

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the current study were to examine the reading strategies that EFL college readers in Thailand used when they read English texts and to compare the strategies used by the higher ability readers and the lower ability readers. This chapter begins with the description of the participants. The instruments and data collection procedures were also reported. Finally, the data analysis was described.

#### Participants

The present study took place at a university in the north of Thailand. The population of the current study was non-English major students who enrolled in the English II course during the second semester of academic year 2004. The total number of population was 899 students from 38 classes. In this university, non-English major students were required to take at least four English courses; English II was the second required course in the set. Therefore, the students had already experienced studying English at a college level for at least one semester. Before enrolling in this course, the students were required to pass English I. Before entering the university, these students

had had 8 to 12 years of formal studying of the English language.

Because one of the purposes of the current study was to compare the reading strategies used by the higher ability readers and the lower ability readers, the students' final examination scores from English I, the pre-requisite course of English II, was used to separate the students into two groups. The final paper of English I was divided into three parts: writing, reading, and conversation. Since this study focused on reading strategies, only the scores of reading section were used to select the samples. The total score of the reading section was 60, the participants who received a score of 48 or higher (Grade A) were considered the higher reading ability group and those whose reading scores were between 30–35 points (Grade C) were considered the lower reading ability group. The difference between the lowest score of the higher reading ability group (48) and the highest score of the lower reading ability group (35) helped to minimize any flaws in the study since there was a substantial difference in the range of scores.

The total number of students in the higher reading ability group was 115. All of them were invited to participate in this study. With regards to the lower reading ability group, there were 302 students. The researcher randomly selected 115 students from this group. Thus, the number of the participants from the lower reading ability group was equal to those from the higher reading ability group. The total number of the samples in the current study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The number and percentages of participants

Reading Ability Groups	Male Frequency	Percentage	Female Frequency	Percentage
Higher Reading Ability Group (N=110)	47	42.7%	63	57.2%
Lower Reading Ability Group (N=109)	30	27.5%	79	72.5%
Total (N= 219)	77	35%	142	65%

At first, the higher reading ability group consisted of 115 students. However, the number decreased to 110 because some participants were absent on the day the researcher collected the data. Thus, the total number of the participants in this group were 110, consisting of 47 male (42.7%) and 63 female (57.2%). Similarly, some of the participants in the lower reading ability group were absent on the day that the data were collected, decreasing the total number of participants to 109, which consisted of 30 male (27.5%) and 79 female (72.5%). Thus, the total number of the participants in the current study was 219 students, 77 male (35%) and 142 female (65%). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001), 20% of the population should be sampled if the population size is around 1,500. In the current study, the population size was 899. Therefore, the number of participants (219) was sufficient.

After that, ten participants were randomly selected, for later interview five from the higher ability group and another five from the lower ability group.

### Instruments

The instruments used in this study were a questionnaire and an interview.

#### Questionnaire

A questionnaire was intended to measure the types and frequency of reading strategies that the participants used when they read. It was taken from Survey of Reading Strategy (SORS), which was developed by Mohktari and Reichard (2002). The questionnaire consisted of 30 items, each of which used a five- point Likert scale ranging from 1, "I never or almost never do this" to 5, "I always or almost always do this" (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire was divided into three categories: global reading, problem-solving, and support strategies. Global reading strategies (GLOB) are general, carefully planned techniques by which learners monitor their reading. The global reading strategies consist of 13 sub-strategies. Next, problem solving strategies (PROB) are actions and procedures that readers use while working with the text. They are localized, focused techniques that readers used when problems occur which attempting to understand textual information. Problem solving strategies consists of eight sub-strategies. Finally, support strategies (SUP) are basic support mechanisms intended to

aid the readers in comprehending the text. There are nine sub-strategies of the support strategies (see Table 2).

To validate the questionnaire, Mohktari and Reichard (2002) field-tested it with the population of ESL students studying at two universities in the United States. They found consistent results related to the instrument's reliability, indicating a reasonable degree of consistency in measuring awareness and perceived use of reading strategies among non-native learners of English.

