

A Study of Investigation of English Reading Comprehension of Undergraduate Students Using Online Newspaper

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Abstract

To encourage students' attention in reading, news articles can be used as supplementary materials in addition to textbooks. This research was conducted to investigate of English Reading comprehension of undergraduate students using online newspaper. The study was conducted with 27 first year students from the faculty of Education major in Teaching English. All of them were taking an English skills development course in the second semester at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand. The data was collected through a paper's questionnaire distributed to the participants. The data was analyzed to find the means and standard deviations (SD). A Likert scale was used to score and interpret the data. The findings showed that the participants strongly agreed that reading news article can improve their vocabulary. They also agreed that news articles were an appropriate material in teaching reading in terms of improving reading comprehension skill, providing interesting and up-to-date content, providing authentic resources, providing for a deeper understanding about the lifestyles and cultures of native English-speaking countries, and helping to promote good relationships with their English teacher.

Keywords: News articles, English materials, English reading

Introduction

Language is counted as an important life factor nowadays because it is used as a basic tool for communication, education, searching for new knowledge, and life opportunities. In addition, language is also a hub for conveying knowledge of tradition, cultures, and customs to people to communicate and contact each other effectively. Thus, learning a foreign language is very significant and unavoidable for this moment in time (Koratpittayakhom, 2001). In Thailand, the English language is used as a foreign language which has served a significant role in Thai education for more than a century. (Pornnapit, 2007)

In education, English is a primary language for the dissemination of academic knowledge and helps construct an educational experience for countless students. Diverse uses of English, have implications for different cultures, changing the nature of English and the roles it plays in

different communities are represented within Kachru's three 'Concentric Circle Model' (1985: 11). The Circle comprises those who have been once regarded as the native speakers of English in such countries as the U.K., the U.S., and Australia. The Circle countries are those containing an English colonialist history, for example, India, Malaysia, and the west indies include countries from the rest of the world and their people learning and using English for certain purposes, especially for international communication. The fast growth in global English use has been viewed by some critics as a deliberate expansion of the hegemonic power of the Inner Circle countries using English as a weapon of 'Linguistic Imperialism' (Philipson. 1992: 165). To accomplish this; the cultural values, military, and economic powers, wants, and needs of the 'Centre' or English-speaking countries have been imposed on the 'Periphery' countries. From this perspective, English Language Teaching (ELT) is the use of a 'weapon' or 'tool' of colonialism 'to back up and strengthen the current global expansion of English and its underlying cultural values' (Ha. 2008: 72). English language teachers are viewed as those contributing to the existing international power structures and implicitly downgrading the power of their hegemonic power, local needs, and specific conditions of language teacher contexts need to be considered. An appropriate and effective curriculum for the diversity of English learners should be provided to create resources and pedagogies that suit individual contexts and includes teacher' cultural backgrounds and their relationships with the English language.

Reading is a skill that is important for improving students' learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In addition to being a source of information, reading in a language class is an activity to be enjoyed (Dechant, 1991). Reading can also reinforce writing and reading skills, which are essential for facilitating comprehension. If students' reading skill is poor, they are likely to struggle to improve or make progress in their studies. For Thai students, a study from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (2018) showed that they are weak readers owing to a lack of interest in reading, low motivation, and poor reading habits (Sawangsamutchai & Rattanavich, 2016). Furthermore, Thai students may read a text, but they do not comprehensively understand what they read (Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2018). One of the reasons for this unsatisfactory reading outcome is a result of the teaching methodology. Hayikaleng et al. (2016) said that there are teachers of English in Thailand who use traditional teaching methods, where passages are read aloud to students, and students are then assigned to answer comprehension questions. This teaching strategy encourages students to be passive learners and does not promote the skills necessary to become proficient in a new language. Hence, Thai teachers must try new teaching methods, and students should also find other ways of learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

Newspaper articles are written clearly and directly, making them perfect for language learning. The language used in newspapers is a day-to-day language. Reading English newspapers can help students learn a lot of vocabulary, raise reading skills, and increase reading speed because the contents of the English newspapers are rich and vivid. Moreover, the

language of the English newspapers is a very authentic one that students can use in their daily conversation. Besides, English newspapers help students to enjoy reading, based on their interests. So, English newspapers can be learners' personal English classroom and can help students acquire a higher level of proficiency in English.

