

Chapter V

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Summary of the Study

The objectives of this study were: (1) to investigate the reading problems among university English major students, (2) to survey the students' reading strategies and (3) to recommend changes in the course, and possibly revision of reading materials appropriate for students. The subjects were fifty English major students who were required to take the course, AE203: Reading I in the first semester of the 2003 academic year. Three instruments used were the reading comprehension test, the questionnaire, and the interviews. The reading comprehension test was used to investigate students' reading problems in reading comprehension skills. The test was a multiple-choice test. The questionnaire was used to survey the reading problems in AE203 course. Besides the questionnaire, the instructors of the reading course and the students were interviewed in order to obtain data about the reading problems of the students and also opinions about reading. The fifty students were interviewed after receiving the reading comprehension test and the questionnaire were given to them to complete after taking test. Twenty-five subjects randomly selected from fifty subjects were interviewed. The data obtained was analyzed by using SPSS. The statistics used were arithmetic mean and percentage.

The results from the reading comprehension test revealed that the students' reading problems identified were main ideas, making conclusions, making inferences, and guessing the meanings based on contextual clues. This is compatible with the interview result. The instructors' interview declared that the students' major problem in reading is having an inadequate vocabulary. The other problems are looking for main ideas, making inferences, and the applying inability of reading strategies in their daily reading. Regarding the students' needs, the results showed the following:

- They preferred their teacher to teach in English except in grammar explanations.
- Doing class activities should be in small groups, pair work, and individual work.
- The motivation in class comes from extra points and praise.
- Their teachers should not control the class all the time.
- The students prefer to have an opportunity to select their own reading topics.
- The students should have equal rights to gain points.
- The students prefer to be quizzed immediately after each lesson.

Furthermore, they applied all the following reading strategies: that were reading - aloud, re-reading, guessing, using a dictionary, using schema theory, taking notes, using tables, using pictures, using figures. Moreover, their thinking processes came from their native language and were then translated into English. The students were mostly visual learners because they used their imagination, and

they underlines or circled some information helping them in remembering. They were interested in teenager topics, entertainment topics, current news, and environmental topics. The students' expectations were practicing English, applying English in their daily lives, studying English for their further study, and getting experiences.

5.2 Discussion of Results

The results are discussed under each objective of this study as follows:

1. The students' reading problems were identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions, making inferences, and guessing the meanings from contextual clues. This finding is consistent with previous research on reading abilities by Kamwachirapitak (1989), the finding showed that the four reading comprehension skills of recognition, main ideas, inferences, and problem – solving were the reading strategies that improved the students' reading abilities. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that if the students always practice and apply the reading strategies such as identifying main ideas, making conclusions, making inferences, and guessing the meanings from the contextual clues, they can get rid of these sub – skill problems in order to develop their reading abilities.

This was also confirmed by Youngjermjantra (1994) who studied the ability of Mattayomsuksa 4 students to infer from English reading text. The results revealed that Thai students reading abilities were low. Main ideas, supporting details, sequences, cause – effect relationships, character traits, and predicting outcomes were measured in the test.

Moreover, the researcher found that vocabulary was the main problem for Thai students majoring in English based on the reading comprehension test, the students' needs questionnaire, and the interview. The students had a limited range of words and they also got the wrong perception that they should know all the words in sentences in order to understand the reading. For this reason, it can be associated with other skills or other problems such as looking for main ideas, etc., because vocabulary is one factor that affects reading. For instance, when students have vocabulary problems, they might use guessing techniques inappropriately, subsequently getting the wrong answer.

Additionally, the students always mention that they cannot comprehend the text because they have limited vocabulary and they cannot apply the reading strategies. This is also compatible with Quain (1999) who conducted research on "Assessing the Roles of Depth and Breadth of Vocabulary Knowledge in Reading Comprehension". Quain's results concluded that to improve students' academic reading comprehension, there were two components of vocabulary depth which should be emphasized more. First, the primary meaning of words should be introduced in the classroom. Second, syntactic properties of words such as collocational relations with other words are also important. The conclusion of this study revealed that vocabulary knowledge also affects the reading comprehension.

Furthermore, based on the result of this study, the researcher thinks that the way that the teachers solved the vocabulary problems for this class was beneficial for the students. The students can increase their vocabularies when memorizing and using reading strategies. The students were assigned to do the vocabulary list by searching out the unknown vocabulary from the authentic materials. They

should find the words, write the meanings, and also make sentences every day. So, they learned by themselves every day. In addition, the teachers made the students practice to make an educated guess or guess the meanings from the contextual clues when necessary. Although some words in the passage were taken out, they can find other words that have the same meanings to fill in. That was a way that the teacher could encourage the students to practice and apply guessing techniques based on the contextual clues.

