

Suggesting Second-Language Reading Model for EFL University Students' Reading Comprehension

การแนะนำรูปแบบการอ่านภาษาที่สองเพื่อความ
เข้าใจสำหรับนักศึกษาในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยที่เรียน
ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

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Abstract

The academic article aims to fill up the gap found of the inherent second-language (L2) or English reading development in Thai EFL (English as a foreign language) tertiary context. Some of the research studies were reviewed based on the statement of problems, research methodologies, findings, and conclusions to support evidences. The main contribution of this academic article seeks to suggest the concrete L2 reading model based on the theories of the compensatory model of L2 reading, ACTIVE Framework, and Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS). Lastly, this academic article suggests conducting a pilot study by using the suggesting reading model.

Keywords

Second-language reading model, EFL university student, reading comprehension

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิชาการฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเสริมช่องว่างงานวิจัยเกี่ยวกับการพัฒนาการอ่านภาษาที่สองในบริบทของอุดมศึกษาที่มีผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ การทบทวนบทความวิจัยเพื่อนำเสนอข้อมูลเชิงสนับสนุนนั้น ผู้วิจัยได้พิจารณาจากปัญหาของการวิจัย เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ผลการวิจัย และข้อสรุปจากการวิจัย ใจความหลักของบทความวิชาการฉบับนี้ มุ่งเน้นการนำเสนอรูปแบบการอ่านภาษาที่สองเชิงประจักษ์ที่ได้จากการทบทวนทฤษฎีของรูปแบบการอ่านภาษาที่สองแบบขดเขย กรอบแนวความคิด แอคทิฟ และแบบสำรวจกลยุทธ์การอ่าน สุดท้ายนี้ บทความวิชาการฉบับนี้ได้แนะนำให้มีการศึกษานำร่องโดยใช้รูปแบบการอ่านภาษาที่สองเชิงประจักษ์นี้

คำสำคัญ

รูปแบบการอ่านภาษาที่สอง, ผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศระดับมหาวิทยาลัย, การอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ

Introduction

In this section, the researcher of the present academic article as one of his series of academic work tries to inform the inherent L2 (second-language) reading difficulties in Thai EFL (English a foreign language) context and to reflect a high demand of designing a promising L2 reading model.

In doing so, some of the research studies were selected based on the suggestion of Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2011). The researcher formulated the key terms, such as “L2 reading”, “reading comprehension”, “L2 reading model”, “EFL student reading comprehension” prior to searching research studies from online databases. After that, the researcher analysed the retrieved research

studies by looking into their statement of problems, research methodologies, findings, and conclusions.

There is still a wide gap to be filled in explaining how to implement effective L2 reading strategies in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. As Dokchandra (2017) shared concerns about English reading difficulties in Thai tertiary context (university) at the beginning of his academic article, to date, although there are the number of L2 teaching methodologies for reading comprehension, such an array of teaching methodologies cannot be suitably applied for local context due to the fact that they lack concrete guidelines. As a result, Thai EFL students still face difficulties in performing their L2 reading. Then Dokchandra urges to design teaching methodology for L2 reading which can activate EFL students' awareness of selecting reading strategies.

Suwannaprut and Siriwan (2020) examined reading comprehension and use of reading strategies of the 153 EFL students in **English for Study Skills Development** at Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University at the second semester of academic year 2019. The research instruments were the Online Survey of Reading Strategies (OSORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), semi-structured interview, and observation. The results showed that although this group of student participants majored in English, only 22% had high level of reading proficiency. This was due to the fact that they had few opportunities to expose to the target language sources outside classroom. Also, they lacked ability to use reading strategies, like note-taking, making a summary. The results also pointed out that the EFL student participants used support strategies the most in their L2 reading. To develop reading abilities, the results suggested that the EFL teachers should focus more on facilitating EFL students to use of metacognitive¹ reading strategies.

¹ The term 'metacognition' is referred to as a mental processing mechanism in L2 readers. While reading, L2 readers are aware of regulating reading strategies: planning, monitoring, and evaluating to facilitate their success in reading comprehension. That is, L2 readers get L2 input easily and comprehensibly (Anderson, 2003).

Rupsong and Saitakham (2020) examined the use of reading strategies by 212 first-year English major students at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University. The research instrument was the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). The results revealed that the EFL student participants employed global reading strategies the most. To illustrate, they chose to use reading strategies when they tried to figure out the meaning and to check the correctness. Last but not least, the results suggested guiding the EFL students to better use the reading strategies effectively.

