

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale of the Study

In this Information and Technology Age, it is easier to access huge amount of information in the form of either printed or electronic texts, most of which are in English. Therefore, effective reading, especially in English, is still the key to access this world of knowledge and information.

In terms of language learning, reading is viewed as an effective way to learn a language. It also seems to be the most attainable language skill for learners in countries where English is not widely spoken. In ESL and EFL contexts, reading texts are the fundamental source for language exposure.

Reading skill is crucial for language learning. However, a large number of learners in Thailand always complain that they cannot read any texts in English because of their limited vocabulary and structures. On the other hand, many of the teachers who are in charge of cultivating reading ability in their students are not fully equipped with knowledge about how to effectively do it.

According to Chiramanee (1992) poor reading ability of students might result from the fact that most Thai teachers of English are not properly trained to teach English. These teachers normally use traditional ways of teaching such as reading the text to the class and then translating it into Thai. This technique does not make students read better. Instead, it makes them read passively and heavily dependent upon their teachers. It is essential for teachers to be aware of this, and feel the need to search for other more effective ways to teach reading in order to encourage students to read interactively and to achieve proficiency in reading.

In Thailand, the Ministry of Education has been aware that English is important for all Thai people and now makes it obligatory in all educational levels. In the 2001 curriculum which is currently in use, English is the only compulsory foreign language and reading is one of the skills required in core English courses. For example, in the upper elementary curriculum and syllabus, students are required to read two text types: fables and short stories or narratives to understand the information that is directly presented in the passages and to interpret the meaning implied from what they have read. That is, students are required to achieve two levels of reading comprehension: literal and reinterpretation.

Nowadays, the Ministry of Education allows schools to choose their textbooks from the list of specified commercial textbooks. And from a textbook survey, it was found that the recommended two text types (fables, short stories or narratives) have been included in the texts listed. Furthermore, the publisher also provides Teacher's manuals with these textbooks. Therefore, teachers tend to follow the manual and have less interest in looking for other ways which may be more effective in teaching reading.

In terms of teaching reading, there are various suggested strategies and questioning is viewed as one strategy that can improve the students reading ability and their levels of comprehension. Different types of questions can be used at various stages of teaching to encourage students to achieve different purposes of each stage in the lesson. For example, in the pre-reading stage, questions can be used to prepare students to read purposefully. In other words, pre-reading questions are employed to activate students' background knowledge, to preview important points, and to set the purposes for reading. In the while-reading stage, questions can be employed to help students to pay more attention to the textual details of what they are reading to enhance their comprehension. Then, in post-reading stage, questions can be used to get students to review or conclude what has been read from the text and to integrate the textual information into their own experiences. In other words, after reading students will be guided to think beyond the text and associate with what they read to discuss, to react, and to express their opinion.

With the aims of making students read interactively to become more active and efficient readers, it is interesting to study whether the use of questioning strategies will eventually enhance students' reading ability and develop their comprehension levels.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

This research set out to find answers to the following questions.

1. Do the pre-, while- and post-reading questioning strategies affect the students' reading comprehension?
2. Do the pre-, while- and post-reading questioning strategies affect the students' ability in responding to the literal and reinterpretation questions?
3. Do the pre-, while- and post-reading questioning strategies affect the students with different English proficiency levels differently?

## **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Findings of this study will be beneficial and valuable for both EFL teachers and students. If it is found that the pre-, while-, and post-reading questioning strategies enhance the reading comprehension ability and responding abilities at different levels of comprehension of the students with different English proficiency, it will be beneficial for teachers to employ these strategies in language classes; it can be recommended as one effective way to help students become efficient readers and achieve proficiency in reading. Such findings will also help raise teachers' awareness of the importance of reading processes, reading procedures, and effective strategies in learning and teaching reading.

## 1.4 Scope of the Study and Limitations

The subjects in this study were two classes of Prathomsuksa 6 students at Municipality School 4 who were taught with two different teaching methods. That is, the experimental group was taught with the pre-, while-, and post-reading questioning strategies; whereas, the control group was taught according to the reading procedures recommended in Teacher's manual of **Say Hello 6**, a commercial textbook, used in Pattani Municipality Schools. This study aimed to find whether the students who were taught with the pre-, while-, and post-reading questioning strategies would have higher reading comprehension ability than those who were taught with reading procedures as recommended in the Teacher's manual of **Say Hello 6**.

The subjects were Pathomsuksa 6 and the teaching and learning were carried out under the upper elementary 2001 curriculum and syllabus. This study might have some limitations as noted below:

1. The reading passages were limited to the recommended two text types of fables and short stories or narratives.
2. The reading question levels were limited to only literal and reinterpretation questions.

## 1.5 Definition of Terms

1. **Pre-reading questions** refer to general questions used to activate students to think and to relate their background knowledge to relevant information of a text, to preview the key concepts, and to set purposes for reading.
2. **While-reading questions** refer to questions used to monitor students' attention to textual details of content and process of reading that enhance students' comprehension.

3. **Post-reading questions** refer to questions used to get students not only to review or conclude what they have read from the text, but also to integrate the textual information into their own experiences that enable them to think logically and critically.
4. **Literal questions** refer to questions used to check students' understanding to textual details that are explicitly presented.
5. **Reinterpretation questions** refer to questions used to encourage students to think beyond the text and to associate with what has been read.
6. **Reading procedures in Teacher's manual of Say Hello 6** refer to reading after the teacher, translating one paragraph of each text in groups, re-telling the text in Thai to the whole class, and then concluding the important points of each text at the end of the reading lessons.