Vocabulary Improvement through Outside-Classroom Reading

By

Aranya Mudlae
Wachiraporn Phadungsilp
Nitt Neingnoi
Paweenai Boonpok
CHAPTER 1

1.1 Background

Reading, one of basic language skills, is an essential skill for students who would like to succeed in learning. Successful language learners need reading strategies to help them comprehend what they read better. Without the skills of reading comprehension and the motivation for reading to learn, students’ academic progress is limited. (Alvermann & Earle, 2003 in Worakitsawat, 2007: 77) Hill and Holden (1990: 91) define reading as the most useful skill for students to develop the feeling of satisfaction in understanding a text in many ways. Within schooling, reading is self-evidently the pathway for success in English, science, history, geography, health, math, and the art (Bean & Readance, 2002, in Guthrie and Coddington, 2009: 503). Although reading is very important, from our teaching experiences, this paper’s researchers who are responsible for teaching English both as a major and general education subject, have noticed for years that not only the non-English major students who study English in the required courses but also the English major students usually avoid reading texts. This situation indicates that teaching reading at the university level in Thailand is not as successful as it should be.

Since the B.Ed. English major students need to read academic texts for class and are expected to be very fluent in the language when they graduate, reading skills are essential for them. To prepare our students to be the qualified teachers, the researchers did a pre-research survey about extensive reading habit of the second year B.Ed. English major students of ValayaAlongkornRajabhat University under the Royal Patronage. The survey revealed that vocabulary was the main problem in reading. Students typically solved this problem by looking up terms in a dictionary, which results them getting bored because they had to take more time to read a piece of text. This problem contributed to their poor motivation to read English. From this survey, we found that the students spend only thirty minutes reading English each time and they read English just once a week. Moreover, the survey also showed that their reason for reading English was to pass exams, not for pleasure or to get information. However, most of them preferred to read on websites more than textbooks especially if the content is entertainment. Therefore, encouraging students to be involved in improving English through outside or
extensive reading provides the possibility of increasing motivation, and this also reinforce points that they have learned without pressure.

Based on the problem and reading habits, we would like to improve the learners’ achievement of vocabulary knowledge; hence, this paper reports on the study undertaken to research on the use of reading extra texts to enhance motivation to read.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study is based on the premise that if students are encouraged through pleasure reading outside the classroom, they may greatly enrich and retain vocabulary, that is, they remember more and better since they work out the meaning by themselves.

1.3 Scope of the study

The study involved 75 students from two classes of the second year students who are studying in English major in the Faculty of Education at ValayaAlongkornRajabhat University under the Royal Patronage. One class is the control group and another one is the experimental group. The two groups are as follows:

1. The control group, which was not provided extra reading materials. This group helps us measure the effectiveness of our study.
2. The experimental group, which is the group we gave extra reading materials.

1.4 Research questions

There are three research questions. The question number one is our main question and the number two and there are our specific questions which we would like to know besides the main one.

1. Will the experimental group achieve more vocabulary knowledge than the control group?
2. Can the outside-classroom reading increase the leaners’ reading motivation?

1.5 Definition of terms

For clearer understanding of the terms used in this study, below are their meanings:

**Vocabulary improvement** – It means the students getting higher score in posttest than the pretest.

**Reading ability** – It refers to the skill of understanding English written texts in both reading comprehension and to know the meaning of vocabulary
**Extra texts** – They are the interesting passages from various sources that provide to the students to read outside English lesson.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Reading

Walter R. Hill (1979:4) defines reading as what the reader does to get the meaning he needs from contextual resources. This meaning is similar to A.H. Urquhart’s (1998:22) definition. He defines reading as the process of interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print.

In addition Walker (1992: 37) claims that reading involves recalling an individual’s life experience and trying to understand what is written. Reading is comprehending and developing of human learning. Reading is a fluent process of readers combining information from a text and their own background knowledge to build meaning and the goal of reading is comprehension (Nunan. 2003:68).

Reading is an important skill of learning English for foreign students. They will learn more things besides English if they have good reading skills.

2.2 Reading Styles

According to researchers, there are four styles of reading: scanning, skimming, intensive and extensive reading.