Likewise, Nuwee (2010) conducted a large scale of research to explore the nature of L2 reading so as to develop reading difficulties. She administered survey with 482 EFL students who majored in **English** from public universities: Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University, Kasetsart University to private universities: Bangkok University, Sir Pathum University. The questionnaire (SORS) used was developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). Then she conducted an interview and think-aloud sessions, respectively.

The results showed that high and low proficient EFL student participants responded to the use of reading strategies differently. For example, high proficient group employed more of reading strategies than low proficient group, such as rereading, making reference, guessing meaning of unknown word, and underlining.

Lastly, the results asserted that the EFL teachers should raise their students' awareness of when, why, and how to use reading strategies. Moreover, think-aloud could be used to elicit areas of reading's strengths and weaknesses and to drive their students beyond word-level reading.

Phonhan (2017) examined 34 Thai chemistry students' use of English reading strategies. They studied **English Academic Reading Context** at Rajamangala University of Technology Isan in academic year 2017. The research instruments were the Academic English Reading Test (AERT) and Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). The results

revealed that two groups of student participants (high and low) responded to different proportions of reading strategies. For instance, high proficient group used global, problem-solving, and support reading strategies, respectively. In contrast, low proficient group used support, global, and problem-solving strategies, respectively. With this, the result was unique in revealing that non-English major students needed more motivation to foster them to learn English and to make use of reading strategies.

To summarize, the research results emerged from above research studies are likely to provide general guideline for developing L2 reading instruction in Thai EFL context. As for the research designs, the research studies discussed here still followed the traditional teaching patterns whose results may not be possibly generalized to their local contexts. For example, the results only revealed the extent to which the EFL students voiced about their reading domains and what EFL teachers concluded about the alternatives to the development. Second, there was still no report on a reading model. Third, there was still the number of factors, such as individual difference, learning strategy (motivation), and distance between L1 and L2 language to be carefully considered when designing L2 reading instruction.

The retrieved research results from 2012 to 2020 found here are not different from what Fuengbangluang (2020) has found in his first academic article. In his first part of previous academic work, he preliminarily looked into six research studies conducted in Thai EFL context from 2003 to 2018. EFL students as L2 readers still lacked reading ability reflecting their difficulties in reading comprehension in terms of metacognitive ability. Therefore, it is possible to make a claim that Thai EFL students still face L2 reading difficulties.

Relating to this, general guidelines which do not cover relevant components of L2 reading and models for reading instruction cannot be generalized to L2 reading development. Fuengbangluang and Panjanon (2021) also contended that EFL students who were English major and non-language major in comparable context still face difficulties in understanding how to

reading for comprehension. Some of the domains of reading difficulty are “language knowledge (linguistic elements), L2 reading literacy, L2 background knowledge, use of reading strategies both L1 and L2” (p.51). It leads to the conclusion that to improve effective reading instruction, multiple components should be reconsidered.

Fuengbangluang and Panjanon (2021) have made an urgent call for designing concrete reading instruction. They suggested the compensatory models of second-language reading originally developed by Bernhardt (2005) and McNeil (2012). Main focal reading components here heavily rely on multiple intervention of reading instruction to meet a variety of EFL students with different reading proficiencies, like high and low proficiency because they require varied language sources in comprehending texts. The model pays much emphasis on L1 literacy (e.g., vocabulary, text structure), L2 language knowledge (e.g., grammatical form, vocabulary), and unexplained variance or other relevant components (comprehension strategy, content and domain knowledge). However, more concrete teaching patterns should be added.

Next section discusses a second-language reading model.

Suggesting Second-Language Reading Model

This section discusses an overview of second-language reading model and suggesting reading model for classroom application.

Overview of Second-Language Reading Model

Dating back to the last decades, as mentioned in Carrell, Devine, Eskey (1988), Lems, Miller, Sora (2009), and Bernhardt (2011), two prominent L2 reading models were proposed by Rumelhart (1977) and Stanovich (1988). Later, such reading models were reviewed by scholars in the light of their conceptualization of L2 reading components. First, the main concept of two models places heavy emphasis on reading skills (word-recognition) and linguistic knowledge (grammatical knowledge). Second, such models followed the idea of top-down and bottom-up process. As

for patterns of top-down and bottom-up processes, Lems, Miller, Sora (2009) maintained that “bottom-up ... refer(s) to the word-level skills that are required for decoding ... top-down ... refer(s) to the analytical and cognitive skills that are needed for comprehension” (p.33). High and low proficient L2 readers were treated differently. For example, top-down was designed for high group, whereas bottom-up was designed for low group.

