

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In Thailand, English is taught as the first foreign language, and it is more in use than other popular foreign languages, such as French, Japanese, or Chinese. This predominance of English over other languages happens because Thailand is presently in the process of shifting from a traditional economy to a market economy that allows foreign investment in the country. Thus, in order to perform business transactions, Thai citizens need to communicate in English with overseas investors. Most multinational companies with offices in Thailand prefer recruiting employees with a very good command of English. That is, the employees should be able to write, read, and understand contracts or exchange e-mail messages with superiors, colleagues, or customers. Furthermore, the Thai government is campaigning to attract visitors to Thailand in order to stimulate tourism. Moreover, Thailand has been highly shaped by a changing world dominated by western economies using English for communication. This caused the national curriculum to be revised in 1978 and 1996. The focus of language teaching changed to teaching language for communicative purposes. The teaching of English in the new curriculum emphasizes the integration of four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to meet the realistic needs of country. (Orranuch, 2008).

The researcher has emphasized how important reading is as far as learning English is concerned. However, there is a further, very important reason why university students should try to develop their reading skill. Educational Research

(2012) has showed found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success. In other words, a student who is a good reader is more likely to do well in a school and pass exams than a student who is a weak reader. Good reader can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of writing. They can comprehend ideas and detect implications. They know most of the words in the texts already, but they can determine the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the context and they can extract from the writing what is important for the particularly task, they can do it quickly.

In recent years, the academic matter has seen a growing body of research in regards to learning strategies that help students improve their acquisition of the English language. For English reading, learning strategies play an important role, as (English as a Foreign Language) EFL students may encounter difficulties reading in English and trying to comprehend its content for meaning (Chun An Lin. 2009). Students at the university level need to understand textbooks, articles, magazines or business texts written in English to acquire knowledge and gather information for both their careers and their academic studies (Wei. 2005). For these reasons, the ability to read and understand English effectively is regarded as the most important skill for university students at all levels.

The educators in Thailand investigated the reading ability of Thai students and employees at the workplaces and it was found that the reading ability of Thais were at a low level. Wongsuwan (1992), for example, found that Mathayomsuksa 6 (Grade 12) students in the demonstration schools affiliated to the Ministry of University Affairs both in Bangkok and in the provinces had reading problems in the following areas: 1) sentence structure, 2) vocabulary in context, and 3) paragraph

organization. The results of the study conducted by Sucompa (1998), who also indicated that Rajamangala Institute of Technology (RIT) language teachers and students in tourism had difficulties with English business reading because they could not read and write English correspondence or e-mail business texts properly.

The results of the mentioned studies revealed that Thai students and employees had difficulties in reading English business texts. The major reading difficulties are low understanding of sentence structure, poor vocabulary in context, weak paragraph organization, and limited background knowledge in what they read. All of these impede Thais' reading achievement.

Metacognitive strategies are simply memorable plan or approaches that students use to solve the problem. A good reader uses effective tactics that skilled learners use to enhance their reading ability. These strategies combine planning, monitoring, and checking the process of reading. All of these strategies may help readers understand a text being read and help them to apply metacognitive strategies to control their own learning and learn how to learn for their life such as self-awareness and self monitoring. Readers are to develop independent learners (Papaleontiou-Louca, 2008).

At Buriram Rajabhat University, students' reading comprehension skills are low, especially in regards to business reading. Table 1.1 below indicates the level of students' reading comprehensions in "Reading in Business Course"

Table 1.1

The level of students' reading comprehension in "Reading in Business Course".

Students' Grade	Frequency	Percentage
A	1	2.8
B+	3	8.3
B	2	5.6
C+	12	33.3
C	8	22.2
D+	7	19.4
D	3	8.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>

However, students are unable to decode the written words, a very important aspect of the reading act. In addition, when reading aloud, students recite words and phrases with no feeling, no changes in tone, no logical phrasing, and without proper rhythms and paces. (Registration Office of Buriram Rajabhat University. 2012).

