current study reveals the results about these topics.

First, the focus on reading strategies that Thai EFL college-level learners use while reading English text, this study revealed the awareness of reading strategies among EFL learners. The readers will be able to utilize the strategies to improve their reading and relate their knowledge of reading

strategies to actual reading. Besides, teaching reading strategies to the students was focused. That is, because the teacher is considered as one of the learning source, through this current study the teacher will also benefit from the relationships between the reading strategies used on English text and the reading proficiency in an EFL classroom. The current study will reveal the use of the students' reading strategy so that the teacher will be able to know and apply this information to help their students improving their reading abilities. Lastly, this study will reveal whether Thai EFL learners at the college-level are really aware of reading strategies. The results will be of great benefit to the field of teaching EFL learners at the college-level as well.

Definition of Terms

EFL (English as Foreign Language)	learners who study English while living in the culture of their first language (Barnett, 1989)
Global Strategies	a set of reading strategies oriented toward a global analysis of the text (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002)
Metacognitive Strategies	the strategies that involve thinking about the learning process, planning of learning, monitoring (of) comprehension or production while it is taking place, and self-evaluation of learning after the

	language activity is completed (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Mazanares, Russo & Kupper, 1985)
Problem Solving Strategies	the strategies that are oriented around strategies for solving problems when texts become difficult to read (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002)
Reading ability	the level of the students' language production and understanding (Aebersold & Field, 1997)
Reading Strategies	the processes used by learners to enhance reading, for example, underlining, predicting, skimming, and scanning (Carrell, 1998)
Support Strategies	the strategies that are primarily involved use of outside reference materials, taking notes, and practical strategies that might be described as functional or support strategies (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002)

Assumption of the Study

The current study assumed that the participants responded to the questions in the questionnaire to the best of their knowledge and abilities.

Organization of the Study

This chapter offers the discussion of the statement of problem related to the reading strategies used among EFL college readers in Thailand. There were description of the research questions, significance of the study, assumption of the study, and definition of terms related to the current study. Chapter two discusses conceptual framework which is about reading strategy and related studies related to the current study. Chapter three explains the methods of the study which are subjects, instrument, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Chapter four reports the results found from the study. Chapter five discusses the results of the study, limitation, and further studies recommendation.