When it comes to actual situations, to succeed in reading comprehension, not only word-recognition and grammatical knowledge are important, but a variety of reading components which excluded in the Rumelhart’s (1977) and Stanovich’s (1988) models are seen as the important keys to language compensation (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). While reading at a time, Bernhardt (2011) posited that L2 readers “ ... rely on multiple information sources not a prior determining what is an “important” source, but rather, bringing which ever source to bear at an appropriate moment of indecision or insecurity” (p.37). In addition, high and low proficient L2 readers are likely to follow no predictable patterns between top-down and bottom-up. Supporting this, Lems, Miller, Sora (2009) stated that by relying on such patterns cannot be able to fully activate successful L2 reading comprehension.

Later, Bernhardt (2005) and (2011) has intensively worked on developing reading model. The well-known model is emphasized on three main categories: L1 literacy, L2 language knowledge, and unexplained variance. Bernhardt attempted to argue that while reading, L2 readers may not follow top-down and bottom-up processes. Rather, they are like to rely on multiple information sources to compensate for deficiencies at any levels for reading comprehension (see Figure 1).

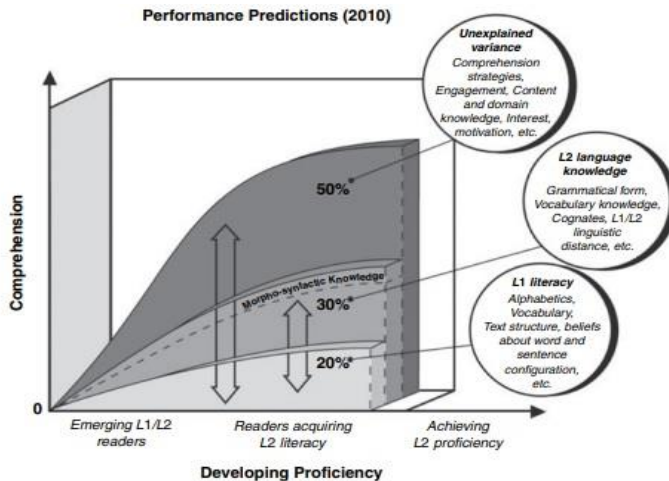


Figure 1: A compensatory model of second-language reading (revised).

The model lies in the maximum domains of L2 knowledge. This model works on the premise that L2 readers for all level of reading proficiency should be provided with concrete strategies to compensate for language deficiencies while reading, allowing them to pick up multiple language sources.

The involvement of the use of a compensatory model as proposed by Bernhardt (2005) and (2011) was supported in Cabinda's (2016) work. He sought to investigate the concrete research reflecting how and what L2 readers did while reading in L2 rather than sought to know how reading strategies were used in general. Then he looked at 28 undergraduate student participants who were native and non-native at Eduardo Mondlane University to see their use of metacognitive strategies in the language test for reading comprehension. The result showed that EFL students as test-takers tended to use cognates, translation, and code-switching.

Altogether, Bunch, Walqui, and Pearson (2014) borrowed the idea of a compensatory model to see how English student participants at one school overcame L2 reading complexities. The results showed that they would rather overcome their reading difficulties by relying on background knowledge and being emphasized on text structure, comprehension strategy, and students' L1 language knowledge.

Clearly, it contradicts with the patterns of top-down and bottom-up processes since by letting L2 readers rely on word-recognition and grammatical knowledge cannot fully support L2 reading comprehension against various kinds of text with different degree of difficulties, such as topic, vocabulary, and writing styles (sentence). Then this leads to the continuous promotion of a compensatory model of L2 reading.

To make the reading model more concrete, covering relevant L2 reading components and L2 reading patterns, Later, McNeil (2012) re-examined the compensatory model as proposed by Bernhardt (2005). He further added that by considering individual L2 readers' reading proficiency, they have different degrees of metacognition. Thus they need a particular intervention against the background and strategic knowledge (see Figure 2).

