

Impact of Interactive Notebook on the Developing of Critical Reading Ability of EFL Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were to study the impact of using interactive notebook in critical reading. The samples were intact group composed of 16 Thai EFL Khon Kaen University students, who were enrolled in English Seminar in Economic and Social Issues in ASEAN course. The instruments consisted of interactive notebook, and interview. Participants used interactive notebook to summarize, analyze and synthesize their knowledge after they read texts, news and articles. The result presented as graphs. There revealed that the participants improve their critical reading ability by using interactive notebook. After completing the interactive notebook task most of participants reach the high level of critical reading ability. It is means that the critical reading ability of the participant were assessed from the interactive notebook tasks that each participants created at the end of chapter.

Keywords: Critical reading, interactive notebook

Introduction

In 21st century learning, issues concerning critical thinking ability have been identified as a deep-rooted problem in the Thai education system. The four basic skills used in the classroom to achieve proficiency for well-rounded language learners are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading is a required skill to obtain information from composed writings in English. In EFL, critical reading is extremely important; however, Thai students rarely engage in this classroom activity. Many literacy researchers highlight the importance of critical literacy development for college adolescent readers to maximize and enhance academic success and prepare them for their future undertakings at the workplace (Conley & Wise 2011; Ippolito, Steele & Samson 2008).

In the Thai EFL context, reading skills are an essential ability for all educational levels. In fact, critical reading abilities are as important but with less interest by several educators. According to several studies, however limitation of the English reading ability is found a factor obstructs several EFL learners to improve their English proficiency. In the Thai EFL context, not only reading abilities found a serious problem, many students are not independent thinkers and could not appropriately synthesize the information they have read in English. Being influenced by Thai culture where the classes are typically monitored by teachers, students are found equipped with limited curiosity or low motivation to achieve academic goal of their reading.

Of the four language skills used to achieve the English language proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Reading is an important skill for obtaining information from composed writings in English. In EFL critical reading is an extreme important ability, yet the least successful ability in reading class. Thai students are found worried and engage so little in class activities.

Moreover, undergraduate EFL learners have had problems with illustrating their thinking process while reading. Also, typical Thai classes are criticized as teacher-centered, and many reading classes ignore the learning activities aiming at helping student readers selects facts, information or ideas from printed materials. The most general objective of reading activities is for comprehension. At several times, students are not properly supported to define the meanings transmit by the author,

nor how do they decide relate the information to previous knowledge and judges their appropriateness and worth for meeting the learner's own needs and objectives.

Critical reading begins with the interpretation of the subject based on individual's own life, accumulation of knowledge, to his/her observations, to his/her views (Orhan, 2007, pp. 49). According to Ozdemir (2002), critical reading is a skill that should be used throughout life. Critical reading has been defined as the ability to make judgments and inferences, distinguish between fact and opinion, and recognize the author's purpose or points of view (Darch & Kameenui, 1987). In short, critical reading is to actually thinking about the subject, moving beyond what the text concluded to the point of how the author reached that conclusion and the degree to which that conclusion is accurate (Wheeler, 2007).

Therefore, it is necessary to all concerned with Thai English curriculum to prepare Thai people for their practical use in both for academic progression and for career advancement. Most Thais who learn English as a foreign language have no trouble in reading in Thai, which is their first language. However limitation of the English reading ability is found a factor obstructs several EFL learners to improve their English proficiency. A significant number of difficulties which prevent them to perform the reading task. The success in communication depends largely on number of language knowledge, for example, EFL learner's knowledge of English, exposure to English, attitudes to English language and others.

Interactive student notebooks were created in the 1970s by Lee Swenson and his colleagues at Aragon High School in California. After the Teachers Curriculum Institute saw the improvement of instruction that the ISNs made, they officially adopted the idea of an ISN as a teaching tool in 1992 (Teachers' Curriculum Institute, 1992). Using Interactive notebooks to promote EFL learners' reading skills have been done in several non-English speaking countries. This is because reading has been recognized as one of the most important language skill. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) concerns with developing the necessary components in the reading process for EFL learner how to establish. It also strives to model this process by specifying these components, and reveals correlations between them. English is employed to communicate with foreigners, and to gather

information from textbooks, newspapers, journals, and Internet websites which mostly come from the English-speaking countries. Even though reading is considered as skill vital learning for learning new knowledge, it has been discussed as one of the English communicative abilities.

