Chapter V

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

Conclusion

The objective of this study was to investigate commercial student problems in reading business English texts and the factors which cause their reading problems. The four groups of subjects consist of 120 first-year higher level students from the four commercial schools in Amphur Muang, ChiangMai, namely, ChiangMai Commercial College, Srithana Commercial College, ChiangMai Vocational College, and ChiangMai Rajamongkol Technology College. Thirty students from each school were randomly selected to take the test and to answer the questionnaire. These students had already taken two courses of business English (Tor Sor 012-013) in the 1998 academic year. The instruments employed were a reading comprehension test, a questionnaire concerning the students' problems in reading and understanding business English texts, and the factors affecting their achievement and/or failure in reading them. The factors in the questionnaire were divided into five subheadings: (1) students, (2) teachers, (3) teaching methodology, (4) environments, and (5) teaching aids.

Aside from the reading comprehension test and the questionnaire, the interview with ten business English teachers who had been teaching in the four target commercial schools were conducted. This was done in order to obtain information concerning the teachers' teaching methods, teaching aids and materials, and their

problems in teaching business English reading. The data analysis was completed using the SPSS/PC+ program. The statistics employed are percentage, arithmetic mean, frequency distribution, and SD (Standard Deviation).

The test and the questionnaire results reveal that:

1) The students have problems in mastering reading subskills. The mean of student ability in reading business English texts is 12.15 or 45 percent which is very poor when compared with the criterion of the Thai Vocational Education Department revised in 1995. Student ability in each reading comprehension subskill, guessing meanings of the unfamiliar words within a text, recognizing general business vocabulary for that level, determining main ideas, inferring information from context, and identifying factual details from the text was 38.60, 44.40, 46.40, 42.60, and 50.86 respectively. This reveals that the students have a very low ability in reading and understanding business English texts according to the criterion of the Thai Vocational Education Department revised in 1995. It can be concluded that the students have too much difficulty or too many problems in reading business English texts. When comparing all five reading subskills, students have the most difficulty in guessing meanings of the unfamiliar words from textual clues, and the least in identifying factual details within a text. This can be supported by the student self-evaluation in their reading difficulty. According to the questionnaire results the students have much difficulty in guessing meanings of the unfamiliar words and recognizing general business vocabulary (Mean = 3.51), and in identifying factual details (Mean = 3.41), having difficulty in determining main ideas (Mean = 3.32), and inferring information from the text (Mean = 3.16). It can be concluded that the students have difficulty in both the literal comprehension level (guessing meanings of the words, recognizing general business vocabulary, determining main ideas, identifying factual details) and the

interpretive comprehension level (inferring information from the text).

2) There are many causes which affect the student reading achievement and/or failure. The factors which cause the student difficulty in reading business English texts concern (1) teaching techniques, (2) reading strategies, (3) teachers' language use in the classroom, (4) teaching aids, and (5) environments. Concerning teaching techniques, they do not match the student needs. The students prefer the teachers to explain the business terms and idioms before reading, to instruct how to guess the words and how to skim to find the main idea while reading, and to construct the questions to help them to infer and to summarize the text after reading but the teachers do not.

In regard to reading strategies, the students sometimes use strategies in reading, but the strategies they use are not appropriate for mastering that skill. Consequently, the students get the low scores in reading. According to the interview, the teachers do not teach the students reading strategies because of time constraint and lack of appropriate exercises.

Regarding the teacher language use in the classroom, the students prefer the teachers to speak both Thai and English in the classroom but the teachers tend to use Thai more.

Relating to teaching aids, the students want to study English with modern teaching equipment such as a slide projector, a computer, a CD-ROM but the schools do not provide them.

In terms of environments, the students want to study English in comfortable classroom environment with average class size, enough light, air-conditioner, and right position of teaching equipment. Besides, parents, relatives, and friends' encouragement including with English media such as advertisements, warnings, notices, and so forth can motivate the students to study business English.

The results from the test and questionnaire indicate that the students'
problems in reading business English texts have not been solved. This can be
supported by a study of Noisangsri et al (1982) in that Thai students had most
difficulty in reading with new vocabulary and idioms because they did not spend extra
time for reading . Besides, environment affected their English learning. According to
Thearmtanachock (1999), the students had problems in identifying main ideas, making
inferences, and making predictions because they used insufficiently reading strategies.
In a study by Caragine (1993) reveals that students' background knowledge, family
background, personalities, and learning styles influence their inferencing abilities.
Regarding teaching techniques, Saranjam (1986) found that students' poor background
in English, their inattention, and their favor of translation caused failure in using
techniques to teach them reading. Moreover, her study also reveals that the
inappropriate materials can discourage students in learning to read. The students
themselves found that it was difficult to understand the passage as a whole even if
they knew the meaning of the vocabulary. According to Parasakul (1984) who
conducted a survey of the students' attitudes toward English, achievement, and needs
in learning English found that 71 percent of students wanted their English teachers to
speak more English than Thai in the classroom.