The questionnaire was adopted to be used in the current study because the reading strategies measured in the questionnaire served its purposes. The questionnaire was translated into Thai to minimize any confusion that might be caused by the participant's limited ability at understanding English. A specialist proofread the translated version of the questionnaire. Additionally, the researcher conducted a pilot-study with a group of 10 Thai students who did not participate in the current study. The researcher explained the purposes of the study to the students and asked them to complete the questionnaire.

Table 2

## Sub-strategies

Categories	Items	Sub-strategies
Global Reading Strategy	1	Setting purpose for reading
	3	Activating prior knowledge
	4	Taking an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it
	7	Reading slowly and carefully to make sure that I understand what I am reading
	10	Underlining or circling information in the text to help me remember it
	14	Paying closer attention to text when it becomes difficult
	17	Using context clues
	19	Trying to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read
	22	Finding relationship among ideas in the text by going back and forth
	23	Checking understanding when come across new information
	25	Rereading text to increase my understanding when it becomes difficult
	26	Self-questioning
29	Translating from L2 to L1	

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Table 2 (Continued)

## Sub-strategies

Categories	Items	Sub-strategies
<b>Problem Solving Strategy</b>		
	8	Reviewing the text before reading
	11	Adjusting reading speed according to text
	13	Using reference materials (e.g., a dictionary)
	16	Stopping from time to time and thinking about text
	18	Paraphrasing
	21	Critically analyzing and evaluating information in text
	27	Checking whether the guesses about text are right or wrong
	30	Thinking about information in both L1 and L2
<b>Support Strategy</b>		
	2	Taking note while reading
	5	Reading aloud
	6	Fitting the content of the text and reading purpose
	9	Trying to get back on track when losing concentration
	12	Deciding what to read closely and what to ignore
	15	Using tables, figures, and pictures in text
	20	Using typographical features
	24	Trying to guess about the content of text
	28	Guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases

A few flaws were found in the questionnaire. For example, there was some confusion regarding the written instructions, whether they should check or circle the answers. The students also needed longer than 10 minutes to finish the task. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the instructions of the questionnaire were rewritten for clearer understanding, and the researcher decided to extend the time to complete the questionnaire.

### Interview

An interview was the other instrument used in the current study. It aimed to collect the data from the participants that illustrated interesting perspectives that might otherwise not have come to light and expanded the data retrieved from the questionnaire (Chapelle, Jamieson, & Preiss, 2005). The interview questions were written based on the purposes of the study and related to items in the questionnaire. They contained open-ended questions about reading strategies that the participants employed in order to increase their understanding, for example, “Do you know any of the reading strategies?” and “How do you use these strategies in your reading in order to increase your understanding?” (see Appendix C). The participants were allowed to speak Thai during the interview. The average length of each interview was 30 minutes. All interviews were tape-recorded for later analysis.

To increase the validity of the interview, the researcher wrote a draft of the interview questions in English based on the purposes of the study. Then,



the researcher asked the expert to review the questions. The interview questions were then tested with five students who did not participate in the study. Suggestions and comments were taken to revise the questions before using in later interviews.

Responses made to interview questions and as comments within the questionnaires were used to support the quantitative results or to illustrate interesting perspectives that might otherwise not have to come to light.

### Data Collection Procedure

Five steps were used to collect data in the current study, as illustrated in Figure 1. First, the researcher asked for permission to obtain the final scores of English I from the English Department. Based on the participants' reading scores, the researcher separated them into two groups: higher reading ability group and lower reading ability group as described earlier.

When the second semester began, the researcher asked the English instructors for the list of English II students who passed the English I course and for the permission to distribute the questionnaire. On the day that the data were collected, the researcher first explained the purposes of the study to the students and then asked them to read and complete the questionnaire. They spent about 15 to 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The researcher collected the questionnaire immediately after they finished. After that the researcher pulled out the questionnaires that belonged to the participants of the current study, then divided them into two groups for later analysis. One week later, 10 randomly