Interactive notebooks are different from notebooks in general meaning, for example, the purpose behind this tool is to support EFL learners to organize and synthesize information from their reading texts assigned in class. To use this interactive notebook as a learning tool, students require other compatible strategies such as note taking, concept mapping, and organization of information. In addition, interactive notebooks help students practice their research skills from the ways their brains respond to the texts. They could investigate by themselves how their brains learn best. As a result, interactive notebooks benefit EFL learners to combining several reading strategies to complete the task. This is definitely an integrated instructional method to promote student learning. This reading strategy has been known to many EFL educators as powerful ways to improve students' reading skills, which is one of the most essential skills in EFL contest as to be further discussed.

Research Objectives

The research objective of this study is to study the impact of using interactive notebook in critical reading.

Research Methodology

1. Samples

This study used an intact group of participants. There are 16 third year Thai EFL Khon Kaen University students who enrolled in English Seminar in Economic and Social Issues in ASEAN course in the academic year 2017. This subject aimed to read more long and complex texts. Participants needed to comprehend, analyses, apply, synthesize and evaluate the texts and exchange their knowledge and ideas.

2. Research Instruments

The instruments of this study were as follows :

2.1 Interactive Notebook

This study investigated the outcomes of the use of interactive notebooks as a tool in reading texts. Focus was concentrated on participants' critical reading abilities in synthesizing texts, articles and news which they subsequently organized meaningfully into their interactive notebooks. Interactive notebooks were used to help participants to critically read the texts and to think intuitively about the author's message and language.

2.2 Interview

Interviews were concerned to obtain students' feedback toward using interactive notebooks as a supplementary tool in the EFL course. The researcher asked for permission to record the interviews which were later transcribed and analyzed to answer the research question. The interview procedure was adapted from Krueger and Casey's focus group interview outline (2002).

3. Data Collection

This study investigated how the critical reading ability of Thai EFL students was affected when they used interactive notebooks as a reading supplement. The researcher instructed students how to improve their reading ability through the use of interactive notebook tasks. Moreover, the researcher observed the class and evaluated the learning value of interactive notebooks and other activities. Participants were interviewed after they had completed the interactive notebook tasks in the last week. Details of the procedures involved are presented.

4. Data Analysis

As this study aims to study how the Thai EFL students' critical reading ability is affected when they use interactive notebook as a reading supplementary . In this study, the researcher teaches students how to improve their reading ability with interactive notebook task . Moreover, the researcher observes the class and evaluates the interactive notebook, and other activities. Participants were did an interview after finished the interactive notebook task in the last week. The following parts provide details of the involved procedures.

Research Results

The results were presented according to the research objectives as follows:

1. Interactive Notebook Tasks

Chapter 1: Getting to know ASEAN

In this chapter, students read 4 reading texts related to the introduction to ASEAN (1) *What is the ASEAN?* 2) *Why ASEAN?* 3) *ASEAN's top 10 imports and exports*, and 4) *Trading partner of ASEAN* in 2 weeks (6 hours) both inside the classroom and in the out-of-class reading .

