

ผลการใช้แนวการสอนอ่านแบบเน้นภาระงานเพื่อส่งเสริมความสามารถในการอ่าน  
ภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนระดับประกาศนียบัตรวิชาชีพ  
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The Effects of Using Task-Based Reading Instructions to Enhance  
English Reading Comprehension Abilities of Vocational Certificate  
Students at Phetchabun Technical College

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ 1) เพื่อเปรียบเทียบการส่งเสริมทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนระดับประกาศนียบัตรวิชาชีพ ก่อนเรียนและหลังเรียนโดยใช้แนวการสอนอ่านแบบเน้นภาระงาน 2) เพื่อศึกษาความพึงพอใจของผู้เรียนที่มีต่อแนวการสอนอ่านแบบเน้นภาระงานในการส่งเสริมทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจ กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ คือ นักเรียนระดับประกาศนียบัตรวิชาชีพ สาขาคอมพิวเตอร์ธุรกิจ ชั้นปี 2 จำนวน 20 คน วิทยาลัยเทคนิคเพชรบูรณ์ ที่เรียนรายวิชาการอ่านสื่อสิ่งพิมพ์ ภาษาอังกฤษ (20000-1203) ในภาคเรียนที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2564 ซึ่งได้มาจากการสุ่มอย่างง่ายด้วยวิธีการจับสลากโดยใช้ห้องเรียนเป็นหน่วยสุ่ม เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ได้แก่ 1) แผนการจัดการเรียนรู้โดยใช้แนวการสอนอ่านแบบเน้นภาระงาน 2) แบบทดสอบการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจ 3) แบบประเมินความพึงพอใจที่มีต่อแนวการสอนอ่านแบบเน้นภาระงาน สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล คือ ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และค่าสถิติทดสอบ t แบบไม่เป็นอิสระต่อกัน

คำสำคัญ : แนวการสอนอ่านแบบเน้นภาระงาน, ทักษะการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเพื่อความเข้าใจ

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## ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to: 1) compare English reading comprehension abilities before and after using task-based reading instructions and 2) to survey the students' satisfaction towards the task-based reading instructions. The sample, selected by a simple random sampling technique, comprised 20 second-year vocational certificate students majoring in business computer at Phetchabun technical college, studied reading authentic materials in English (20000-1203) during the second semester of academic year 2021. The instruments used for this research consisted of: 1) lesson plans by using reading task-based instructions 2) English reading comprehension abilities test and 3) a satisfaction survey towards the task-based reading instructions. The data were analyzed by mean, standard deviation and t-test dependent. Mean and standard deviation of items were used to evaluate the students' satisfaction towards the task-based reading instructions. The paired-sample t-test was used to analyze the students' English reading comprehension abilities.

**Keywords :** Task-based reading instructions, English reading comprehension abilities

## Introduction

Since English has become an international language and it is also the second language used in many countries, we can realize the importance of communication in this language. When we know English, we will be able to communicate with the people of most countries in this world without any confusion in expressing our feelings, thinking, and ideas. It is also recognized to be the most important foreign language for Thai learners, especially vocational students. Apart from learning English as a school curriculum, Phetchabun Technical College pays more attention to preparing students for employment, further studies, and competitiveness in workplaces of the ASEAN by defining courses taught in English for students in various functions such as real-life English, reading authentic materials in English, English for the workplace, English for industrial trades, English for commerce, English for sales, English for commerce, English for project work, etc. In addition, the administrator of the College also realizes the importance of improving students' English language readiness by developing a plan to promote the knowledge of the English language for students and provide supplementary teaching to enhance the quality and preparation in English language skills.

Among the four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing) reading is

likely to be the most attainable skill for EFL students (Dubin, 1982). It is regarded as the most vital and necessary for students in both classroom contexts and extracurricular environments where students read outside the classroom (Carrell, 1989 ; Grabe and Stoller, 2002). Similarly, Dokchandra (2010), It is also claimed as the most powerful weapon to gain knowledge because people need to be able to understand both textual and non-textual around the world. Moreover, understanding words' meaning, analyzing the authors' points of view and aiming for writing, and gaining knowledge of new words are all very important reading skills that support reading comprehension (Ruiz, 2015).

As part of basic skills, reading is important in learning a language, which is difficult for Thai students, particularly vocational students. Due to the Thai vocational curriculum, the use of authentic materials in reading English is provided for the certificate level as a basic reading course. Students are being taught to read a variety of authentic texts that provide them with real-world situations. There are some significant language barriers to reading authentic materials since the terminology, the complexity of the language, and the performance conditions in the texts are challenging for students.