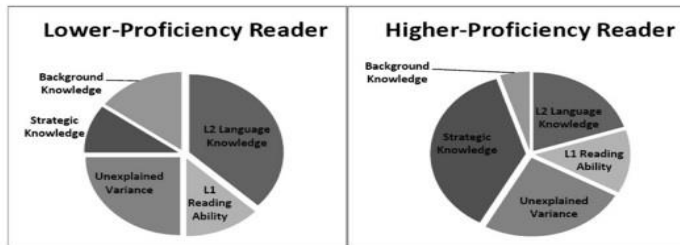


Figure 2: Predicting the relative contributions of L2 language knowledge, L1 reading ability, strategic knowledge, and background knowledge to L2 reading.

In short, the two models shed further important light on developing concrete L2 reading models used in EFL context. However, it now remains unclear whether these models are used in Thai tertiary context.

Next section discusses second-language reading model for adapting in L2 reading classroom.

Suggesting Second-Language Reading Model for Classroom Adaptation

As discussed in two sections above, the research results yielded no concrete guidelines for designing a suitable L2 reading model for Thai EFL context, especially at university. The results are found to inform about EFL students' perceived reading strategies and EFL teachers' perceived alternative to L2 reading without inclusive guidelines. Therefore, to help develop a promising L2 reading model which possibly lead to large-scale L2 reading development, the researcher of this academic study encourages himself to suggest a suitable one based on relevant theories and research results.

Anderson (1999) and (2003), a well-known theorist, devoted his time to develop L2 reading framework for EFL contexts. He integrated his beliefs, colleagues' voices, and theories into ACTIVE teaching strategies: activating background knowledge, cultivating vocabulary, teaching for comprehension, increasing reading rate, verifying reading strategies, and evaluating progress. This framework is designed for including all main dimensions of metacognition which is important for L2 reading. Adaptation of the framework should be done under EFL teachers' consideration.

1. Active prior knowledge:

EFL teachers may ask questions or give EFL students warm-up activity to let them know about overall topic or vocabulary.

2. Cultivate Vocabulary:

EFL students may be asked to do activity to recall, relate, or increase vocabulary.

3. Teach for comprehension:

EFL teachers may guide reading strategies and let their students to write, read, or speak out.

4. Increase reading rate:

EFL teachers may prepare different lengths of passage and reading criteria to practice and record students' reading rate.

5. Verify reading strategies:

EFL students may be asked to reflect and to emphasize on their reading strategies used.

6. Evaluate progress:

EFL students may be asked to make a journal of their reading process during the course.

Later, his framework was cited by a Thai researcher. Ruangroj (2012) conducted experimental research on L2 reading with student participants in a school. Also, the self-report questionnaire SORS (Survey of Reading Strategies) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) was used. In designing the lesson plan, she divided content of teaching into five topics. Each topic for each week was allocated to two periods. About fifty-five minutes was devoted for activating background knowledge, cultivating vocabulary, and teaching for comprehension. Then appropriately last thirty-five minutes was spent on increasing reading rate, verifying reading strategies, and evaluating progress. Such processes were repeated for all five topics.

To give an overview of SORS, (see Introduction section) a self-report survey was developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002). Mokhtari has been developing for the number versions of the self-report survey used for both L1 and L2 reading abilities. As reported, his well-known version of the survey (2002) "Survey of Reading

Strategies” (SORS) was validated as the research instruments for L2 reading. The emphasis is on studying close nature of L2 reading processes (also known as metacognition –what L2 readers think and do while reading different kinds and levels of reading texts): global reading (GLOB), problem solving (PROB), and support strategies (SUP) (see Suggesting Second-Language Reading Model for Classroom Adaptation for more information about the SORS).

GLOB is associated with techniques which EFL students monitor or manage their reading, such as thinking about purposes of reading, text organization.

PROB is related to how EFL students overcome their reading difficulty or complexity. For instance, guessing meaning of unknown words, rereading texts.

SUP is linked with how EFL students support their reading to make them understand more about reading texts, such as using taking notes, underlining textual information, think about L1 to L2.

As discussed, the SORS is one of the prominent self-report surveys which can yield descriptive information. With its conceptualization, it is particularly designed for L2 (English) reading for EFL context. Its design is based on L2 reading metacognition. For example, EFL students as L2 readers are guided to be aware of reading objectives. While reading, they are guided to employ reading strategies which can compensate language deficiencies at that moment. They are provided with guideline checking information from reading.

Taken together, the suggesting L2 reading model is illustrated below.