In fact, teaching students' to read is not an easy thing. Tankersley state that most high school graduates just had an average reading vocabulary of 1000 words, a number considered too small. It implies that the students "are still confused and faced difficulty in decoding and comprehending the text. Sometimes they have trouble remembering the text. Besides, the students" have fewer vocabularies and their comprehension was still low. Then, they cannot construct the meaning of the text. It means that students" are not able to respond to the text easily. Therefore, they do not get the information and knowledge well. In general, reading comprehension is the most basic purpose for reading, underlying, and supporting most other purposes for reading. It is more complex than commonly assumed. The term generally does not mean "simple" or "easy".

Thai students have studied English for several years, but they have paid more attention to grammatical structures. Unfortunately, they seem to have low comprehension of reading texts especially when idiomatic expressions are presented (Palikupt, 1977). Therefore, to gain a better understanding of how English idioms play roles in Thai readers' English reading comprehension, especially those that appear in the two prominent English newspapers available in Thailand.

From the statements above, reading newspaper always relates to students' daily activities. There are some advantages that are gained if we used real-life context in teaching language, in this case, newspaper was easier for students" to lead their mind towards something that they have already known. Newspapers do not only deal with current affairs in the world that are happening around students but also motivate students because it's facilitated students with graphs, photographs, and pictures. Finally, students's skills in reading can improve.

The researcher found some part of student problem in teaching reading, such as in memorized vocabulary because between pronounce with reading is different. It means that the students need the online article in English to help the students in reading comprehension. Before the teaching and learning process, the teacher needs to prepare the news article used. With interesting news, many students have an interest in the learning process and can help with student difficulty.

The researcher would like to solve this problem by using the English online news article in the class to study aims 1) the common linguistic types of English idioms used in the editorial columns 2) Thai readers' abilities and perceptions in their comprehension of English idioms and 3) whether idiomatic expressions are the hindering factors for Thai readers in their comprehension of English newspaper.

Research Objectives

1. To develop an online English newspaper to enhance English reading achievement.
2. To compare English reading comprehension abilities of Thai undergraduate students before and after using the online English newspaper.
3. To know the attitude of students after using the online English newspaper.

Research Question

1. Does the online English newspaper article enhance to achieve the standard?
2. Are the students' English reading comprehension abilities higher than before the experiment?
3. Does the English online newspaper give the student a positive attitude towards reading comprehension in English?

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework is a conceptual model about how the theories related to the factors have been identified as a crucial problem. This was quantitative research. The researchers want to know the satisfaction between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y). Independent variable (X) has the newspaper article, and the dependent variable (Y) has the student's reading comprehension.

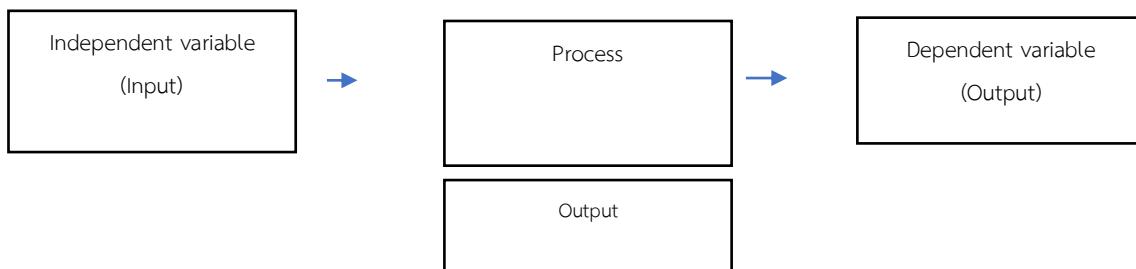


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study is pre-experimental research designed to study the English reading comprehension ability of undergraduate students of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University using online English newspaper instruction. The design in this research was pre-experimental, the design of this research has followed the three stages of reading, pre-reading, while reading, post-reading, and includes a satisfaction design. It aims to get more information about the purpose of the research. design, there is a kind of class used. The population of this study is 27 students from first-year students of the faculty of education program in Teaching English. The reason for choosing this target group is the student's ability in English and they are field in Teaching English to reading and translation. Online newspapers from various sources, i.e., the

BBC, CNN, ABC7 news, and the Bangkok Post, were chosen as suitable news following Sanderson's (cited in Henri, 2009) suggestion. To investigate the English reading comprehension of undergraduate students through online English newspapers, students were taught using news articles as reading comprehension for three weeks (4 hours) before doing the questions.

