

The Problems of English Reading Skills of First-Year Students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon, Myanmar

¹Candasiri, Narongchai Pintrymool, Phramaha Somchai Kittipanyo,

¹Faculty of Humanities, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand

Corresponding Author's Email : ashincandasirimulaei@gmail.com

Abstract

This thesis entitled “The Problems of English Reading Skills of First-Year Students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon of Myanmar”. The objectives of this study are: (1) to study the English reading skills of first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon, Myanmar, (2) to analyze the problems of English reading skills of the first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon of Myanmar. The study was a mixed method both quantitative and qualitative. Questionnaires were used for collecting quantitative data from 55 students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon, Myanmar and the key information from the in-depth interview was used for collecting qualitative data from four lecturers. In this research, statistics including Frequency, Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation (S.D) were used for quantitative data and a content analysis is used for analyzing qualitative data. In this study, the researcher chose 55 first-year students as a sample in the academic year of 2023 to 2024. In the general background, the 54 respondents of this study were male and only one respondent was female. The 24 respondents of this research were 21 to 30 years old or 43.6% and the 31 respondents of this research were 31 up years old or 56.4%. According to the respondents of this research questionnaires, the result had shown that the participated students encountered with problems in Reading English. In objective one, the resultant average of students’ English reading skill was $\bar{x} = 2.402$ and $SD = 0.854$ and in the result of objective two, the resultant average of students’ English reading skill was $\bar{x} = 2.428$ and $SD = 1.114$.

By learning these two resultant averages, the first-year students’ English reading skill were at very low level. In the result of in-depth interview, the lecturers gave some suggestions to solve the problems encountered by their students. The problems to solve were to study grammar, vocabulary, to have self-confidence or motivation, to make self-study more and practices. The researcher also suggested that the students basically should study basic grammar, vocabulary, self-study and practices, and to have self-confident and motivation. And also, they should set specific goals to improve their skill.

Keywords: Problems, English Reading Skills, First Year Students, Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon of Myanmar

Introduction

Today, language skill is of vital important in educational, social, religious, political, and economic affairs. Through languages skill, people can easily know the emotion, belief, and ideas of others. To be effective relationship, languages skill is essential in daily activities. Over 60 nations in the world, English is used as an official language in the country, and have dominant place in a further 20. English also becomes influential in all six continents (Thuy Nga, Nguyen, 2022). And over 50 million children study English as an additional language at primary level; over 80 million study it at secondary level (Phan Thi Tho, 2023, p.1). Furthermore, many international meetings such as world economic forum, world religious conference and international world peace summit that hold in the region also use only English medium during the conferences (A Shin Indaka, 2017, p.1). So nowadays “English language becomes global” (David Crystal, 1997-2013, p.1).

In English language, there are four skills: listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill and writing skill. In reading skill, the readers have many aims of reading their subjects. Among them, reading skill is one of the obstacle things for every English learner. Actually, English reading skill become one of the skills to study for students because English reading skill has come together with listening and speaking. Without having the basic knowledge of listening and speaking skills, it is difficult for collecting data to read. In fact, necessary information used as data for reading come from many sources such as formal documents, text books, newspaper, journal and so on.

Grellet stated that there are two major reasons for students to read any text, first is reading for pleasure and the second is reading for getting information (F. Grellet, 1999, pp.3-25). Oberholzer also stated that it is more important to understand the main point message of the text than to know the mechanical skill of reading (B. Oberholzer, 2023). Investigating of above scholars’ point of view, how reading is important was known. Similarly in the curriculum of Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin’s education system, the students have to study the text of English and try to comprehension of their English text. Students are required to understand the general theme of their text and to understand each part of their text word by word. Most of first-year students are facing with difficulties in reading their English text because English language is not their first language and they are lack of vocabulary knowledge. Most of students came from Myanmar language educational background. All of their subjects written by English are compulsory for students. And while reading English text, they do not understand the main idea of the passage. Thus, they should get command on these aspects of reading to improve their English reading skills.

Therefore, the researcher feels that some of first-year students in Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin are not efficient enough to explain any particular content on their own.

There are lacunae in the development of English reading skills among the first-year students in Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. Therefore, the researcher is trying to find out problems existing in the acquisition of English reading skill among the first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. The main objective of the researcher is to identify the problems faced by the first-year students in acquiring English reading skills. In conclusion, the aim of this research is to know the problems of English reading skills. It is very important to know the problems of English reading skills and to know the categories of English reading skill. In this research, the researcher will research the problems of English reading skill of first year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. The first-year students will gain many ideas from this research how to know their problems of English reading and how to analyze the categories of English reading skills after having been investigating them.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the problems of English reading skills of the first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon, Myanmar
2. To propose effective solutions for English reading skills of the first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon, Myanmar

Research Methodology

This research is quantitative and qualitative of mixed methods research. Research area is in Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon of Myanmar. The chosen population of this study was the four lecturers and the 55 first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon, Myanmar in the academic year of 2023 to 2024. Therefore, this number represented the population of this research. For the research tools, two types include: (A) Questionnaire for participants and (B) an in-depth interview to four effective lecturers.