Consequently, the researcher as a teacher of English at Buriram Rajabhat University would like to develop and improve the business reading comprehension skills of the researcher's students. The researcher would like to focus on students enrolling in "Reading in Business courses". These courses are designed for the third year Business English Major Students. This research focuses on business reading comprehension and shows that the metacognitive strategies used by the third year Business English Major Students to improve their business reading comprehension.

In addition, this research investigates the implication of metacognitive strategies to improve the business reading comprehension skills of the third year students in Business English. The results of this study will be useful for teachers who

want to improve students' reading comprehension skills and for people who work or want to work in environments where business reading skills are important.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

This study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

1.2.1. To investigate the metacognitive strategies the third year students majoring in Business English use in their reading business texts.

1.2.2. To investigate the difficulties these students encountered when reading business texts.

1.2.3. To investigate the differences between the use of metacognitive strategies of the students with high English reading proficiency (HRPSs) and those of the students with low English reading proficiency (LRPSs).

## **1.3 Research Questions**

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1.3.1. What metacognitive strategies do the third year students majoring in Business English use in reading English business texts?

1.3.2. What difficulties do the third year students majoring in Business English encounter when reading English business texts?

1.3.3. How differently do the third year students majoring in Business English with high and low English reading proficiency use metacognitive strategies?

## **1.4 Significance of the Research**

1.4.1. The findings obtained from this research will provide information about metacognitive strategies employed by business English students in their reading in

business course and will help students become more aware of metacognitive reading strategies, which will help them become more skilled in using metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies should help students gain confidence and develop to be more active and independent readers.

1.4.2. The English instructors also obtain pedagogical suggestions in regards to helping students learn how to read, improving the quality of teaching reading, especially for students who struggle to reading. Additionally, the findings from this study can be used as a guideline for teachers when figuring out what effective reading strategies are and how they can teach students a repertoire of metacognitive reading strategies that can be used when reading many different types of texts.

1.4.3. Finally, the researcher hopes this research will be useful to teacher in designing an appropriate pedagogical model to improve their students' reading strategies and promote their language learning.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Scope and limitations are noted in the current research as follows:

### **1.5.1 Research Participants**

1.5.1. 1) The research participant selection was restricted and limited to a selected group of the third year Business English majors who were non-native speakers of English at Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU) in the academic year 2012. English is taught as a foreign language. They came from the same language learning backgrounds and had the same experiences in English; as volunteers, they represented a selective convenience sample. There were only 36 students available at Buriram Rajabhat University (BRU). Consequently, the results from this study cannot

be generalized to the population of other university Business English students in Thailand.

1.5.1.2) After the research subjects were instructed by the researcher using EFL reading instructional lessons, they were categorized into high reading proficiency students (HRPSs) and low reading proficiency students (LRPSs), according to the median of the reading total scores from the business reading test . 4 HRPSs and 4 LRPSs were assigned to participate in the follow-up phase of the study.

### **1.5.2 Reading Texts**

1.5.2.1) The reading texts in TOEIC tests were expository texts with the business contents. Thus, the findings cannot be generalized to the other genres.

1.5.2.2) Regarding expository texts, this present study concentrated on identifying three categories of metacognitive reading strategies, namely Global Reading Strategies (GRS), Problem Solving Reading Strategies (PSRS), and Support Reading Strategies (SRS).

### **1.5.3 Research Findings**

Findings of the study were restricted to the instruction by using EFL reading lessons, reading theory and teaching of methods EFL reading is specific in this investigation. Generalizations beyond the model and/or reading theory and methods of teaching EFL reading and reading skills would be speculative.