Data analysis results

From the first purpose found about that Skill development an online English newspaper to enhance English reading achievement the result as below

Table 1 Skill development

Topic	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	S.D.	Level
Reading news articles can improve my reading comprehension skill	10 37.04	17 62.96	0 0.00	0 0	0 0	4.37	0.49	Agree
Reading news articles can improve my vocabulary skill	14 51.85	13 48.15	0 0.00	0 0	0 0	4.52	0.51	Strongly Agree
Reading news articles can improve my critical thinking skill	13 48.15	14 51.85	0 0.00	0 0	0 0	4.48	0.51	Agree

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the student's attitudes towards the news article providing for skills development. The results of statements items number 8-10 revealed that statement number 9 received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.52$), (S.D. = 0.52) with the level of attitude of " strongly agree." This was followed by statement number 10 represented with ($\bar{x} = 4.48$), (S.D. = 0.51), and the level of attitude "agree." Finally, the statement with the lowest mean was statement number 8 with ($\bar{x} = 4.37$), (S.D. = 0.49), and the level of attitude "agree."

Table 2 Self-development

Topic	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	S.D.	Level
Reading news articles is important because it can broaden my view	12 44.44	14 51.85	1 3.70	0 0	0 0	4.41	0.57	Agree
Reading news articles can make me a more knowledgeable person	17 62.96	10 37.04	0 0.00	0 0	0 0	4.63	0.49	Strongly Agree
Reading news articles can be adapted to the daily life	10 37.04	17 62.96	0 0.00	0 0	0 0	4.37	0.49	Agree

Reading news articles can provide deeper understanding about lifestyles and cultures of native-English countries	15	11	1	0	0	4.52	0.58	Strongly Agree
Reading news articles can provide various opinions in the world.	9	18	0	0	0	4.33	0.48	Agree

Table 2 reveals the descriptive statistics of the student's attitudes toward news article providing for self-development. The results of statements items number 11-15 revealed that statement number 12 received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.63$), (S.D. = 0.49) with the level of attitude "Strong agree." This was followed by statement number 14 ($\bar{x} = 4.52$), (S.D. = 0.58) and the level of attitude "Strongly agree." Statement number 11 ($\bar{x} = 4.41$), (S.D. = 0.57) also had the level of attitude "agree." Lastly, statement number 15 had the lowest mean with ($\bar{x} = 4.33$), (S.D. = 0.84) and the level of attitude that the participants had towards this item was "agree."

From the second purpose found about abilities of Thai undergraduate students before and after using the online English newspaper.

Table 3 Relationships with others

Topic	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	S.D.	Level
Reading news articles helps to promote sharing opinions in groups	16	7	4	0	0	4.44	0.75	Agree
Reading news articles helps to promote good relationship with friends when discussing	12	14	1	0	0	4.41	0.57	Agree
Reading news articles helps to promote good relationship with my English teacher.	15	11	1	0	0	4.52	0.58	Strongly Agree

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the student's attitudes towards news articles providing for relationships with others. The results of statements items number 16-18 revealed that statement number 18 received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.52$), (S.D. = 0.58) with the level of attitude "Strongly agree." This was followed by statement number 16 represented with ($\bar{x} = 4.44$), (S.D. = 0.75) the level of attitude "agree." Finally, statement number 17 received the lowest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.41$), (S.D. = 0.57), and the level of attitude "agree."

From the third purpose found about students' attitude of students after using the online English newspaper.

Table 4 Content of news articles

Topic	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	S.D.	Level
1. News articles are appropriate material for learning reading	11 40.74	15 55.56	1 3.70	0 0	0 0	4.37	0.56	Agree
2. Content in news articles is easy to read	14 51.85	13 48.15	0 0	0 0	0 0	4.52	0.51	Strongly Agree
3. News articles provide various information	12 44.44	13 48.15	2 7.41	0 0	0 0	4.37	0.63	Strongly Agree
4. News articles provide authentic resources	11 40.74	14 51.85	3 11.11	0 0	0 0	4.30	0.67	Agree
5. Vocabulary in news articles is not too hard	9 33.33	14 51.85	4 14.81	0 0	0 0	4.19	0.68	Agree
6. News articles provide interesting and up-to-date content.	13 48.15	14 51.85	0 0.00	0 0	0 0	4.48	0.51	Agree
7. I enjoy content in news articles that teacher bring to the class	15 55.56	12 44.44	0 0.00	0 0	0 0	4.56	0.51	Strongly Agree

