



A SURVEY OF THE NEEDS FOR ENGLISH READING STRATEGIES AS IDENTIFIED BY GRADUATE STUDENTS REGISTERED IN ENGLISH REQUIRED BY GRADUATE SCHOOL (355501), KASETSART UNIVERSITY

การสำรวจกลวิธีการอ่านที่จำเป็นสำหรับนิสิตระดับปริญญาโท ที่ลงทะเบียนรายวิชา English Required by Graduate School (355501), มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์

กฤษฏีภา หลังประยูร, นุชมา ตันทอง

ภาควิชาภาษาต่างประเทศ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์

Abstract

The objective of the study was to identify reading strategies that the graduate students at Kasetsart University use in their academic reading texts. A specially designed rating-scale questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect the data. The participants of the study were 403 master's degree students studying English Required by the Graduate School (355501) in the first semester of the academic year 2008. The results of the study show that the students evaluated their own reading strategy at a moderate level and wanted to develop their reading strategy at a higher level. The reading strategies are to be applied in their academic reading, which are most importantly are post-reading strategy, follow by while-reading strategies, and pre-reading, and use of vocabulary.

Keywords: Reading strategy, Needs, Master's degree students

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจความต้องการการใช้กลวิธีการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตระดับปริญญาโท กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนิสิตระดับปริญญาโท มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์ ที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนรายวิชา English Required by Graduate School (355501) ประจำปีการศึกษา 2551 จำนวน 403 คน เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยนี้ คือ แบบสอบถาม ผลการวิจัยพบว่า นิสิตให้ความสำคัญต่อความต้องการในการใช้กลวิธีหลังการอ่านมากที่สุด รองลงมา คือ กลวิธีการอ่านที่ใช้ระหว่างที่อ่าน, กลวิธีการที่ใช้ก่อนอ่าน และกลวิธีการอ่านด้านคำศัพท์ ตามลำดับ

คำสำคัญ: กลวิธีการอ่าน, ความต้องการ, นิสิตระดับปริญญาโท

Introduction

A majority of people in societies and countries around the world need to read in order to achieve personal, occupational and professional goals. Since the close of the twentieth century, the USA has taken a leading role in many academic fields of research, so academic publishing in English is increasing (Mercer, N. & Swann, J., 1996: 285) [1]. As a result, the use of English for communication including academic reading skills in higher education has dramatically increased. The study of อัจฉรา วงศ์โสธร (2002) [2] has been shown Thai university graduates are expected to be able to read for main ideas, supporting details, understand academic vocabulary in the fields of their studies and reports etc. Kitja Kamhang (2006) [3] found that the background knowledge in grammar for the first year graduate students at Naresuan University is in low level. He concluded that graduate students could not have enough ability in reading. To summarize, students of all level have some difficulties in reading including graduate students.

All graduate students, both doctoral and master's degree at Kasetsart University are required to read journals, research articles and academic textbooks, so the reading skill is an essential skill for successful studies in a graduate program. To become effective readers, the students should seek and be equipped with appropriate reading strategies in order to understand relevant academic reading texts. English Required by Graduate School (355501)

is a reading course offered to students of all majors who cannot pass the English proficiency test or those who have never taken the test before. This course aims to develop students' essential reading comprehension skill in their studies, to enlarge their English vocabulary through reading, to encourage them to learn to read and think in English, and to prepare them for reading academic texts in their fields. The number of students enrolled in this course is increasing to increase. To achieve the goals of the course and to develop reading skill, a study to survey the needs for English reading strategies of the learners should be conducted. This study can help learners to awaken their awareness of what they need, help teachers to adapt the methodology to suit the students' needs and help administrators and teaching executives to more effectively plan and implement learning systems.

In addition, the results of this study will be helpful for course designers to use as a guideline to serve the needs of learners and to develop curricula and instructions. Then, it is also useful for teachers to help their students enhance their reading proficiency by teaching appropriate strategies, and help to construct and implement English reading strategies to suit students to become effective readers. Finally, it will enable both teachers and students to achieve the objective of the course.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to identify English reading strategies that graduate students at Kasetsart University need in their reading of academic texts.

Research Methodology

Populations

In this research, a quantitative approach was utilized in order to identify reading strategies that the master's degree students at Kasetsart University need in their academic reading. The participants of the study consisted of all 403 students from ten sections of English Required by Graduate School (355501). All of them enroll 355501 course in the first semester in academic year 2008.

Research Instruments

This study used a questionnaire as an instrument to get the information from all master's degree students enrolled 355501 course in the first semester of the academic year 2008. The rating-scale questionnaire consisted of 4 parts: personal information, reading information, an evaluation of the ability in using reading strategies, and the expectations of the students to develop their reading strategies. One open-ended question to evoke additional reading strategies which the participants believe to be necessary for them was included at the end of the questionnaire.

The data gathering process was conducted as follows:

The researcher started to review a number of research studies including the examples from several questionnaires related to this study, especially Needs Assessment Research

(สุวิมล ว่องวานิช, 2006) [4]. This book is related to needs identification which answer the question "What reading strategies do the students need to use in their reading". The first draft of the questionnaire, in Thai, was conducted on 3 students who enrolled 355501 in the second semester of academic year 2007 and was checked by the thesis advisor. The researcher conducted a pilot study to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaire its reliability was evaluated with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient by the application of SPSS program (Version 11). The reliability of the questionnaire was determined at 0.9114. A letter of permission from the Graduate School was forwarded to the Department of Western Languages at the Faculty of Humanities in order to ask for a permission from the teacher of each section for data collecting. Then the master's degree students were asked to fill out the questionnaire and return to the researcher in class.

