AN ANALYSIS OF THAI STUDENTS' EFL READING PERFORMANCE AND ABILITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the EFL reading performance of four groups of Thai secondary and tertiary students, the increase in their EFL reading ability and their developmental scale of EFL reading ability as compared to the scale developed by IEA Reading Literacy Study. Both skill-based and text type-based approaches were used for assessing reading performance. The mother-tongue Grade 9 English test developed by the IEA Reading Literacy Study was used. The findings revealed that these Thai students' overall EFL reading achievement was unsatisfactory in spite of the statistically significant growth of the Grade 12 and the tertiary high achievers EFL reading ability. All groups performed more poorly on making inferences, narrative and the expository task domains, and the highest on document text reading and following directions. Their text type-oriented reading ability was considered to lag at least one scale behind the international developmental scale of reading literacy. Further research on EFL reading instruction in Thailand is definitely required so as to boost Thai students' EFL reading ability.

Keywords : English, reading ability, Thai student.

INTRODUCTION

An ability to communicate in English has become a basic qualification for a competent labor force in the era of globalized world competition. English reading competency is not an exception but is required in all kinds of careers and professions since it is a major component of communicative skill in English. Thus, it is important for Thai EFL instructors to obtain information on how well young Thai people--who are the future labour force of the country--perform in EFL reading so that we know how well we have prepared our people to build up the nation's potential and ability to compete with others.

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This classroom-based study, therefore, aimed to investigate : a) how well Thai students at different educational levels can read in English ; b) how well their reading ability has developed when compared with the reading ability of the students of other educational systems around the world ; and c) whether the students of each educational level possess statistically significant growth in their EFL reading ability after the threshold line of EFL reading literacy.

Evolutionary views of reading comprehension and reading skill acquisition

Based on the development of reading theories ranging from a behaviorist orientation to a humanistic view, reading comprehension is usually approached with three broad views : the behaviorist/ traditional view, the cognitive-oriented view, and the humanistic view. Each view has its own strengths and weaknesses in prescribing what a reader's performance in reading comprehension should be. However, this study has been mainly organized under the behaviorist and the cognitive-oriented views of reading.

Behaviorist/traditional view

Reading comprehension, according to the behaviorist view, is a skill composed of sets of subskills such as sequencing the events in a story, being able to paraphrase, knowing the word meaning, predicting outcomes of a story, making inferences, finding the main idea, summarizing, applying the information given etc. (Lundberg and Linnakyla, 1993:3). Davis (1944, 1972) has noted that the process of reading comprehension is composed of nine basic subskills : knowledge of word meanings; ability to select meaning for a word or phrase in a particular contextual setting; ability to follow the organization of the text; ability to identify the main idea; ability to answer specific questions and general questions;

ability to draw inferences from the text; ability to determine the writer's purpose, intent, point of view, tone and mood of the text. His task-analytic conception of reading clearly suggests that the mastery of these subskills will lead to high achievement in reading comprehension. Nowadays many reading specialists still advocate this behaviorist view whereas some have negatively criticized it. Baumann (1984) has conducted a study with the skill-oriented approach to teaching reading comprehension. The findings suggested that the students' reading achievement was brought about by the teaching of the reading subskills mentioned above. However, Stahl (1992) has claimed that young children are able to read beyond the information given and their reading performance has indicated that they already possessed the ability to use paraphrasing and inferential strategies. Generally, it can be concluded that the skill-based approach is still widely adopted to account for the reading comprehension process.

The EFL reading performance studies in Thailand have adopted a subskill-based approach for more than two decades. The study of Thammamongkol (1970) has yielded the result that Thai students performed better on reading for main ideas and had difficulties in reading for details, implications, inferences, conclusions, and in comprehending organizational structures of a story, or the tone and intent of the writer, and cause-effect relationships. Angwatanakul (1992 : 158 - 161) collected the findings of Thai students' EFL reading achievement studies conducted during 1980 - 1987. The collection clearly indicated that the grade 9 - 12 students had problems in critical reading, making inferences, reading for a writer's opinions and purposes, and reading for the tone and mood of a story. Similarly, the freshmen and the sophomores of the university had unsatisfactory EFL reading performance on interpretation, making inferences and critical reading. Based on the findings

of these studies, it can be concluded that a skill-based view of EFL reading performance has been constantly accepted among reading specialists of both mother-tongue and foreign languages.