(A) a research questionnaire was prepared by the researcher with significant 34 questions to explore how and what the students have problems in English reading skills and to know the students' opinions what they need to analyze English reading skills in Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. It included three parts as follow: Part (I) the participants' general background information, part (II) participants' opinion on the problems of English reading skills and part (III) analyzing the problems of English reading skills based on students' opinions.

(B) In the in-depth interview, in this part is to investigate why the students had the problems in reading English at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. The researcher asked the questions to four effective teachers from Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. Because, the researcher tentatively guess that the teachers could understand why their students had problems in English reading skills.

Data was collected by the researcher only one month and finished in 8 March 2024. After collecting data, the collected quantitative data was analyzed with SPSS Software. And in the qualitative data, to know why their students had problems in English reading skills, the researcher interviewed to four effective lecturers. After that, the answers were written down by the researcher on the paper.

Results of the research

This research objective one was to study the English reading skills of the first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon of Myanmar. In the objective one, 16 statements were included as prepared questionnaires for the participants. The finding results of the 16 statements were as follows:

Results of Objective one

No.	Statement	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Level
1	I encounter unfamiliar words when reading the English text.	2.23	.607	Low
2	I do not understand technical terms meaning when reading the English Text.	2.61	1.079	Moderate
3	I do not understand the word meaning when reading the English text.	2.67	1.001	Moderate
4	I lack vocabulary knowledge like synonym, and antonym when reading the English text.	2.34	1.022	Low
5	I meet with complex and very long sentences with many dependent clauses or paragraphs when reading the English text.	2.49	1.184	Low
6	I am confused with punctuation marks when reading the English tex.	2.63	1.128	Moderate
7	I lack grammatical knowledge when reading the English text.	2.56	1.101	Low
8	I cannot guess meaning from the context when reading the English text.	2.43	.976	Low
9	I take the long time to look for meaning of word from the dictionary when reading the English text.	2.14	1.145	Low

No.	Statement	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Level
10	I always look back to words that have already read when reading the English text.	2.29	1.030	Low
11	I always look back to phrases that have already read when reading the English text.	2.32	1.037	Low
12	I lack knowledge to link with what have read when reading the English text.	2.23	1.070	Low
13	I am unfamiliar with the text when reading the English text.	2.52	.878	Low
14	I find that texts are too difficult when reading the English text.	2.30	.813	Low
15	I lack motivation in reading when reading the English text.	2.45	.996	Low
16	I read text with limited time when reading the English text.	2.23	1.290	Low
Average		2.402	0.854	Low

In the objective one, according to analyzing with SPSS software by combining all part one question, the researcher finds the results of English reading problem of the first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. The average mean (\bar{x}) of the first-year students' English reading problems is (2.402) and SD is (0.854). So, the level of the first-year students' English reading skills is low. That is, the problems of the first-year students in English reading skill is high and that results highlight that they have the high-level problems to solve in their English reading skills.

This research objective two was to analyze the problems of English reading skills of the first-year students. In objective two, 18 statements were included as prepared questionnaires for the participants. The finding results of the 16 statements were as follows:

Results of Objective Two

No.	Statement	Mean	SD \bar{x}	Level
1	While I am reading, I divide words into groups such as travel, sport, place, food, and vehicle.	2.30	.997	Low
2	I think of closely related words with a new one found in the passage such as phone –	2.32	1.106	Low



No.	Statement	Mean	SD \bar{x}	Level
	charger cable, screen or book - cover, while I am reading.			
3	While I am reading, I use symbols to represent an abstract noun like an evil for badness.	2.32	.963	Low
4	While I am reading, I use the sounds of a familiar term to remind myself of a new word.	2.00	1.054	Low
5	While I am reading, I memorize new word or phrases by using familiar words or sounds from my language.	2.09	1.076	Low
6	While I am reading, I act out what I read.	2.90	1.251	Moderate
7	While I am reading, I group words into a picture, chart, or diagram.	2.36	1.042	Low
8	I reread parts of the book that I enjoy or am meaningful to me while I am reading.	1.96	1.053	Very low
9	While I am reading, I reread the entire text.	2.36	.969	Low
10	While I am reading, I reread words or phrases that have already read.	2.27	1.096	Low
11	I skim the whole passage while I am reading.	2.29	1.083	Low
12	I scan the passage for specific points of interest while I am reading.	2.56	1.150	Low
13	I create my own questions while I am reading.	3.83	1.330	High
14	I look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary while I am reading.	1.47	.939	Very low
15	I separate unknown word into parts to understand the meaning while I am reading.	2.96	1.400	Moderate
16	I take note of some important points in the flash card and write down key words while I am reading.	2.38	1.079	Low
17	While I am reading, I write the story in short, using my own language.	3.54	1.398	High



No.	Statement	Mean	SD \bar{x}	Level
18	I underline or highlight key words, main idea or important parts of the passage while I am reading.	1.81	1.073	Low
Average		2.428	1.114	Low

In the objective two, according to SPSS software by combining all part two questions, the researcher finds the results of analyzing problems of English reading of the first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. The average mean (\bar{x}) of the first-year students' analyzing problems of English reading is (2.428) and SD is (1.114). So, the level of the first-year students' English reading skills is low. That is, their problems in the English reading skill are high and also, they have the high-level problems to solve about their English reading skills.