Data Collection

The data collection process took about 3 weeks prior the final examination of the first semester in the academic year 2008 (Last week of August to the beginning of September 2008). The master's degree students were required to fill a questionnaire and return them in the class.

Data Analysis

The SPSS Program (Version 11) was applied as a tool to compute descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D.) from the information in the questionnaire.

A five-point Likert scales was used in order to investigate the respondents' reading strategies employed in reading English.

Scale	The Evaluation	Mean Range
5	Very well	4.21 - 5.00
4	Well	3.41 - 4.20
3	Moderate	2.61 - 3.40
2	Low	1.81 - 2.60
1	Very low	1.00 - 1.80

Results

Four hundred and three participants completed and returned the questionnaire. 42.2% were male and 57.8% were female. 64.8% were to 23-25 years old, and 93.1% took the course for the first time. 55.8% ranked their ability in reading strategies as moderate and 51.4% indicated that reading strategies were very necessary for them.

Table 1 The Needs for Reading Strategies in Pre-Reading

Reading Strategies	Mean of Ability in Using Reading Strategies (\bar{X}_D)	Mean of Expectation in Using Reading Strategies (\bar{X}_I)	The Needs for Reading Strategies ($\bar{X}_I - \bar{X}_D$)	Rank
Using patterns of organization	2.85	3.98	1.13	1
Previewing	3.24	3.97	0.73	2
Setting goals	3.20	3.88	0.68	3
Total	3.09	3.94		

The result shows that using patterns of organization, previewing and setting goals are the most needed reading strategies that the students want to develop in their academic reading.

Table 2 The Needs for Reading Strategies While Reading

Reading Strategies	Mean of Ability in Using Reading Strategies (\bar{X}_D)	Mean of Expectation in Using Reading Strategies (\bar{X}_I)	The Needs for Reading Strategies ($\bar{X}_I - \bar{X}_D$)	Rank
Speed Reading	2.85	3.98	1.13	1
Making Interpretation	2.90	4.01	1.11	2
Translating	2.94	4.04	1.10	3
Analyzing Fact and Opinion	2.79	3.87	1.08	4
Paraphrasing	2.82	3.89	1.07	5
Skimming	3.02	4.01	0.99	6
Finding Main Idea	3.12	4.09	0.97	7
Making Inference	3.00	3.94	0.94	8
Making an Outline	3.00	3.91	0.91	9
Using Background Knowledge	3.19	3.99	0.80	10
Scanning	3.19	3.97	0.78	11
Predicting	3.18	4.02	0.39	12
Total	3.00	3.98		

As shown in Table 2, students mostly needed reading strategy in while-reading. They mostly needed speed reading, making interpretation, translating, analyzing fact and opinion, paraphrasing, skimming, finding main idea, making inference, making an outline, using background knowledge, scanning and predicting.

Table 3 The Needs of Reading Strategies that the Students Need to Develop their Vocabulary

Reading Strategies	Mean of Ability in Using Reading Strategies (\bar{X}_D)	Mean of Expectation in Using Reading Strategies (\bar{X}_I)	The Needs for Reading Strategies ($\bar{X}_I - \bar{X}_D$)	Rank
Choosing proper words	2.83	3.96	1.03	1
Using Prefix-Suffix	2.92	3.93	1.01	2
Using Conjunction	3.03	4.02	0.99	3
Using context clues	3.14	4.04	0.90	4
Using dictionary	3.91	4.03	0.12	5
Total	3.16	3.99		

From Table 3, the reading strategies that the students needed to develop are choosing proper words, using prefix-suffix, using conjunction, using context clues and using dictionary, respectively.

Conclusion and Discussion

The reading strategies the students needed most in their academic reading are post-reading strategies, while reading strategies, pre-reading strategies and the use of vocabulary, respectively.

In while-reading strategies, speed reading is the most needed strategy for the students following, making interpretation, translating and analyzing fact and opinion. According to the study of Lukkana Dokkeaw (1996) [5] which her research is in parallel to the study, she found that students in low English ability could not interpret what they could read. It could be inferred that the students need to develop their ability in interpretation.

In pre-reading strategy, using pattern of organization, previewing and setting goal are the most needed reading strategies. According to the study of Henia, D. (2003) [6], he found that his participants got the difficulties in using pattern of organization so they should develop their ability in using pattern of organization.

In using vocabulary, choosing proper words, using prefix-suffix, using conjunction, using context clues and using vocabulary are the reading strategies that the students need to employ in their academic reading, respectively. The study of Henia, D. (2003) [6] also found that his participants got the difficulties in using difficult words.

Suggestions for further studies

This study was conducted in only one university while there are other universities in Thailand. Hence, it is suggested that a parallel study is asked for needed at other universities in Thailand should be conducted. The results of the further study should be made and compared with this study in order to ascertain the needs for Master's degree students throughout Thailand. To complete need assessment, further research should also include needs analysis (cause of problems) and needs solution (ways to solve problems). Besides, other researchers should focus in a wider variety of methods such as interviews or observations.

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