Cognitive-oriented view

The cognitive-oriented view of reading claims that a reader requires both interactive and constructive processes while reading in order to comprehend a text. Reading comprehension under this conception thus has been approached using two models : the schema-based model and the text-based model.

The schema-based view focuses on the conception that reading comprehension is the knowledge and understanding resulting from a reader's complex cognitive process that integrates the reader's existing knowledge with new knowledge from the text through the flexible use of strategies to foster, regulate, and maintain comprehension. Advocating this view of reading, Smith (1985) defines reading as a constructive process for getting meanings out of a text, which requires a reader to use his own theories of the world, complex knowledge and belief systems in his/her mental structures. Trabasso (1981) asserts that what is required to make inferences during reading are background knowledge and knowledge of text structure. This view of reading is also affirmed in Livdahl (1993) who states that while reading, readers transact with a text through the use of their own theories of the world and learning skills. In conclusion, this schema-based view obviously emphasizes a reader's prior knowledge and his/her use of flexible mental strategies as the key components of reading ability.

In the 1980's, reading theorists advocated a naturalistic, text-based approach to reading comprehension. Types of text and text organizational structures are considered to constrain reading comprehension. Pearson and Camperell (1981)

have reviewed the research findings of reading and concluded that schemata for text structure facilitate reading comprehension. Lundberg and Linnkyla (1993) have noted the differences between narrative comprehension and expository comprehension. RELC (the Regional Language Centre, SEAMO, Singapore) has utilized the text-based view to construct a scheme to classify English reading proficiency. The study of mother-tongue reading literacy conducted by the International Organization of the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in 1992 also adopted the text-based view of reading and has constructed a developmental reading scale which consists of reading performance on narrative texts, expository texts and document texts. These mentioned sources obviously reflect that the text-based approach to reading comprehension performance is another important aspect of reading studies. Thus, the Thai students' text type-based reading performance has been analyzed in the study.

METHODS
Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 277 subjects divided into four groups that were purposely selected from three educational levels : 73 from grade 9, 72 from grade 12, 40 from tertiary education low achievers, and 92 from tertiary education high achievers. The grade 9 and grade 12 groups were students of Suansunandha Secondary Demonstration school enrolled during the second semester of the academic year 1993. The tertiary education low achievers and the high achievers were classified by using the Thai university entrance examination. The low achievers were the freshman and sophomore English majors of Rajabhat Institute Suansunandha and Rajabhat Institute Suandusit. The high achievers were the freshman and sophomores of Mass Communications and Economics (English Program) majors at Thamasart University.

Reading test

The reading test constructed by the inter-national committee of the project "IEA Reading Literacy Study", which was conducted by 31 countries during 1989 - 1992, was used. The test aimed to measure reading ability in the mother toungue of 14 year old students. The version of the test employed for this study was the English one used by countries whose people were English native speakers e.g the United States, New Zealand, Canada, Australia etc. The test consisted of 90 multiple choice items based on three types of reading material: expository prose (26 items), narrative prose (30 items), and documents (34 items). Each question item had four alternative answers for the students to choose.

a) Domains of reading materials

The types of reading materials to be included in the reading test, and as defined byElley (1992 : 4) were as follows:

a.1) Narrative prose: Continuous texts in which the writer's aim is to tell a story--whether fact or fiction. They normally follow a linear time sequence and are usually intended to entertain or involve the reader emotionally. The selected extracts ranged from short stories of approximately 450 words to lengthy stories of 1,200 words.

a.2) Expository prose: Continuous texts designed to describe, explain, or otherwise convey factual information or opinion to the reader. The tests contained short extracts of approximately 220 words and lengthy passages of about 830 words.

a.3) Documents: Structured information displays presented in the form of charts, tables, maps, graphs, lists or sets of instructions. These materials were organized in such a way that students had to search, locate and process selected facts rather than read every word of continuous text. In some cases, students were required to follow detailed instructions in responding to such documents. The documents ranged from 16 to 154 items and included a form, three simple lists, two tables, a bar graph, and a complex bus schedule.

b) Reading subskills

The test items were categorized into six reading subskills: following directions (D), locating information (L), verbatim (V), main theme (M), paraphrase (P), making inferences (I).

Following direction items were those requiring a student to follow the directions contained in a structured document, e.g., fill in an application form, take pills according to the doctor's prescription or the label instructions.