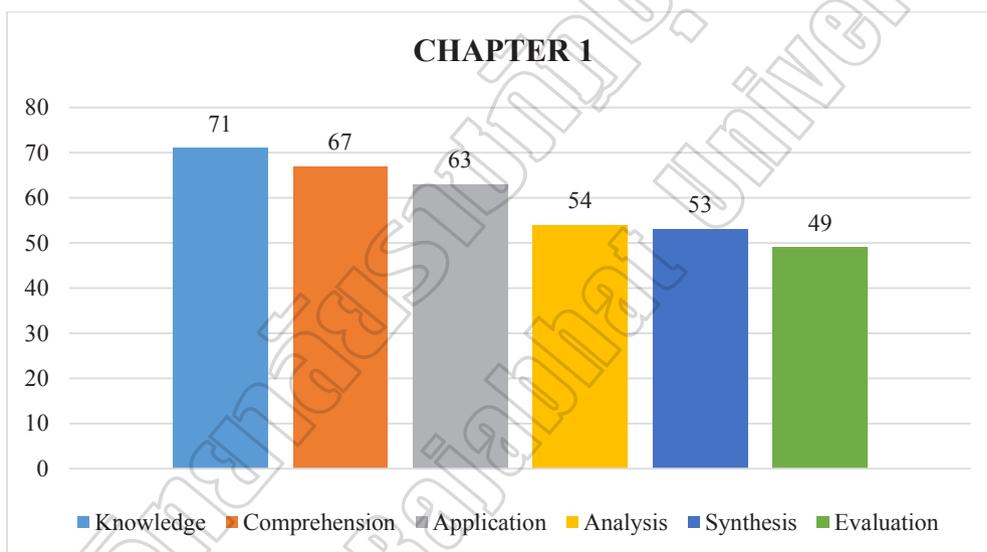


Figure 1: Overall score collected from chapter 1

From the bar graph above, it reveals the overall score collected from chapter one taken from participants' interactive notebooks. Participants received high score for level 1 knowledge (20% = 71 score), level 2 comprehension (19% = 67 score), level 3 application (17% = 63 score), level 4 analysis (15% = 54 score), level 5 synthesis (15% = 53 score), and level 6 evaluation (14% = 49 score). In explanation, participants made high score in presenting their critical reading ability from levels 1 to level 3. These learners were those who could create interactive notebook with a partially clear and accurate information. Levels 4-6 refer to good to excellent critical reading ability created with correct summary and details of relevant information from the texts.

Chapter 2: ASEAN and Education

In this chapter, there were 4 reading texts (1) *Quality of higher education in ASEAN*, 2) *ASEAN language*, 3) *ASEAN language English proficiency rankings*, 4) *EF English Proficiency Index* in 2 weeks (6 hours) both inside the classroom and in the out-of-class reading. Class activities included reading practice to promote the learners’ reading comprehension, using context clues, and critical reading games. One of the reading activities was role-plays. Learners did role-plays by reading the outside reading texts on their preference and make a group role-plays by using new information from their reading. Altogether, the learners read approximately 6 reading passages on the same theme (ASEAN and Education). The scores in the following section was drawn from the last activity (the interactive notebook task) which required an individual learner to synthesize the information learnt throughout the two weeks. The following graphic presents the average scores of their second interactive notebook task.

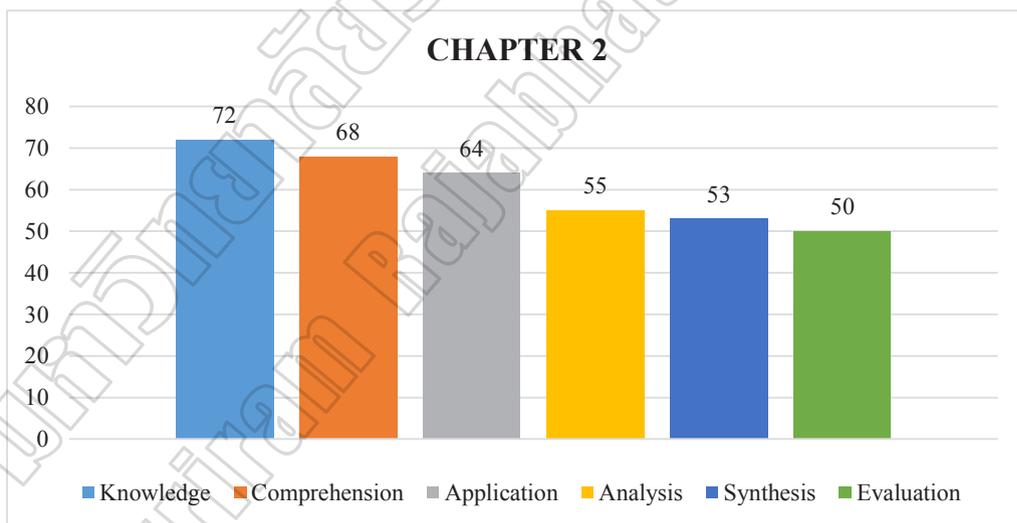


Figure 2: Overall score collected from chapter 2

The bar chart above shows the overall scores collected from the reading activity, the participants’ interactive notebooks. Participants got high score for level 1 knowledge (20% = 72 score), level 2 comprehension (19% = 68 score), level 3 application (18% = 64 score), level 4