Scanning and Skimming

Scanning is going through a text very quickly to find a specific piece of information. The purpose of scanning is to find the answers to particular questions. These meaning are mentioned by Williams (1984: 100). He also defines skimming as glancing rapidly through a text by "merely dipping into it and sampling it at various points" to comprehend its general content. He emphasizes the purpose of skimming is to briefly summarize what the text is about.

Intensive and extensive reading

Intensive reading means reading every detail to certify everything in the text. Intensive reading involves a close study of texts and an examination of the features of foreign language at the various levels of word, sentence, paragraph and whole text. Hedge (1985: 6) says that students are trained in the various skills and strategies to progress in reading through intensive reading activities in the classroom. On the other hand, extensive reading means reading some materials for pleasure outside the classroom. Hill and Holden (1990: 91-93) note that students who read for pleasure are better readers and have more
advanced vocabulary since “free voluntary reading” is comprehensible input in a low anxiety situation, and students never feel pressured while reading outside the classroom.

2.3 Approaches to vocabulary learning

It is useful to make a distinction between direct and indirect vocabulary learning. In direct vocabulary learning, the students can learn by doing exercise and activities that focus their attention on vocabulary. In indirect vocabulary learning, the students focus on some other feature, usually the message that is conveyed by a speaker or writer. (Heinle&Heinle, 1990:2).

2.4 Vocabulary and Reading

Heinle&Heinle (1990:115) note that students of English as a foreign language usually begin their reading with specially simplified texts. The vocabulary and the sentence structure guidelines which are followed in the simplified texts are very explicitly described for writers. When the students are faced with unsimplified texts, they have to develop a large reading vocabulary if they wish to pursue academic study in English.

2.5 Reading Motivation

Guithrie&Coddington (2009:518) propose four profiles of group reader depending on their motivation:
1) avoid readers are those who have high levels of affirming motivations and low levels of undermining motivations for reading. These students are typically the highest achievers in reading;
2) ambivalent readers are those with an uneven profile with some high affirming motivations and some high avoidant motivations for reading. For example, these students may be efficacious for school reading (believing they can do it), but uninterested, with low intrinsic motivation. This group may be expected to be intermediate in reading achievement and school success;
3) apathetic readers are those who have medium levels of affirming and medium levels of undermining motivations for reading. Their achievement may be expected to be intermediate between the avid and avers readers;
4) averse readers are those who exhibit high levels of undermining motivations and low levels of affirming motivations for reading. These students are typically low in reading achievement.

The pre-research survey on extensive reading habits of the 2nd year B.Ed English major students at ValayaAlongkornRajabhat University revealed that vocabulary was the main problem in reading English and that typically students solved this problem by looking up meaning of words in a dictionary, which result in them getting bored because they had to take more time to read a piece of text. This problem contributed to their poor motivation to read English. From this survey we found that the students spend only thirty minutes to read English each time and they read English just one a week. Moreover, the survey showed that their reason for reading English was to pass the exam, not for pleasure or to get information. However, most of them preferred to read on the website than the textbook especially if the content was entertainment. Based on the problem and reading habits, we would like to improve the learners’ learning of vocabulary through extra texts outside English lesson. Fonos (2009) found that students who spent more time on activities outside of academic study had significantly higher GPAs compared to students who spent less time on academic activities. This finding suggests that reading comprehension and time dedicated to activities outside of academics are important predictors of academic success amongst William Paterson University Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) freshmen students.
3. METHODOLOGY

This unit describes the methodology of the research information about the Vocabulary Improvement through Extra Texts Outside English Lesson, how the subjects were chosen, what kind of method was done through the ten-week term, and finally how the data were collected and analyzed throughout the research period. The main research question in this study is that extra texts reading in order to increase students’ motivation and vocabularies. Lecturers should encourage their students to be involved in reading not only in class but also outside the classroom as well. Lecturers should give their students an extra task, for instance, asking them to read any books in English and return the summary or answering questions from the reading passages.

3.2. Research Design

This experimental study aims to analyze the information about the increasing in the motivation of reading and vocabularies of 1st year B.Ed English major students at Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University 2012 academic year; and showing the differences between the control and the experimental group by using reading passages outside the classroom, except their textbooks.