According to the reports of the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS, 2019), the 2019 V-Net test taken by vocational students in Phetchabun technical college has the average score of English of 35.34% out of 100%. This result is corresponding to various studies conducted by Takrudkaew (2021) which revealed that the PIER+4 Model was at a high level of appropriateness: course contents, instructors, learning activities, measuring, and environment. One of the main factors found is learning activities used in the classroom.

From the background and significance mentioned above, it is important to have an appropriate learning activities for students. Nowadays, many different teaching approaches are presented for language teachers to use in their recent classrooms. The trend of teaching language focuses on improving communicative competence of students (Richard, 2006). Task-based learning is an effective approach that promotes learning English. In the activities that use task-based learning were found that there are many positive effects on language learning because there is a systematic process, including support students to work in group. Nunan (2004) stated that task-based learning is an activity that focuses on understanding the language used in communication. It is also hands-on learning that allows learners to practice their language skills, gain confidence in using language to express their opinions, achieve learning goals that require language communication, and encourage learners to experience interactions

in the use of language. Similarly, Willis (1996) who suggested that task-based learning can promote students facing in a real situation which is focusing on communicative competence.

Thus, task-based learning is the most effective teaching approach for enhancing reading comprehension abilities because in the procedures of teaching activity, students are provided to do the activities where the target language used to achieve an outcome (Willis, 1996). Moreover, task-based learning emphasizes on meaning before form causes students to have more effective awareness because students make progress in learning and enhances critical thinking in solving by the natural communication. Furthermore, it offers students a way to scaffold from classroom reading and related tasks to texts that they will encounter and skills what they need to use outside of the classroom.

### Research objectives

1. To compare the students' reading comprehension abilities before and after learning by using task-based reading instructions.
2. To survey students' satisfaction towards using task-based reading instructions.

### The Sample

This study employed the sample of 20 second-year vocational certificate students, majoring in business computer at Phetchabun technical college and taking the course reading authentic materials In English (20000-1203) in the second semester of the academic year 2021. They were selected by simple random sampling. The samples were placed in two hours of class per week. The class total was given for five weeks. The reading instruction provided for the students was based on the course description of reading authentic materials, included in the current vocational Education curriculum for the English subjects at the certificate level.

#### 1. The variables in this study were as follow:

1. **Independent variable** was task-based reading instructions.
2. **Dependent variable** were students' reading comprehension abilities and students' satisfaction towards using task-based reading instructions.

#### 3. Research instruments

There will be a number of research instruments. First of all, the pre-test will be investigated to measure students' reading comprehension abilities. Second, task-based reading instructions lesson plans based on Willis's principle will be prepared for every lesson. The next step is a post-test which will be the same test as the pre-test. Finally, a students'

satisfaction questionnaire that will be given at the end of the course. The questionnaire will include both scaling questions and open-ended questions to let students express their opinions toward task-based reading instructions.

### **3.1 Pre-test and Post-test**

Reading test is a process of evaluating reading comprehension abilities. It consists of two parts:

1. The multiple choices were 20 items.
2. The true or false answers were 10 items.

The reading test is based on the topics in the lesson plans: job advertisements, traveling trips, and graphs and charts. Both pre-test and post-test take one hour, and the test results will be compared to see whether task-based reading instructions would enhance reading comprehension abilities.

### **3.2 Lesson plans**

In this study, the lesson plans were designed to three units: job advertisements, traveling trips, and signs and notices. Each reading lesson was created based on the theoretical framework of task-based learning adopted from the TBL framework (Willis, 1996). The lesson plans were conducted in a sequence of three phases: pre-task, task-cycle, and language focus.

1. The pre-task phase prepared and introduced students the topic, the tasks, the words and phrases that promote the acquisition.
2. The task-cycle phase provided students with a holistic experience of language in use. This phase included the task stage, the planning stage, and the reporting stage which students were asked to work in pairs or small groups to achieve task outcome.
3. The language phase provided students with an opportunity to analyze the language found in the passages. In this phase, it included two components: analysis and practice.

### **3.3 Questionnaire**

The survey questionnaire was developed based on 5 likert-type rating scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. To analyze the students' satisfaction towards task-based reading instructions, the questionnaire was included 2 parts as follows:

In part 1, it was scaling 15 questions in the following aspects:

1. Satisfaction towards the reading contents.
2. Satisfaction towards task-based reading activities.

3. Satisfaction towards task-based reading instructions on reading comprehension. In Part 2, there were open-ended questions consisting of 3 questions as follows:

1. What are the advantages of using task-based reading instructions to enhance reading comprehension?
2. What are the disadvantages of using task-based reading instructions to enhance reading comprehension?
3. Are there any opinions and suggestions about implementing task-based reading instructions?