analysis (15% = 55 score), level 5 synthesis (14% = 53 score), and level 6 evaluation (14% = 50 score). In details, the scores were given according to levels of each critical reading ability. In explanation, participants made high score in presenting their critical reading ability from levels 1 to level 3. These learners were those who could create interactive notebook task with a partially clear and accurate information. Levels 4-6 refer to good to excellent critical reading ability created with correct summary and full details of relevant information from the texts.

Chapter 3: ASEAN and Economy

In this chapter, there were 4 reading texts (1) *ASEAN economic growth*, 2) *Quality of citizenship*, 3) *Quality of Nationality Index* 4) *Which ASEAN economy has the most developed infrastructure?* in 2 weeks (6 hours) both inside the classroom and the out-of-class reading. Class activities included reading practice to promote the learners' reading comprehension and analysis, using context clues, and critical reading games and role-plays. One of the reading activities was extended reading. From this activity, learners did presentations by reading the outside reading texts on their preference and make a presentation using old information from class activities and new information from their reading. Altogether, the learners read approximately 6 reading passages on the same theme (ASEAN and Economy).

The scores in the following section were drawn from the last activity (the interactive notebook task) which required an individual learner to synthesize the information learnt throughout the two weeks. The following graphic presents the average scores of their third interactive notebook task.

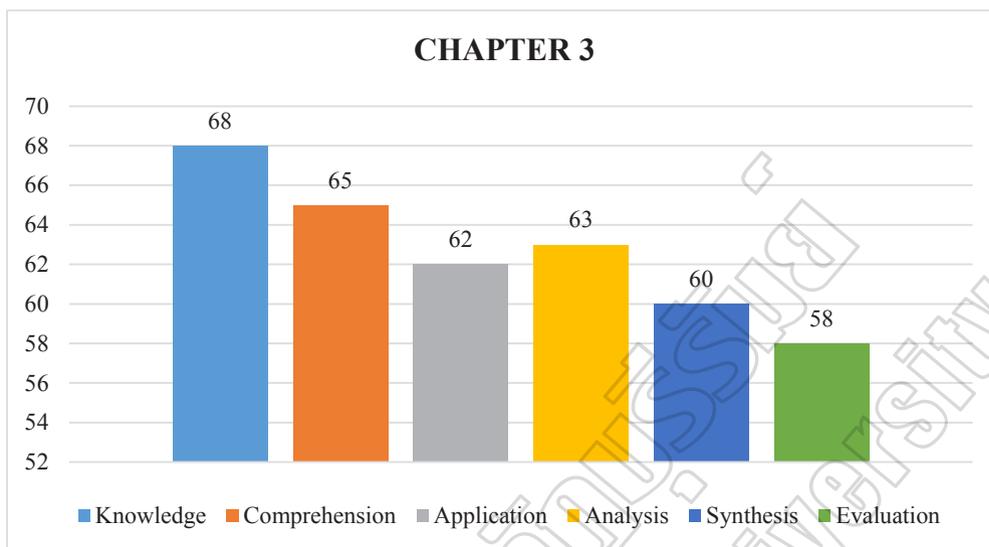


Figure 3: Overall score collected from chapter 3

The bar graph above shows the overall scores collected from participants' interactive notebooks. Participants got high score for level 1 knowledge (18% = 68 score), level 2 comprehension (19% = 65 score), level 3 application (17% = 62 score), level 4 analysis (15% = 63 score), level 5 synthesis (16% = 60 score), and level 6 evaluation (15% = 58 score). In details, the scores were given according to levels of each critical reading ability. Participants' scores in level 1-3 decreased, while the scores between levels to levels 6 rose. These increases were from a more relevant supporting details and better summaries the provided in interactive notebooks.