Table 4 represents the descriptive statistics of the student's attitudes toward the content of news articles. The results of items number 1-7 revealed that statement number 7 received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.56$), (S.D. = 0.51) with the level of attitude of " strongly agree." Statement number 2 was the second highest response with ($\bar{x} = 4.52$), (S.D. = 0.51) with the level of attitude of " strongly agree.", followed by statement number 6 ($\bar{x} = 4.48$), (S.D. = 0.51) Finally, the statement with the lowest mean was statement number 5 with ($\bar{x} = 4.19$), (S.D. = 0.68). The level of attitude that the participants had towards this item was "agree."

Table 5 The overall finding of attitude towards news articles in reading comprehension.

No.	Topic	Mean	S.D.	Level
1	News articles are appropriate material for learning reading	4.37	0.56	Agree
2	Content in news articles is easy to read	4.52	0.51	Strongly Agree
3	News articles provide various information	4.37	0.63	Agree
4	News articles provide authentic resources	4.30	0.67	Agree
5	Vocabulary in news articles is not too hard	4.19	0.68	Agree
6	News articles provide interesting and up-to-date content.	4.48	0.51	Agree
7	I enjoy content in news articles that teacher bring to the class	4.56	0.51	Strongly Agree
8	Reading news articles can improve my reading comprehension skill	4.37	0.49	Agree
9	Reading news articles can improve my vocabulary skill	4.52	0.51	
10	Reading news articles can improve my critical thinking skill	4.48	0.51	Agree
11	Reading news articles is important because it can broaden my view	4.41	0.57	Agree
12	Reading news articles can make me a more knowledgeable person	4.63	0.49	Strongly Agree
13	Reading news articles can be adapted to the daily life	4.37	0.49	Agree
14	Reading news articles can provide deeper understanding about	4.52	0.58	Strongly Agree

lifestyles and cultures of native-English countries				
15	Reading news articles can provide various opinions in the world.	4.33	0.48	Agree
16	Reading news articles helps to promote sharing opinions in groups	4.44	0.75	Agree
17	Reading news articles helps to promote good relationship with friends when discussing	4.41	0.57	Agree
18	Reading news articles helps to promote good relationship with my English teacher.	4.52	0.58	Agree

As can be seen in Table 5, the overall finding showed that, most attitudes towards news articles as a development reading comprehension the participants agreed (overall mean score = 4.43). Statement number 12 received the highest mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.63$), (S.D. = 0.49) and the level of attitude that the participants had towards this item was “strongly agree” followed by statements number 7 ($\bar{x} = 4.56$), (S.D. = 0.51) with the level of attitude “Strongly agree.” The statement with the lowest mean was statement number 5 ($\bar{x} = 4.19$), (S.D. = 0.68) and the level of attitude was “agree.”

Discussion of the research

From the results of the development of reading comprehension by using English newspaper articles and students' attitudes toward news articles as follows:

The participants of this study consisted of 18 male students (66.65%) and 9 female students (33.35%). Most of them were 18 years old (81.48%), followed by the age of 17 years old (18.52%) and one of them was 21 years old. A total of 55.56% of participants (n=15) spend time reading in the evening, while 25.93% of participants (n=7) spent time reading in the afternoon, and 18.52% of students (n=5) spend time doing it in the morning. Moreover, 37.04% of participants (n=10) prefer to read the newspaper. Meanwhile, 25.93% of students (n=7) prefer to read a book, 18.52% of students (n=5) have another source to read, 11.11% (n=3) like to read from the internet news, and two students prefer to read the magazine. For the frequently read participants, the majority read a newspaper once a week (25.9%), followed by more rarely (22.2%), several times a week with twice a month (18.5.5%), and once a month was the smallest portion of participants (14.8%).