The evaluation of the quality of the research instruments is to indicate how well the method, the technique and the test are. Both validity and reliability were taken into consideration. In the process, there were 3 experts in English teaching to make judgement in order to check how well the research instruments were correspond to the concepts of teaching reading. Then all study instruments were tried out with the pilot study who were 23 second-year vocational certificate students majoring in business computer. The students in a group of pilot study had the same characteristics in terms of educational background knowledge. The problems found in the pilot study were considered in revising for the sample.

#### **4. Data collection and data analysis**

##### **4.1 Data collection**

This study employed the sample of 20 second-year vocational certificate students, majoring in business computer at Phetchabun technical college and taking the course reading authentic materials in the second semester of the academic year 2021. It was conducted over a period of five weeks. In the first week, the reading comprehension pre-test was investigated to measure the students' reading comprehension abilities before getting the treatment. It took one hour. The three task-based reading instructions plans were implemented from the second week to the fourth week. Each lesson plan was used two period and each period lasted 60 minutes. The post-test was administered in the fifth week and took one hour. It took eight hours to complete this study.

##### **4.2 Data analysis**

The data were analyzed to fulfill two objectives of this study. The first objective was to compare the students' reading comprehension abilities before and after learning by using task-based reading instructions. The t-test will be used to determine if there is a statistically

significant difference between the means of the pre-test and the post-test. The second objective was to survey students' satisfaction towards using task-based reading instructions. The means ( $\bar{X}$ ), and the standard deviation (S.D.) will be utilized. Then the level will be interpreted according to Best's criteria.

## 5. Research findings

The findings are summarized as follows:

1. The students' English reading comprehension abilities after studying using the task-based reading instructions was significantly higher than before studying at the .05 level.

**Table 1: A Comparison of the paired t-test on pre-test and post-test (N=20)**

English reading comprehension abilities	Total score	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{D}$	S.D. (D)	t	df	p-value
Pre-test	30	7.70	2.77	7.55	1.85	-	19	.000
						18.26*		
Post-test	30	15.25	2.81					

\*Significance at level .05

According to table 1, it was found that students' reading comprehension abilities were higher after learning by using task-based reading instructions. The post-test mean score was 15.25 while the pre-test was 7.70. The mean difference was 7.55, and the t-test was -18.26 ( $p < .000$ ).

It shows that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test mean score of English reading comprehension abilities test at the significant level of .05.

2. The students' satisfaction towards the task-based reading instructions was at the high level. The ranking order (from high to low) of each aspect of satisfaction was as follows: 1) task-based reading activities ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.30, S.D. = 0.73), 2) task-based reading instructions on reading comprehension ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.10, S.D. = 0.76), and 3) reading contents ( $\bar{x}$  = 4.08, S.D. = 0.80) as shown in table 2.

Statements	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of satisfaction	Ranking
<b>Satisfaction towards reading contents.</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>②</b>
1. The terminology used in the lessons are fascinating.	3.75	0.83	high	
2. The contents are not difficult to understand.	4.15	0.79	high	7
3. The contents used in the steps of doing tasks challenge me to complete the tasks.	4.25	0.83	high	5
4. The contents used in the lessons promote my reading comprehension.	4.05	0.86	high	8
5. The topics arouse my needs and my interests.	4.20	0.68	high	6
<b>Satisfaction towards task-based reading activities</b>	<b>4.30</b>	<b>0.73</b>	<b>high</b>	<b>①</b>
1. Task-based reading activities encourage me to read.	4.10	0.07	High	
2. Task-based reading activities are enjoyable.	4.25	0.77	High	5
3. Task-based reading activities promote the collaboration when doing the task in pairs or groups.	4.30	0.78	High	4
4. Task-based reading activities encourage me to learn more about current situations.	4.35	0.73	High	3
5. Task-based reading activities help me perform the tasks comfortably.	4.50	0.67	Very high	2
<b>Satisfaction towards task-based reading instructions on reading comprehension.</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>③</b>
1. Task-based reading instructions support me to understand the contents.	4.05	0.80	High	8
2. Task-based reading instructions enhance my reading comprehension abilities.	4.20	0.81	High	6



Statements	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level of satisfaction	Ranking
3. Task-based reading instructions help me grasp more vocabulary in the passage.	3.90	0.77	High	9
4.Task-based reading instructions foster my reading strategies.	4.55	0.59	Very High	1
5.Task-based reading instructions help me arrive at the answer easily.	3.80	0.81	High	10
<b>Overall average</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>High</b>	

## 6. Conclusion, discussion, and recommendation

### 6.1 Conclusion

It can be concluded that the study on the effects of using task-based reading instructions to enhance English reading comprehension abilities had a positive effect as follows:

1. The students' English reading comprehension abilities after studying using the task-based reading instructions was significantly higher than before studying at the .05 level.
2. The students' satisfaction towards the task-based reading instructions was at the high level.