Firstly, a list of the topics of reading passages were chosen from the result of the pre research questionnaire. These topics of reading consist of recipe, technology, tourist attractions, festival, and short story. The lecturers provided 4 passages and one short story; therefore, the groups chosen as control and experimental groups were given the passages as a pre-test.

Secondly, the lecturer presented the reading passages to the students in the experimental group. Each passage introduced new words, and the students had 10 weeks to read and prepare their presentation in order to show how many vocabularies they have learnt from 4 passages and one novel they had read.

Finally, the post-test were given to the control and experimental groups. The results of outside reading passages which measure students’ progress were compared. The purpose of comparing these tests was to investigate if there would be any discrepancy in vocabulary range between the experimental and the control groups. For the data collection, the lecturers of the experimental group was asked to observe the students’ reading behavior continually and give oral and feedback about students’
interest in reading to the other researchers on a weekly basis. The lecturer of the experimental group was provided reading passage report sheets (see Appendix...) to the students. The students were supposed to return them as a reading passage report to make sure that they read the book. The report sheet covered some specific items such as topic, vocabulary, satisfaction, and comment about the content.

3.3. Participants

The participants of this study consisted of two classes of the 1st year B.Ed English major students that want to join the activity. The former class consisted of 32 students and the latter class consisted of 43 students. The two groups of students were taken into consideration since they are still studying Reading Strategy and English for Teachers which related to the study. And they also have already been exposed to four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Therefore, they are ready to expand and increase vocabularies, motivation as their next step of language development during ten-week period.

3.4. Research Instruments

The seven different instruments were used to collect data for this study are as follows:

3.4.1 Pre-test of motivation questionnaires (see Appendices A). This type of test is a questionnaire test that evaluates students motivation in reading before they cover the materials.

3.4.2 Post-test of motivation questionnaires (see Appendices B). This is a questionnaire test that evaluates students motivation in reading after they cover the materials.

3.4.3 Pre-test of Reading Passages (see Appendices C). This instrument used to evaluates the two group of students about their vocabulary knowledge of passages before taken the reading practice.
3.4.4 Post-test of Reading passages (see Appendices D). This instrument used to evaluates the two group of students about their vocabulary knowledge of passages after taken the reading practice.

3.4.5 Reading Passages Tests (see Appendices E). These are five comprehension tests given to the experimental group in order to evaluate the increasing of vocabularies.

3.4.6 Feedback form for lecturers (see Appendices F). This instrument is provided for the lecturer of the experimental group. She was asked to give the students' progress by the end of course.

3.4.7 Reading passage report (see Appendices F). The students in the experimental group were asked to complete a report sheet for each passages that they read. The report sheets included items such as title, level, topic, and they were asked to comment about the content, comprehension and vocabulary they have learnt.

3.5 Pilot Study

As a pilot study, the motivation survey and the reading passages were given to two classes of the 2nd year B.Ed. English major students in order to see how the students would react. It was observed that the students were highly pleased to join this type of activity, and they suggested that the passages should be chosen form their interesting. Therefore, the pre-research survey was given to the students in order to examine the topics that they want to read. After that, the groups of students were chosen as control and experimental group. They were asked to go over the reading passages an hour after class for ten weeks and did the motivation’s questionnaires at the same time.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 The researchers distributed the pre reading motivation questionnaires and pre-test to two groups of the participant on 5th July 2013.

3.6.2 The week after, the experimental group was assigned to read the reading passage and prepared a group presentation to present their knowledge, and understanding from the passage. The lecturer assigned the other reading passages in the same way as the previous pattern according to the following schedule:
3.6.3 The post-test were given to all participants after experiment on 14th August 2013.

3.6.4 The data were sorted into two groups: (a) pre and post reading motivation, and (b) pre and post reading passages.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data analysis was calculated into statistical values as follow:

1. The data concerning the Pre and post motivation in reading were presented by using a five – point Likert scale in order to specify the level of the needs of the learners, based on the following criteria of RensisLiket (1932):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Level of need</th>
<th>Mean range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>4.50 - 5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>agree</td>
<td>3.50 - 4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>2.50 - 3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1.50 - 2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1.00 - 1.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) Mean (M) was used to summarized the average level of each agreement from the questionnaire and Standard deviation was used to measure pre-test, post-test, and motivation questionnaire.