Chapter 4: ASEAN and Tourism

In this chapter, there were 4 reading texts (1) The future of ASEAN tourism, 2) *Travel industry in ASEAN*, 3) *Safety and security in ASEAN*, 4) *Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index*) in 2 weeks (6 hours) both inside the classroom and in the out-of-class reading . Class activities included reading practice to promote the learners' reading comprehension and, using context clues, and critical reading games and role-plays. One of the reading activities was extended reading Learners did presentations by reading the outside reading texts on their preference and make a presentation using new information from their reading. Altogether, the learners read approximately 6 reading passages on the same theme (ASEAN and Tourism). The scores to be presented in the

following section was drawn from the last activity (the interactive notebook task) which required an individual learner to synthesize the information learnt throughout the two weeks. The following graphic presents the average scores of their fourth interactive notebook task.

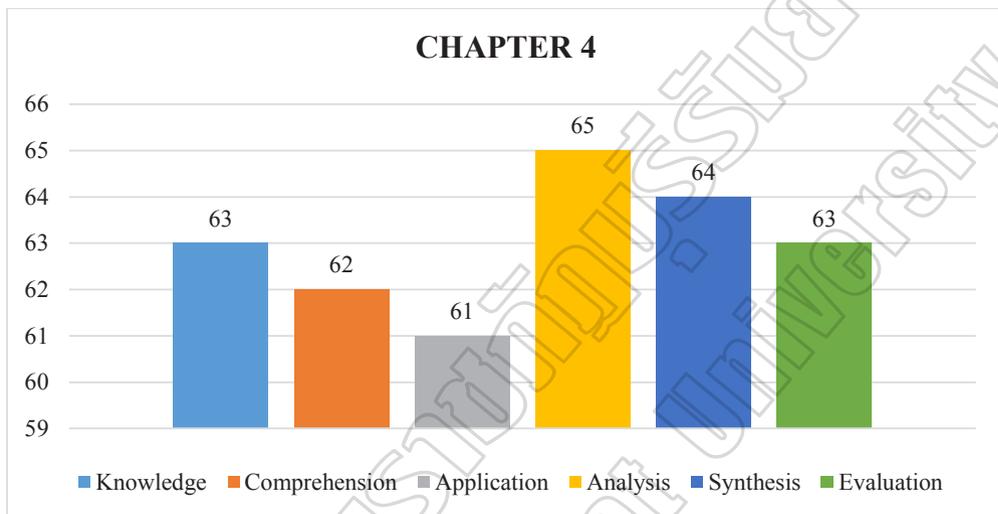


Figure 4: Overall score collected from chapter 4

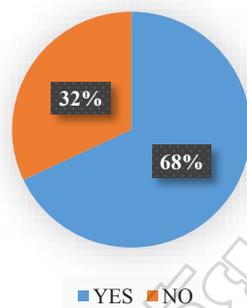
This chart above shows the overall score collected from chapter four taken from participants' interactive notebooks. Participants got high score for level 1 knowledge (17% = 63 score), level 2 comprehension (16% = 62 score), level 3 application (16% = 61 score), level 4 analysis (17% = 65 score), level 5 synthesis (17% = 64 score), and level 6 evaluation (17% = 63 score). In details, the scores were given according to levels of each critical reading ability. Participants got high score in level 4-6 as they could synthesize and evaluate the story as well. Moreover, participants also decreased the score from level 1-3 as they seemed to devote more on higher levels of critical reading ability.

2. Interview

The researcher also conducted an interview with participants to get their feedback after completing the Interactive notebook tasks. Participants were interviewed in order to acquire their opinions toward the implication of interactive notebook tasks to enhance their critical reading ability. The followings are the questions and answers gathered from the interview.

2.1 Do you think interactive notebook improve your critical reading ability? and How?

Interactive notebook improve reading ability? How?



Reasons for YES

- Motivating extended reading
- Being a study tool for reviewing, analyzing, comparing, contrasting, etc.
- Improving reading comprehension
- Improving relationship with classmates
- Thinking more deeply
- Practicing communicating through visualization

Reasons for No

- Requiring students to read too many texts to
- Vocabulary were unfamiliar
- Requiring much more time and afford to complete the tasks.
- Feeling nervous when asked to join class activities

Figure 5: Overall score collected from interview

The following section presents example quoted from the tape script of participants' interview.