Discussion and Recommendations

The factors mentioned are the cause of student problems in reading business

English texts. The three instruments used are shown below.

Reading subskill	Student self-evaluation	Student reading strategies	Teacher teaching methods	Test result
Guessing meanings of the unfamiliar words from the text	Vocabulary and idioms in business English texts are much too difficult for them. The vocabulary and idioms are unfamiliar to them. They want the teachers to teach them to guess the meaning of difficult words.	Students use this strategy often while reading business English texts.	Teachers do not teach students how to guess the words because they feel student are already familiar with the words since the words are defined in the text.	very low

From the table it is showed that the students have problems and difficulty in guessing

unfamiliar words from the text clues because the teachers do not teach

them guessing techniques. Some teachers let students find meanings of words they

do not know from the dictionary. Although the students say that they often use this

strategy, they may not use the right process. This can cause student difficulty in

reading and understanding the texts because one word in English has several meanings.

Reading subskill	Student self-evaluation	Student reading strategy	Teacher teaching methods	Test result
Recognizing general business vocabulary for that level	This skill is much too difficult. The students want the teachers to explain business terms and idioms to them before reading.	The students often underline the key words in the text and try to memorize them.	Teachers ask students to recite and memorize the words and then they give them dictation on the words in class.	very low

From the table it is revealed that the students have problems in recognizing general business vocabulary for that level even though the teachers teach them how to recognize the words and give them practice using this skill regularly. From teacher interviews, it indicated that the students have no opportunity to use these words in daily life or in a real situation and the words are too difficult for them to memorize.

Reading subskill	Student self-evaluation	Student reading strategy	Teacher teaching methods	Test result
Determining main ideas	This subskill is much too difficult for them. The students want the teachers to teach them how to skim to find the main idea and ask them guided questions leading to the main points of the text.	1.The students sometimes skim while reading in order to find the main ideas. 2. Students read through the conclusion. 3. They underline the key words and sentences.	The teachers ask the students to find main ideas by noticing the key words they have seen often in the text and ask them guided questions leading to the main points of the text.	very low

The above table makes the point that students had problems in determining the main ideas within a text because the teachers did not give them enough strategies for finding the main ideas, such as used in skimming. When considering the teacher interviews, the student poor knowledge of English, their limited vocabulary, and the teachers' lack of appropriate exercises in supporting the use of subskills caused student problems.

Reading subskill	Student self-evaluation	Student reading strategy	Teacher teaching methods	Test result
Inferring information within a text	This skill is fairly difficult for students. They want teachers to instruct them in how to differentiate between the types of texts, to understand numbers, pictures, tables, to construct the questions for them to help them infer, and to teach them to summarize the text	The students often notice numbers, pictures, tables, and the kind of article or letter before reading it.	The teachers do not instruct students on how to infer, but instead ask interpretive questions.	very low

The table shows that the students have problems in inferring information within a text because the teachers do not encourage the students to infer. The teachers ask only the questions in the text. Although the students use some strategies leading to infer information from the text, those strategies do not provide them enough information in inferring. They need more strategies in inferring, for example, noting details and using what knowledge the students already have on the subject. Besides, the students need more exercises in inferring practice.

Reading subskill	Student self-evaluation	Student reading strategy	Teacher teaching methods	Test result
Identifying factual details within a text	This skill is very difficult for them. They want the teachers to explain complex structures, construct questions in detail from the text, teach them how to examine a summary before reading and suggest them how to translate the text into Thai.	Students "often" underline important points while reading, but only "sometimes" notice sentence structures, take note on key points, and scan to identify factual details from the text.	Teachers instruct students to note key points in the text while reading, translate the text into Thai, and answer questions on the worksheets after reading.	low

From the table it can be said that the students have problems in identifying factual details because the teachers teach them only how to note key points from the text, but in effect, the students do not know what they are underlining. There is no "check" on the students. Besides, the teachers ask the students to translate the text and answer the questions from the worksheets without explaining complex structures from the text. The few questions in the worksheet are not enough for the students. The students themselves do not often notice structures or take note while reading or scanning in order to identify factual details.

There were other factors which cause the student problems in reading and understanding business English texts when looking at the questionnaires and the interview results as shown in the table.