Locating information items required a student to search and find some specified infor-mation contained in a structured document. This category was divided into 3 subcategories: a) the information was literally there; b) the information was there but the reader must in some way process it; and c) the reader must generate new information and then act based on the new information.

Verbatim items were said to require a student merely to match the words of the item with those of the text, which were explicitly stated.

Paraphrase items were those requiring a student to choose or compose an answer that was explicitly stated in the text but expressed in words different from that of the item.

Main theme items were those requiring a student to identify the underlying message of the text or some specified part of it, where the main theme was explicitly stated in the text. There was considerable complexity in processing these two types of main idea.

Inference items consisted of two categories of specifications. The first category included items requiring no additional information since all the needed information appeared in the passage. The second group of items required the student to draw a generalization from the text using information that was not explicitly stated in the text.

Based on the results of the IEA Reading Literacy Study, these test items were grouped by domain to establish five developmental scales of reading ability: emergent, elementary, intermediate, competent, and advanced. The scale points in each domain and the description of reading performance of each developmental scale and domain were set up by the international committee of the project.

The level of difficulty of all test items ranges from .20 to .80 (based on the international items analysis results). KR-20 reliability of the test is .85. The p-value of all test items grouped by reading subskills ranges from 44 to 98 for fourteen year old American students, from 7 to 79 for grade 9 Thai students, from 10 to 92 for grade 12 students, from 5 to 100 for tertiary low achievers, and from 2 to 99 for tertiary high achievers.

Collection of the data

The reading test was given in January, 1994. All sampled students were expected to take all items of the test. The instrument (both format and rubric) resembled a multiple choice reading test that has been customarily administered at the secondary and tertiary education levels in Thailand. Consistent with this genre of objective, the reading passages varied in length, and the questions tapped a variety of mental processes or reading subskills.

Each group of subjects was scheduled to take the reading test during their class periods. The students were required to put a (X) mark on the letters (a b c d) in front of the answer they chose, and were required to complete the test within 120 minutes.

Data analysis

a) Test scoring

Scoring the test items was done according to answer keys and guidelines provided by the IEA International Coordinating Center.

The multiple choice answers were scored as either right or wrong. The items with either no chosen answers or not reached were scored wrong. Right answers were coded "1" and wrong "0".

All correct answers were totaled for each student in each task domain and each reading subskill.

b) Statistics used for the data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to compute percentage, mean, standard deviation in order to obtain the results on the students' reading performance.

t-test was used to obtain the results on comparing the students' reading performance among groups so as to get the picture of the overall growth of the students' EFL reading ability.

RESULTS

Reading Achievement

The overall achievement

The overall reading achievement is presented in Table 1.The Grade 9 students got 34.48% and the group had the widest range of students' EFL reading ability. On average, they could understand only 34.48% of the Grade 9 English text. The Grade 12 students got 45.67% and their EFL reading abilities seemed to be more homogeneous. The group was able to grasp only 45.67% of information presented in the texts. Being similar to the Grade 12 students, the tertiary low achievers were able to answer only 45.42% of the questions about the texts and their reading abilities were rather alike. Lastly, the tertiary high achievers demonstrated the highest EFL reading achievement of 61.08% with a quite narrow range of EFL reading ability. However, based on these students' EFL reading performances, it can be considered that these secondary and tertiary students did not possess an adequate level of reading skill acquisition since their average achievement expressed in percentage was obviously low.

Table 1.   The overall reading achievement

Subject groups	Reading achievement		
	X (scores)	SD	Percentage
Grade 9	31.38	12.96	34.48
Grade 12	41.56	8.76	45.67
Tertiary low achievers	41.33	9.19	45.42
Tertiary high achievers	55.58	9.69	61.08

The skill-based achievement

The skill-based reading performance reported by percentage is presented in Table 2. The scores of grade 9 ranged from 30.00% to 50.80%. Their performances on verbatim reading, reading for main ideas, paraphrasing, and making inferences were about 30%, locating information 41.38%, and following directions 50.80%. The grade 12 students's performance scores ranged from 39.40% to 66.50%. They performed better on locating information (54.79%) and following directions (66.50%). Their reading performances on verbatim reading, reading for main ideas paraphrasing, and making inferences were centered around 40%. The performances of tertiary low achievers seemed to vary greatly among these subskills. They got the highest score on following directions (75%) and the lowest one on making inferences (32%).