## **1.6 Definitions of Key Terms**

The followings are both conceptual and operational definitions of key terms for this study:

**1.6.1 Metacognitive Strategies** refers to the set of reading tactics through which learners are capable of becoming aware of their mental process. It involves thinking about the mental operations used in the learning process, monitoring or controlling learning while it is taking place, solving problems, and evaluating learning after it has occurred. Metacognitive reading strategies readers use with the five-point Likert scale questions, namely Global Reading Strategies (GRS), Problem Solving Reading Strategies (PSRS), and Support Reading Strategies (SRS).

**1.6.1.1 Global Reading Strategies (GRS)**, which can be thought of as generalized or global reading strategies aimed at setting the stage for the reading act e.g., setting a purpose for reading, previewing text content, predicting what the text is about, etc.

**1.6.1.2 Problem Solving Reading Strategies (PSRS)**, which are localized, focused problem-solving or repaired strategies used when problems develop in understanding textual information e.g., checking one's understanding upon encountering conflicting information, re-reading for better understanding, etc.

**1.6.1.3 Support Reading Strategies (SRS)**, which involves using the support mechanisms or tools aimed at sustaining responsiveness to reading e.g., use of reference materials like dictionaries and other support systems.

**1.6.2 Business Reading Comprehension** is defined as the level of understanding of a business text or message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text or message. Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize words quickly and effortlessly. If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing



capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read (Nuttal. 1996).

**1.6.3 High Reading Proficiency Students (HRPs)** refers to the third year students majoring in Business English at Buriram Rajabhat University who were studying English as a foreign language in academic year 2012 in a non-English speaking surrounding. Their TOEIC scores of Reading for Business ranged from 70-100%.

**1.6.4 Low Reading Proficiency Students (LRPs)** refer to the third year students majoring in Business English at Buriram Rajabhat University who were studying English as a foreign language in academic year 2012 in a non-English speaking surrounding. Their TOEIC scores of Reading for Business ranged from 0-69%.

**1.6.5 Metacognitive Awareness** refers to declarative knowledge (including knowing one's strengths, weaknesses and resources), procedural knowledge (knowing strategies and the specific steps in those strategies), and conditional knowledge (understanding when and why they use specific strategies) (Schraw & Dennison. 1994; Schraw & Moshman. 1995).

**1.6.6 Metacognitive Knowledge** refers to knowledge of one's own cognitive processes and those of other...regulation of learning, as distinguished from knowledge about learning, entails the use of metacognitive strategies (O'Malley & Chamot. 1990:150).

**1.6.7 Business Text** refers to the economics text written in a precise, factual writing style designed to inform or explain information (Burns. 2005). Business texts involve business knowledge e.g, letters, emails, and agenda. In this study, the business text is a reading passage excerpted from TOEIC textbooks.

## **1.7 The Overviews of the Research**

This current research is organized into five chapters. Chapter one presents both the contextual and research background which the current study is set. To answer the research questions, the researcher has reviewed the related theories and previous research studies in the field. This is discussed in Chapter Two. First, there is a review of the literature in which the cognitive views of reading and reading ability development are discussed. Second, the effectiveness of and possible instructional approaches for reading strategy training are presented, and finally, the importance of students' perceptions of the instruction is analyzed. Chapter three is on research methodology. The research design, the details of reading strategy instruction, the research participants, the research instruments, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis and statistical procedures are presented. Chapter four presents findings on students' perceived usefulness of reading strategy instruction and their perceived application of reading strategies. Chapter five is a discussion of the findings and conclusion, including the significance of reading strategy instruction and the different aspects involved in facilitating more effective teaching and the study concludes with a summary of its pedagogical implications and suggestions for future research.

## **1.8 Summary of the Chapter**

In Chapter One, the researcher has put the study into contexts by giving a historical description of the current investigation, followed by the research objectives for the present investigation. This chapter also presents brief research questions and their contributions. This is followed by a discussion of the study's scope and limitations and definitions of key terms of the present investigation. Lastly, the

chapter concludes the overviews of the research. In the next chapter, Chapter two, relevant research studies that have previously been conducted will be reviewed with a view to shedding light on the theoretical framework guiding this particular study.

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