Factors	Student self-evaluation	Interviews	Interpretation
Student attitude toward English	Students have a good attitude toward English.	Teachers say that students have no interest in studying English.	Teachers feel that students have no interest in studying English because they have to spend time in studying other required courses.
Teacher language in class	Students prefer teachers who speak both Thai and English in teaching.	Teachers use both languages that is what students want, but use more Thai.	Students still get poor scores in English even though teachers speak both Thai and English. The teachers think the students have poor basic knowledge in English.
Teaching aids and materials	Students accept that the school textbooks have the content that they prefer, but the textbook is difficult for them. Besides, they want supplementary documents and modern technological equipment to enhance their learning.	Teachers use both school textbooks and supplementary documents, but do not use modern technological equipment in teaching students.	Students have low scores in reading business English because the school textbooks are very difficult for them and they are not given the opportunity to read English texts with the aid of modern technological equipment.

According to the problems mentioned in the tables, they can be resolved as the followings:

1. Before teaching business English, teachers should do a needs analysis to find the students' needs, attitudes, and problems they encounter in reading the texts. This can help the teachers find appropriate teaching methods, activities, and materials in relation to the students' needs and attitudes. This can also eliminate or prevent the problems which may occur when teaching and learning to read in business English texts.

2. Teachers should instruct students the strategies in reading and the strategies to master different reading subskills. Knowing these strategies together with practice can help the students to comprehend the texts they read.

3. From the teacher interviews, teachers rarely instruct students reading strategies or strategies to master reading subskills. It can be assumed that the teachers probably do not know how to teach reading strategies necessary for the students in selecting appropriate strategies in reading business English texts.

4. Since teaching aids also affect students' achievement and/or failure in readng business English texts according to the study, it is suggested that modern technology such as the internet, educational or general CD-ROM, different kinds of media should be provided in teaching reading. Teachers should stimulate the students' attention and interest and also give them first-hand experience to have an access to worldwide knowledge in business. This can make the students realize the importance and the necessity of English messages and reading skills. Moreover, the students can apply their reading skills, expressions, idioms, and vocabulary studied in class in their daily life. This can reinforce what the students have learned in class. In case of textbooks employed in teaching business English, it should be evaluated at the end of semester in order to find the strong points,

weak points, problems occurring when using them, cultural difficulty, the correspondence to the student needs, the authenticity, and level of difficulty. Consequently, the texts should be modified and the suitable supplementaries should be added. These supplementaries should be authentic, seen in the student daily life, and match the student needs. Following the supplementary materials, teachers should construct proper and adequate exercises for students practice in different reading subskills to comprehend the reading texts.

5. According to the teaching techniques in reading, teachers should teach the student background about the topic they are going to read. The teachers should encourage the students to read by making connection or relate their prior knowledge to the reading texts. The teachers should assign the students to look for the information outside such as from magazines, newspapers, or websites in the internet. This can help the students in learning the new vocabulary which appear in authentic materials. Besides, teachers should arouse students curiosity by establishing problem situations (create problems to be solved), guided imagery to allow students to explore concepts visually, and analogies to compare-contrast concepts familiar to the students and unfamiliar ideas which will be encountered in the text. To help students to accustom to English language and to reinforce them to recognize the vocabulary in their reading texts, teachers should speak English in class as much as possible. Moreover, teachers should construct appropriate exercises for students practice to enhance their vocabulary and their reading skills. While teaching, teachers should emphasize the student-centred approach to motivate students to participate in teaching and learning. In addition, activities and cooperative learning such as pair-work or group-work can stimulate students to read. Since reading skills are necessary tools in understanding English reading texts, teachers should instruct students to guess unfamiliar words by analyzing

word parts (prefixes, affixes, or suffixes), by using context clues (definition, explanation, or illustration), and by using a dictionary wisely and effectively. In order to identify main ideas, teachers should instruct students to find topic words or key words, to distinguish general and specific ideas, and to identify paragraph organization. In addition, teachers should instruct students how to find factual details which support the main idea by using some signals such as *for example, first, second, last, also,* and so forth. The other reading subskill which students should learn is to look for inferences by reading carefully and considering all the evidence the writers do not state directly. Apart from the reading skills mentioned, the reading strategies like K-W-L (Know, Want to know, Learn) and Direct Instruction should be employed in teaching students to comprehend the texts. After teaching students how to read effectively, teachers should set the questions from the reading texts and let students find the answers. In addition, students should be able to make questions from the answers given by the teachers. Teachers can ask students to tell the meanings of vocabulary, write the outline from their texts, or summarize the texts after reading to measure their comprehension after reading the texts.