They performed slightly better on locating information (49.75%) and got about 40% on the rest. The tertiary high achievers performed best on locating information (71.75%) and following directions (76.20%) and got the lowest score on making inferences (48.75%). Their reading ability on verbatim reading, reading for main ideas, and paraphrasing was about 55%.

The patterns of the reading performance of the four groups of the subjects clearly revealed that all of them had the highest reading ability on following directions and the second best on locating information. Each group had more difficulties on verbatim reading, reading for main ideas, paraphrasing, and making inferences. In addition, making inferences proved to be the most problematic reading skill to achieve.

Table 2.   Results of he students' skill-based reading performance.

Subject group	Percentage of performance on six subskills					
	V	L	D	M	P	I
Grade 9	30.00%	41.38%	50.80%	32.80%	30.18%	31.10%
Grade 12	41.81%	54.79%	66.50%	39.40%	40.68%	38.70%
Tertiary low achievers	43.63%	49.75%	75.00%	41.00%	40.93%	32.00%
Tertiary high achievers	57.63%	71.75%	76.20%	54.10%	57.62%	48.75%

Table 3.   Results of the students, text type-based reading performance.

Subject groups	Percentage on performance on three text - types		
	Narrative	Expository	Document
Grade 9	31.40%	30.26%	40.52%
Grade 12	39.06%	41.00%	58.23%
Tertiary low achievers	37.67%	39.07%	57.26%
Tertiary high achievers	51.10%	57.00%	73.05%

The text type-based achievement

The text-based reading performance scores presented by percentage are displayed in Table 3. The grade 9 students got similar reading performance scores on narrative and expository task domains being approximately 30%. Their reading ability was best in the document domain (40.52%). The grade 12 group obtained the higher score on the document task (58.23%) and performed more poorly on the narrative task domain (39.06%) and the expository domain (41.00%). Surprisingly, the tertiary low achievers performed slightly more poorly than the grade 12 group in three task-domains. They got only 37.67% on narrative reading, 39.07% on the expository task, and 57.26% on the document domain. With a similar pattern of reading performance on three text-types, the tertiary high achievers performed best on the document task domain (73.05%) and achieved lower scores on narrative comprehension (51.10%) and expository (57.00%).

As for the overall patterns of these four groups, text-based reading performance strongly indicate that Thai students at each educational level have more difficulties in comprehending narrative and expository texts and fewer problems with documents. The findings seem to suggest clearly that narrative and expository reading tasks require both higher order of cognitive processes and higher proficiency in English in order to carry out the mental functions that construct comprehension.

Moreover, two such reading tasks have been proved in many studies, e.g., Trabasso (1981), Livdahl (1993) to be involved with readers' schemata--both world knowledge and text organization. On the contrary, document reading tasks--both locating information and following directions—require lower proficiency in the language itself and less complicated mental processes. A reader, while reading, does not have to process a large chunk of information which depends on various heavy short-term memory information loads to form meanings and maintain the continuous transactional process of reading. In other words, it can be concluded that narrative and expository reading comprehension seems to require more supporting factors to be achieved than document comprehension.

Growth of the Students' EFL Reading Ability

The growth of the students' EFL reading ability--both skill-based and text type-based--has been analyzed and presented in Table 4 and Table 5 respectively. Using the grade 9's performance as a threshold for the skill-based reading ability development, the grade 12 students' reading ability has significantly developed in all subskills with the confidence levels ranging from $p < .05$ to $p < .00$. Unfortunately, when using grade 12 as a starting point, the tertiary low achievers did not show any significant growth in any subskills and

even showed a significant lack of growth in making inferences (p <.05) and observable lack of growth in locating information. The only significant growth was observed in following directions (p<.05). As expected, the tertiary high achievers demonstrated significant growth in all reading subskills with the confidence levels ranging from p <.025 to p <.001. The greater rates of growth appeared in locating information, paraphrasing, verbatim reading and reading for main ideas and smaller sizes in following directions and making inferences. Unsurprisingly, the tertiary high achievers showed possession of significantly higher reading ability in all subskills,

except following directions, with the confidence levels ranging from p <.01 to p <.001. However, the development in making inferences seemed to have the smallest size, and the subskill following directions became an insignificant indicator of reading ability for the tertiary students. In addition, it should be observed that following directions had its own pattern of development. This subskill significantly varied from Grade 9 to tertiary level with the significance levels ranging from p<.05 to p<.001 but did not show significant difference between the tertiary low and the tertiary high achievers.