### 6.2 Discussion

The study of the effects of using task-based reading instructions to enhance English reading comprehension abilities will be discussed and supported with the related literature based on the two objectives of the study as follows:

1. As mentioned in the research finding 1, the English reading comprehension abilities of second-year vocational certificate students after the use of task-based reading instructions were higher than those before the treatment with the statistically significant difference of .05 level. This can be demonstrated as follows:

1.1 In the pre-task phase, students enjoy doing the activities because they were given the opportunity to enable the words, phrases, and sentences by brainstorming the ideas with their friends. This is consistent with the idea of Nunan (2004) who indicated that task-based learning allows students to use the language in pairs or groups. In addition, Richard

(1990) stated that brainstorming was effective in achieving student interaction in developing cognitive skills for the purpose of generating ideas. He also found that students trained in brainstorming are more successful at organizing ideas. This is accordance with the study of Chalak (2015) who conducted the effect of task-based instruction on reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. The findings revealed that using interactive tasks help improve reading comprehension abilities.

1.2 In the task-cycle phase, students feel confident when they do the tasks in pairs and groups in the planning phase, and they also report their tasks confidently. Moreover, students exchange ideas with the teacher because the error correction of language would not occur in the class. This is consistent with the idea of Willis (1996) who states that students feel the need for various interaction patterns with a focus on themselves rather than on the teachers. Van den Branden (2006) agrees with the fact that task-based lessons are student-centered, which means students take the main part in learning process. Moreover, Skehan and Foster (1997) claim that interlanguage development will come about, not through control and practice, but through the meaningful use of language. This can be realized that students will be able to comprehend the language when they are not controlled. This is relevant to the study of Nahavandi and Mukundan (2013) who investigated the use of task-based cycle in reading comprehension classes for engineering EFL learners. The findings revealed that applying the elements of task-based cycle positively affected learners' reading comprehension.

1.3 In the language focus phase, students have the opportunity to observe the language used in the task-cycle phase by themselves so that they do the task freely in terms of "text investigators". This is consistent with the idea of Willis (1996) who claims that the stage of language focus provides students opportunities to analyze and practice specific linguistic features arising from the task. This is relevant to the study of Chung and Révész (2021) who examine the extent to which textual enhancement implemented in the post-task stage of task-based reading lessons can facilitate development in L2 grammatical knowledge by child language learners. The results revealed that students who were exposed to textual enhancement demonstrated significantly higher than before studying. Thus, by this time of language focus stage, students might have had enough attentional resources left to pay attention to the enhances grammar or structure found in the task-cycle stage to promote reading skills.

As mentioned in the research finding 2, the students' satisfaction towards the task-based reading instructions was at the high level. This can be demonstrated as follows:

The findings of students' satisfaction on task-based reading instructions showed that task-based reading instructions enhance students' reading comprehension abilities. The ranking order (from high to low) of each aspect of satisfaction were task-based reading activities, task-based reading instructions on reading comprehension, and reading contents. The reasons to explain these points might be the fact that using task-based reading instructions are the activities that provide students do the activities in pairs and groups which promote students collaboration when they are doing the tasks. This is relevant to the study of Gokhale (1995) which mentioned working in a group as collaborative can support students when doing the task, because they help each other to comprehend the tasks. Additionally, students feels relax in the moment to develop the different tasks and it is easier to carry out the solving-problem activities.

### **6.3 Recommendation**

According to this study, there are some recommendations for practice and for further study as follows:

#### **Recommendation for practice**

1. As task-based reading activities involve steps and processes that are different from what students are used to learning, so teachers should time the activities accordingly. Accurately a teacher describes the steps and processes in the beginning stages and provides clear and correct examples of how to perform the tasks to achieve the objectives.

2. In organizing the activities, the teacher encourages students to take an interest in the material before the reading activity to prepare them for the activity. The activities and the difficulty of the language used should be appropriate to the learning differences of the learners and stimulates the background knowledge of the students.

#### **Recommendations for further study**

1. It could be investigated with a control group and experimental group.
2. It could be conducted task-based learning on other skills of English such as listening, speaking, and writing.

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