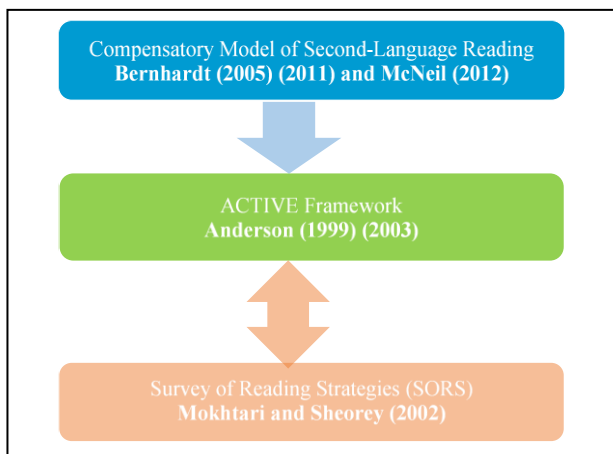


Figure 3: Suggesting second-language reading model for classroom adaptation.

As can be seen in Figure 3, in lesson plan, EFL teachers can adapt the idea of the compensatory model of second-language reading as a main concept to guide or control L2 reading instruction. It can help design in-class exercise, activity, and task hand in hand with ACTIVE Framework and metacognitive reading based on the SORS. Lastly, EFL teachers can ask their EFL students to report the extent to which they gain from intervention through the SORS again.

There is an underlining relationship with the compensatory reading model and the SORS in that L2 learners, who have unpredictable processes of reading, such as top-down and bottom-down, are guided and encouraged to be able to pick up target language sources while reading in any levels of reading texts. So, they need discrete guideline which emphasized on how to compensate for language difficulties or complexities, like retrieving from L1 background knowledge.

To ascertain the validity of the self-report survey by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002), Anderson (2003), who developed the reading framework, also chose to use this survey to elicit L2 learners the metacognitive reading strategies. Also, Mokhtari, Dimitrov, and Reichard (2018) revisited the SORS and confirmed that "... SORS are valid measures for assessing students' metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies" (p. 239).

Next section will be finished with a conclusion of the main point of the academic article.

Conclusion

The academic article aims to address the inherent L2 (English) reading difficulties found in Thai universities as an EFL context. To develop a better L2 reading instruction for this local context, this academic article suggests the second-language reading model which is guided by theories, and it is believed to fulfill the gaps. The suggesting L2 reading model is briefly summarized below.

EFL teachers can:

- 1) adapt the concepts of the compensatory model of L2 reading to guide their reading instruction,
- 2) plan instructional exercise, activity, and task based on ACTIVE Framework and the SORS which help facilitate EFL students to get target input more easily and comprehensibly,
- 3) evaluate or ask their students to report reading strategies used while reading through the SORS.

All of the processes can be repeated again based on EFL teachers' consideration.

The present researcher of the academic article suggests conducting a pilot study by using the suggesting reading model to ascertain the suitability of the model or the extent to which the model is suitable for local EFL context. Later, conducting a pilot study on effectiveness of the model should be done to see the sequential development of EFL students' reading ability.

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Appendix 1: “Survey of Reading Strategies” (SORS) developed by Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002)

Category	Statement	Never			Always
GLOB	1. I have a purpose in mind when I read.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	2. I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	3. I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	4. I take an overall view of the text to see what it is about before reading it.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	5. When text becomes difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	6. I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	1	2	3	4 5
PROB	7. I read slowly and carefully to make sure I understand what I am reading.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	8. I review the text first by noting its characteristics like length and organization.	1	2	3	4 5
PROB	9. I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	10. I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	1	2	3	4 5
PROB	11. I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	12. When reading, I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	13. I use reference materials (e.g., a dictionary) to help me understand what I read.	1	2	3	4 5
PROB	14. When text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	15. I use tables, figures, and pictures in text to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4 5
PROB	16. I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	17. I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	18. I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	1	2	3	4 5
PROB	19. I try to picture or visualize information to help remember what I read.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	20. I use typographical features like bold face and italics to identify key information.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	21. I critically analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	22. I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	23. I check my understanding when I come across new information.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	24. I try to guess what the content of the text is about when I read.	1	2	3	4 5
PROB	25. When text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	26. I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the text.	1	2	3	4 5
GLOB	27. I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	1	2	3	4 5
PROB	28. When I read, I guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	29. When reading, I translate from English into my native language.	1	2	3	4 5
SUP	30. When reading, I think about information in both English and my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4 5

Global Reading (GLOB), Problem Solving (PROB), and Support Strategies (SUP)

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