Table 4.   Growth of the students' skill-based reading performance and the statistical significance level of growth.

Between - group comparison	Percentage of growth and its level of significance					
	V	L	D	M	P	I
G 9 - G 12	11.81% p<.001	16.41% p<.001	15.70% p<.001	6.60% p<.05	10.50% p<.001	7.60% p<.001
G 12 - tertiary low achievers	1.82% ns	-5.04% ns	8.50% p<.05	1.60% ns	.25% ns	-6.70% p<.05
G 12 - tertiary high achievers	15.82% p<.001	16.96% p<.001	9.70% p<.025	14.70% p<.001	16.94% p<.001	10.05% p<.001
Tertiary low achievers -high achievers	14.00% p<.001	21.88% p<.001	1.20% ns	13.00% p<.01	16.64% p<.001	6.75% p<.001

The results of the student's text type-based EFL reading performance in Table 5 clearly showed that their reading ability had significantly developed (p<.001) in all task domains in accordance with their educational levels, except the tertiary low achievers who seemed to be underdeveloped in all text type-oriented performance when compared with the grade 12 students and the tertiary high achievers. Regarding the rates of growth, even though the differences were not statistically tested, the growth in the expository and the document tasks were demonstrated with bigger sizes than the growth in the narrative one. At this stage, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide explanations for such a phenomenon. Definitely, further studies are needed to investigate more deeply the development of text type-based reading comprehension.

Table 5. Growth of the students' text type-based reading performance and the statistical significance level of growth.

Between - group comparison	Percentage of growth and its level of significance		
	Narrative	Expository	Documents
G 9 - G 12	7.66% p<.001	10.74% p<.001	17.71% p<.001
G 12 - tertiary low achievers	-1.39% ns	-1.93% ns	-0.97% ns
G 12 - tertiary high achievers	12.04% p<.001	16.00% p<.001	14.82% p<.001
Tertiary low achievers -high achievers	13.43% p<.001	17.93% p<.001	15.79% p<.001

Table 6. Developmental scale showing levels of the students' text type-based reading ability based on Grade
9 mother-tongue developmental scale.

Subject groups	Task domains and levels of performance (percent and developmental scale)		
	Narrative	Expository	Documents
Grade 9	elementary (31.40%)	elementary (30.26%)	intermediate (40.52%)
Grade 12	intermediate (39.06%)	intermediate (41.00%)	advanced (58.23%)
Tertiary low achievers	intermediate (37.67%)	elementary (39.07%)	advanced (57.26%)
Tertiary high achievers	competent (51.10%)	competent (57.00%)	advanced (73.05%)

The significant growth in the Thai students' EFL reading performance has demonstrated only one aspect of the EFL reading literacy of Thai youngsters. Hence, it is necessary that their achievement must be compared with an international standard of reading performance so as to obtain a clearer picture of how well Thai students perform on EFL reading. Table 6 shows the reading ability levels and their developmental scale of the Thai students as compared with the developmental scale of reading ability of the IEA Reading Literacy Study, which was based on grade nine mother-tongue reading ability. The developmental scale consists of five levels of reading ability: emergent, elementary, intermediate, competent, and advanced.

Based on the descriptions of each developmental scale of the three task domains, the Thai students' reading ability can be detailed as follows :

a) Narrative domain

The grade 9 students, placed on an elementary scale, were able to read short to medium-length passages, and to make easy inferences required about characters, motives or message.

The grade 12 students and the tertiary low achievers, placed on an intermediate scale, were able to read medium-length stories with several characters, and to make inferences required about motives, characters or plot.

The tertiary high achievers, placed on a competent scale, were able to read long, complex stories with many characters, and to make difficult inferences required about motives, plot, messages, and likely outcomes.

b) Expository domain

The grade 9 students and the tertiary low achievers, placed on an elementary scale, were able to read longer passages on less familiar topics, and to answer questions which required the ability

to paraphrase and integrate information from different parts of text.

The grade 12 students, placed on an intermediate scale, were able to read medium-length complex passages on unfamiliar topics, and to provide answers to the questions that required the ability to paraphrase and integrate information from different parts of the text.