Furthermore, the researcher also strongly agreed that teaching prefixes and suffixes was a basic way of increasing vocabulary for the students. Since they know the word families and whether to use prefixes or suffixes, it can lead them to positive or negative meanings. Subsequently, they can guess the answers.

The researcher also realized that identifying main ideas, drawing conclusions and making inferences were related to vocabulary problems. At the time of doing my thesis, the teachers taught only vocabulary skills, main ideas, and inferences. Mostly, the teachers practiced these three skills together. Thai students typically believe that every word in the sentence is important, so vocabulary causes them a problem.

2. Regarding reading strategies, ten of the twelve reading strategies were found to be used at high frequency, and two of the twelve reading strategies were found to be used moderately. This means the students know how to use the reading strategies, but they might use some more inefficient reading strategies more frequently. For example, if the students choose to use a dictionary they may waste more time than if they chose to guess the answer using contextual clues. Sometimes, it is unclear to the students in which situation it is most appropriate

for specific reading strategies to be employed. So, it can be summarized that if the students were taught about: why, when, and in what problems or circumstances to use a reading strategy, their reading abilities would be expected to become higher because they would have a chance to practice and apply the reading strategies. However, teaching students to become strategic, and constructively responsive readers can be a powerful way to promote skillful academic reading. Although the strategy instruction is time consuming to teach, it is important for teachers emphasize how and when to use a strategy. It involves modeling and re-teaching specific strategies when necessary. This is in line with the previous research done by Ono (1992) who studied twenty Japanese ESL readers' reading strategies. In Ono's study, the students read the short stories with different cultural proximity to students' backgrounds. The results showed that the readers interpret a text on the basis of their personal experiences, knowledge perception, and beliefs. This means teachers should find the topics which match with the students' interests, and then they can apply their background knowledge and pay more attention more to their studying.

The researcher found that the cultural differences and the reading habits affected reading and caused the students' reading problems. In Thai culture, the teachers are people who always give the answers to their students and rarely allow students to find the answers by themselves. Although now, the teaching is focussed on the learner- centered approach and the teachers try to encourage the students to develop their cognitive skill, this primary perception is still with them. In comparison, in Western culture, the students practice to think about and search

for the answers by themselves. They also learn to love reading which gives them a positive outlook on doing further reading.

For the Thai situation, in order to develop the students' cognitive skill and the students' reading habit, it should begin with the family and the people who are close to them such as friends or teachers. Parents should encourage their children in reading and should read for them when they are young. In the classroom, teachers should introduce the reading strategies in order to help students become more independent in reading. In fact, when they do a reading exercise, the teachers will tell them the correct answers without first asking them how they got that answer. It would be better practice if the teacher should lead the students to the answer by giving them some clues instead of telling the answer to them directly.

3. In regard to the students' need, it can respond for the recommendations for the course. Their ideal reading class should be as follows:

- Teachers should have the students practice by using English with them.
- Teachers should explain instruction or grammar in Thai.
- Students prefer doing group work, pair work, and individual work.
- Praise and extra points such as presentation and participation points can be motivating factors in class.
- Students prefer having quizzes after each lesson.

Moreover, they are interested in teenager related reading topics, entertainment, and current news. Thus, the teachers should find readings that have their students' interest in mind. The students' needs were just surveyed for the student's general reading preferences. The survey does not address those

materials meant only for the reading class. So, the researcher hopes that the future reading teachers can gain some insights from the data collected to help students overcome their major reading problems.

Collection data from the students' questionnaire showed that one important thing is the students want to change the reading curriculum from teacher-centered to learner-centered. They need their rights in the classroom to express their ideas and making decision by themselves. The teachers themselves should open their minds accepting the students' idea and focus more on learner-curriculum. It can stimulate the students more in studying this course.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

5.3.1 Classroom Recommendations

1. Instructors should put more emphasis on the vocabulary problem in order to reduce the students' reading problems in the classroom.
2. Instructors should keep up the research on reading problems including: reading strategies and reading comprehension in order to improve their instructions based on current information in the field.
3. Instructors should carefully select appropriate materials for the students.
4. Instructors should directly teach reading strategies and encourage students more to practice these strategies with various kinds of genre.
5. Instructors should move towards teacher-centered curriculum to learner-centered curriculum.

5.3.2 Research Recommendations

1. Further research should take into consideration other variables that may cause students' reading problems in AE 203 subject such as reading comprehension, reading strategies, instructional materials, teachers and learners, etc.
2. Further research might focus on the content of the chosen reading materials.
3. Researchers should put more emphasis on other research instruments, such as observation. Observation can help researchers find out other factors that may affect the students' reading abilities.
6. This research was carried out in a limited time, others researchers should have more time to do this research to gain better results.