According to the first part of students' opinions towards the content of news articles, the findings revealed that most of the students thought that news articles are appropriate material for learning reading (mean score = 4.56) In addition, they agreed that the content of news articles is interesting and up to date. This result supported the theory of Wigfield & Guthrie (1997)¹ on intrinsic motivation, which relates to students reading what they are interested in and enjoying the texts. Students also agreed that news articles provide authentic

¹ Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T. (1997). Relations of children's motivation for reading to the amount and breadth of their reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 89(3), 420-432.

resources. The result supported Ajayi (2002)², who found that newspapers provide various types of information: sports, entertainment, politics, health, agriculture, and technology. Moreover, there is up-to-date information with appropriate vocabulary that is practical and authentic. In addition, the results of the study are consistent with the study of Brno (2006)³ in which newspapers were used as tools for teaching reading. The students were at the elementary and intermediate levels of a junior vocational school for construction. He concluded that using newspapers as authentic material is important to encourage students to connect with the real world.

The second part presents the students' attitudes towards the skills development provided by news articles. The highest responses were that reading news articles can improve vocabulary skills, rated at an average of 4.52. In addition, they strongly agreed that reading news articles can also improve their reading comprehension skill. The results of the study are consistent with the study of Henri (2009), which examined the effectiveness of using newspaper articles to develop reading comprehension. The study was an experimental study with first-year students of SMAN I Rengasdengklok, Indonesia. A pretest and posttest were the research tools used to test students' reading comprehension. The result showed the group using newspapers as a tool for teaching got higher scores in the post-test than the other group that did not use newspapers. Henri (2009)⁴ concluded that the students who learn reading comprehension using newspaper articles showed a significantly better learning outcome than those who did not use newspaper articles. The results of the present study are consistent with the study of Ahmmmed (2016)⁵, which investigated the effectiveness of reading English newspapers for improving vocabulary and reading skills with students at Dhaka University. The target population of this study ranged from first year to master's degree students. A questionnaire was used as the research tool. The study indicated that student's vocabulary and reading skills gradually improved. However, some students indicated that reading news articles cannot improve their critical thinking skills. The study of Punjab (2009)⁶ also showed that newspapers do not play a significant role in the development of the analytical ability of the students; nevertheless, he suggested that teachers can use news articles to develop the analytical ability of the students

² Ajayi L (2002). Newspaper as enrichment material for enhancing students' performance | English. In Adebayo L.; Isiugo-Abanihe, I. and Ohia, I.N (eds) perspectives of Applied Linguistics in Language and Literature. Ibadan; Stirring Holden Publisher (Nig) Ltd.

³ Brno. (2006). Using magazines and newspapers in ELT with interpersonal and intrapersonal types of students.

⁴ Henri. A. (2009) The use of newspaper articles as supplement materials in teaching reading comprehension.

⁵ Ahmmmed, R. (2016). Effectiveness of Reading English Newspapers for Improving Vocabulary and Reading Skills of Students of Dhaka University.

⁶ Punjab, P. (2009). Newspaper reading among college students in the development of their analytical ability.

by providing assignments using newspaper articles. Begoña Oliveras (2013)⁷ studied the use of news articles as a tool to develop critical thinking in science classes, suggesting that improvement in students' critical thinking skills came from both critical activities which the teacher organized as well as the appropriate materials containing different data, arguments, opinions, and evidence. Therefore, he used news articles as material, and he also suggested teachers can use texts from various resources such as magazines and the internet.

Conclusion

The results from this study showed that the student's attitude towards newspaper articles to develop reading comprehension was "strongly agree." Most students strongly agreed that reading news articles can improve their vocabulary and meaning of context. They also agreed that newspaper articles were appropriate material for teaching reading in terms of improving reading comprehension skills, providing interesting and up-to-date content, providing authentic resources, providing a deeper understanding of the lifestyles and cultures of native English-speaking countries, it also helps to promote good relationships with their English teacher and news articles can make a lot of new information from around the world from the newspaper.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the finding and conclusion of this study:

- 1 Further study should use an experimental study to investigate the effectiveness of using news articles in teaching reading or other skills.
- 2 Further study should investigate teachers' attitudes towards the use of news articles as supplementary English material in class.
- 3 Further study should investigate other supplementary materials such as magazines, short stories, or other types of documents in teaching reading or other skills.
- 4 Future study is suggested to investigate English speaking in the public situation.

⁷ Begoña Oliveras, N. S. (2013). The Use of Newspaper Articles as a Tool to Develop Critical Thinking in Science Classes.

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