The tertiary high achievers, placed on a competent scale, were able to read long passages with some technical vocabulary and abstract ideas, and to answer questions that required inferences, comparisons, and applications.

c) Document domain

The grade 9 students, placed on an intermediate scale, were able to read two-way tables, one dimensional graphs or maps, and to locate three features and count and compare them.

The grade 12 students, the tertiary low achievers and the tertiary high achievers, all of whom were placed on an advanced level, were able to read detailed tables or multidimensional graphs or charts, and to locate four or more features and make difficult inferences.

DISCUSSION

This classroom-based study has shed light on the Thai students' EFL reading ability. The findings certainly make a great contribution to the EFL reading instruction in both secondary and tertiary institutions.

Firstly, the study has shown empirically that both secondary and tertiary Thai students demonstrated inadequate performance in EFL reading. No matter what approach was used for assessing measures, the results have shown that each group still had great difficulties in reading Grade 9 English texts. This information leads to question whether it is possible for Thai EFL instructors to boost Thai students' EFL reading achievement. Should they be satisfied with the fact that the Grade 9, the Grade 12, the tertiary-low achievers, and the tertiary

high achievers students could understand only approximately 35%, 45%, 45% and 61% respectively of the mother tongue Grade 9 English texts? The results clearly suggest that Thai EFL instructors must definitely make more effort to increase Thai students' EFL reading achievement. The quality of EFL reading texts and instruction must be continuously monitored and assessed in order to maximize the students' learning opportunities to develop their EFL reading skills. Further research on how to raise Thai students' reading ability is certainly required.

Secondly, concerning the students' development in EFL reading ability as being placed on the IEA developmental scale of Grade 9 mother-tongue reading ability, the results clearly reveal that the Thai students did not possess an adequate level of reading skill acquisition. Even though every group seemed to achieve a satisfactory level on the document task, their EFL reading ability in the narrative and the expository task domains obviously lagged at least one scale behind what was considered to be appropriate. The Grade 9 group should have been placed on the lowest scale of intermediate, the Grade 12 and the tertiary low achievers on the competent, and the tertiary high achievers on the advanced. In other words, these students should have demonstrated more understanding of Grade 9 English narrative and expository texts. Such results can be used to further analyze the EFL reading instructional situation in Thailand, and to reveal whether the narrative and the expository tasks are adequately taught and enhanced consistently through the EFL curriculum designed for higher secondary and tertiary education.

Thirdly, the results on the growth of the students' skill-based EFL reading ability have revealed a very crucial point about EFL reading instruction in Thailand. That is the rate of growth between two different educational levels. From Grade 9 to Grade 12, these Thai students could

achieve approximately 7 - 8% higher in reading for main ideas and making inferences, and 11 - 16% in verbatim reading, paraphrasing, locating information, and following directions. Whereas the tertiary low achievers did not demonstrate any statistically significant growth in all subskills, the tertiary high achievers showed statistically significant gain-approximately 10 - 17% in all sub-skills. Thus, it can be concluded that in general the students have gained an average of only 7 - 17% during three - years of educational levels. Are these average sizes of increments satisfactory for Thai EFL educators? If they are not, how can we maximize growth in each reading subskill so as to raise overall reading achievement?

Finally, the results of the students' text type-based performance indicate that an EFL document reading task was mastered by the students more highly than the narrative and the expository ones. This might be because the document domain does not require high proficiency in English to comprehend the texts, but just an understanding of the information display. However, the narrative and the expository tasks demand more complex mental processes in order to understand bunches of pieces of information chunked into cohesive and coherent texts. Hence, it should be reiterated that EFL reading instructors need to put more emphasis on the narrative and the expository reading tasks in EFL reading lessons since they are more difficult to master and develop.

In addition to the students' higher performance on document reading tasks, the increments of the students' reading ability in these tasks between the groups of students are larger than the other two tasks. This clearly proves that the document reading task can be more easily developed through the instruction process. EFL reading instructors, therefore, should be more attentive to the proportion of the text types assigned for the students to read. Students should be encouraged

to practice reading more difficult text types so as to boost their reading ability.

Even though the results of the study were primarily aimed to be used as the baseline information for improving the EFL reading instructional situation of Rajabhat Institute Suansunandha, they can be used to mirror the EFL reading instruction of secondary and tertiary institutes as well. Furthermore, the study has also revealed a general picture of the EFL instructional quality of Thailand. Thai students' average EFL reading ability is not yet competitive with the students of other educational systems around the world.

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