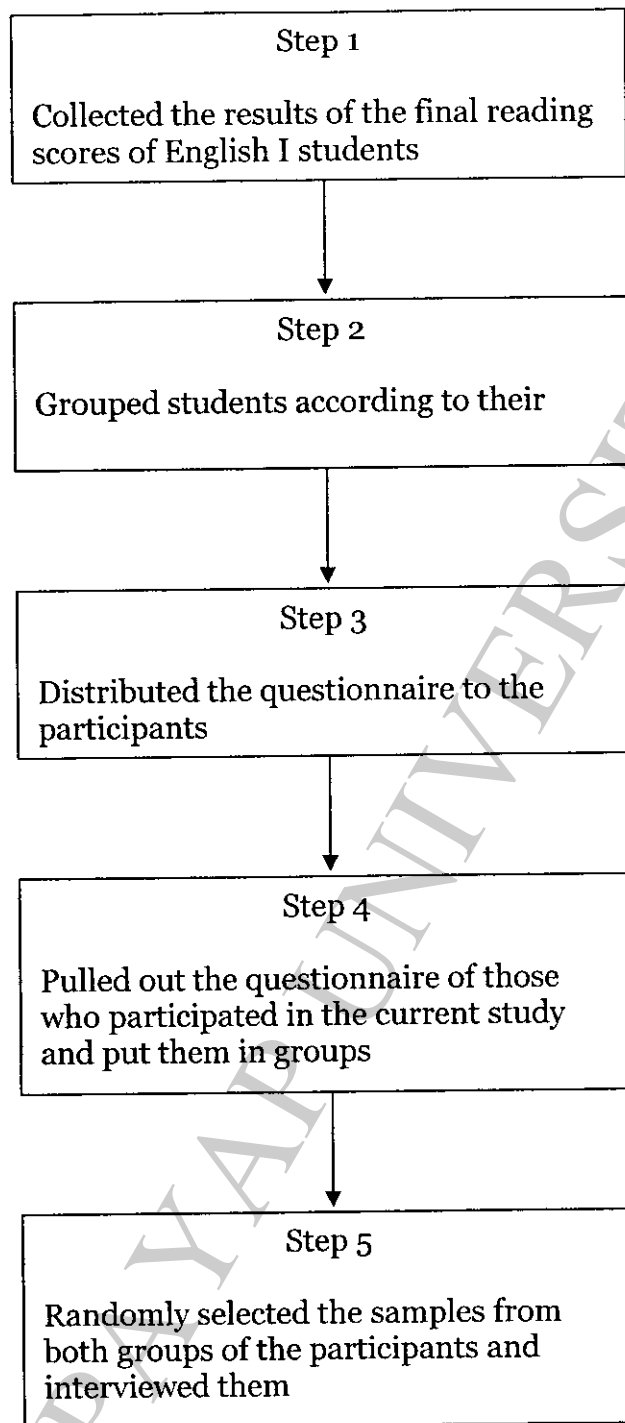


Figure 1 Data Collection Procedures

selected participants were interviewed individually in a room where only the participants and the researcher were present. The researcher explained the purposes of the interview to the participants before interviewing.

### Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively by using SPSS program. Because the purpose of the study was to better understand how EFL readers used strategies while reading English texts, only frequencies, percentage, and mean score were used in the analysis. The individual scores are recorded and divided by the number of items to get an average response for the entire questionnaire as well as for each strategy subscale (i.e., global reading, problem-solving, and support strategies). In examining the reading strategy usage of individual and groups of the participants, these score can then be interpreted using the interpretation guideline, which ranges from 1 to 5. Three levels of usage were identified in Table 3, as suggested by Mokhtari and Reichard for strategy usage: high (mean of 3.5 or higher), medium (mean of 2.5 to 3.4), and low (2.4 or lower). The results of the analysis and interpretation will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 3

## Interpretation of mean scores

Ranges from mean score	Degree of strategy usage
3.5 or higher	High
2.5-3.4	Medium
2.4 or lower	Low

## Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed four major aspects of the research methodology, which are participants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis. The participants of this study were 219 EFL Thai readers from a university in the north of Thailand. They were divided into two groups: the higher and the lower reading ability participants based on their reading test scores. Both groups were asked to complete the questionnaire about the strategy usage when they read EFL texts. The data were then analyzed by using descriptive statistics.