Result of an In-Depth Interview with Five Lecturers

Researcher used two questionnaires and one suggestion to four lecturers. 1. What are the problems in English reading skills of first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin? Please! 2. What are the proper ways to be good at English reading skills of first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon of Myanmar? 3. Please give some suggestions for this research to analyze the problems in English reading skills of Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Yangon of Myanmar. After interviewing with four lecturers, there was finding results from four different individuals (Ven. Kondannya, Ven. Maghinda, Ven. Pandita, Ven. Maghinda) regarding the problems of English reading skill and an analysis of English reading skill among the first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin.

According to question one: most of students have poor vocabulary, the weakness of knowing basic English grammar.

According to question two: students should make their reading skills in self-studies, understand basic grammar, read a lot of books and have to make a note in their notebook.

According to question three: the four lecturers gave suggestions, that is, students need to brush up on their reading comprehension skills, to find the best technique, to conduct surveys and interviews with the students, teachers and administrators to gather their perspective on the challenges faced in English reading.

Discussion

In this section, the researcher discusses the problems of English reading skills encountered by the first-year students from Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. Nowadays, English becomes the popular language in academic fields and other important functions. Policy maker, language planners and teachers in their respective fields in the world are

indicating the need to increase the students of confidence and quality in English skill. In this part, the researcher prepares to discuss the finding results and show how this research are consistent with other studies and in the review of the literature in the chapter two. The aim of this study is to investigate the problems of English reading skills of the first-year students from Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin. The method of this research has used both qualitative and quantitative. The tool of data analysis is SPSS software version. As it has described in the chapter four, the respondents include 44 male students and only one female in the finding results. All populations are studying in the first academic year at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin.

This current research finding is relevant with Nongnat Chawwang's research about an investigation of students' English reading problems of Thai 12th Grade students in Nakhonratchasima Education Region. He investigates the differences in English reading problems among the science students and the arts students concerning with sentence structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. His research tool is the differences of English reading problems among the science students and the arts students. After conducting his research, he found that 30% of the science and arts students gave the correct answers. That is, most of them, over 70% of both science and arts students had problems in all three area. The reading ability of the science students and of the arts students was at a low level. It can be concluded that there were no differences in reading ability between students in the science and the arts groups.

However, in this current research, according to the questionnaires results, most of respondents are lack of English reading skill. They do not have enough knowledge about English reading skill. For example, they do not know the word meaning when reading the English text, and so on. They have many problems in reading English text. When the researcher interviewed the lecturers, they replied their views on their students about English reading skill and the problems about English reading and they gave a lot of suggestions about English reading to focus on basic grammar, vocabulary, and to read English books more and more, to make self-study and practices it more and more in order to improve the first-year students' ability in English reading skill.

Consulsion

This research examined the problems of English reading skills among first-year students at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin in Myanmar, using a mixed-methods approach with SPSS software for data analysis. Based on responses from 55 students (44 males, 1 female) and interviews with four lecturers, the findings revealed significant difficulties in English reading skills, with students performing at a very low level. Key challenges included weak grammar

and vocabulary, leading to poor comprehension. Lecturers recommended increased self-study, regular reading of English books, and a stronger focus on foundational language skills to improve proficiency. The study highlights the need for targeted interventions to enhance students' reading abilities.

Suggestions

To improve English reading skills, students should focus on basic grammar, vocabulary, self-study, practice, confidence, and motivation, while employing active strategies like asking questions, making connections, and taking notes. Lecturers at Sitagu Buddhist Academy Thanlyin should address students' confidence issues, tailor teaching methods to their needs, and incorporate interactive activities to enhance engagement. Future research should explore diverse methodologies, such as mixed-method studies, to examine English reading skills in broader contexts, including individual student performance and the impact of different learning levels. Additionally, students should assess their reading proficiency to align with the academy's objectives, ensuring effective language skill development.

References

- Nguyen, T. N. (2022). English as a global language and its implications for students. VNU Journal of Science: Foreign Languages, 24. Retrieved from <http://www.google.co.th/search?q=English+a+global+language+and+its+implications+for+students>
- Phan, T. T. (n.d.). A study of improving English speaking skills for IELTS of students at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, Vietnam (Master's thesis). Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand.
- Indaka, A. S. (n.d.). A study of university students' motivation for learning English in private schools in Yangon, Myanmar (Master's thesis). Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand.
- Crystal, D. (1997/2013). English as a global language. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Grellet, F. (1999). Developing reading skills. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Oberholzer, B. (2023). The relationship between reading difficulties and academic performance (Master's thesis). University of Zululand, South Africa. Retrieved from <https://uzspace.unizulu.ac.za/items/9ec52782f-4fef-4201-9d6a-9295a27cf51a>
- van Gelderen, E. (2006). A history of the English language. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Wikipedia contributors. (2023). History of reading. In Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reading#History-of-reading>
- Baugh, A. C. (1951). A history of the English language. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.