Positive excerpt

- “Absolutely Yes! The interactive notebook helps me to remember what story is and I can go back to read it anytime”.
- “Yes, it’s really help me improve my reading, my critical reading skill.

Negative excerpt

- “No, it is boring and waste the time”.

Most of participants agreed that using interactive notebooks helped improve their critical reading ability and made the learning to be hands-on rather than lectures. Moreover,

interactive notebook helped them to remember what story of the text is because they can go back to read it anytime.

2.2 Do you have any suggestion about using interactive notebook as a tool to improve critical reading ability?

The following section presents the issues mentioned by the participants regarding their ideas on improving the tool and activities.

2.2.1 Time management

Tasks took too long time for learner to read and analyze the texts. Moreover, the class time was too short for participants to create the interactive notebook. In addition, creating the presentation of their critical ability required them a lot of time, skill, and afford to create beautiful pages. As a result the teacher should consider the relevancy of time and text for each lessons.

2.2.2 Content

The length and complexity of the text seemed to be burden for the learners. They complained about reading too long texts which a large number of new and unfamiliar words. However, participants accepted that they were encourage to read more texts both inside and out of class to produce the best task for each chapter.

2.2.3 Teaching and learning activities

Learners viewed that there were a variety of learning activity that could make a reading class be more interesting and enjoyable. Many of them claimed that they loved to do class activities as these require no peroration. They thought that a variety of assessment techniques allowed their ability to be assessed more accurately.

Discussion

Critical reading ability of participants was initially between levels 1-3. This indicated that participants comprehended the texts and applied knowledge and understanding in answering specific questions. This concurred with results from tests administered by the Thai Ministry of Education,

indicating high numbers of Thai students nationwide with reading failures and limited abilities, including vocational students (Rodklai, 2014).

Participants undertook activities and created interactive notebook tasks. Average scores of critical reading abilities increased from chapter to chapter. Scores improved with active learning and participating in interesting class activities, reflecting synthesized ideas in the creation of interesting tasks.

Thus, critical reading ability was improved through the effective and systematic use of interactive notebooks. Participants moved up to a higher level of critical reading ability as a result of more engaging reading. To explain, participants were required to further study their reading beyond the classroom. In total, each student read 24 texts in this project, and the learning activity involved each student as an active learner who was ready to participate in a variety of pre-, during-, and post-reading activities. In addition, students undertook some basic and advanced reading techniques in each chapter. These included previewing, predicting, skimming, scanning, analyzing, comparing, contrasting and synthesizing. The texts were authentic and of varied length and complexity. Participants were encouraged to exchange knowledge and information with their peers and compare their answers after each reading, rather than using a dictionary. Thus, participants read with purpose and immersed themselves in the activity, thereby resulting in a positive outcome. Similarly, Wallace (2003) identified three personal reasons for reading which he termed as reading for survival, reading for learning, and reading for pleasure. Therefore, when participants learn to read, it is best to set a goal to make the experience more meaningful and interesting.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to evaluate the effects of interactive notebooks on learners' critical abilities in reading. Learners' opinions on implementing tasks to help in processing information were also investigated to review, assess and personalize the knowledge content presented. Interactive notebooks provide students with the opportunity to add, adjust and review their notes at a later date. Overall, an interactive notebook is an organizational tool for both teachers

and students. One aspect of interactive notebooks is that students are required to interact with information and figure out what it means. When students understand the content, they can explain the concepts in their own words, apply information to new contexts appropriately and make new analogies and generalizations (Perkins, 1991).

Similar to other instructional tools, teachers need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of interactive notebooks. If used properly, interactive notebooks can be effective organizational tools for both teachers and students.

Recommendations

Further research is needed in the field of language as mention in chapter 2 they are many research about interactive notebook in science but there is very little research about the benefits or limitations of interactive notebooks for develop language ability. Research needs to be done that directly correlates student achievement levels and success to interactive notebooks. They need to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of interactive notebooks as they decide when to use them. When used properly, interactive notebooks can be effective organizational tools for the teacher and students.

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