

English language teaching reading principles methodologies study skills research content based learning cognition speaking development classroom interaction linguistics techniques technology grammar psychology motivation listening pragmatics resource based learning discourse participation phonetics vocabulary assessment skills education attitudes syntax independence semantics learner training communication approaches autonomous learning sociolinguistics strategies materials self-access writing genre learner centred curriculum evaluation morphology course design teacher training resource based language learning English language teaching reading principles methodologies study skills research content based learning cognition speaking classroom

rEFLectiOns

KMUTT Journal of Language Education

techniques technology grammar psychology motivation listening pragmatics resource based learning discourse participation phonetics vocabulary assessment skills education attitudes syntax independence semantics learner training communication approaches autonomous learning sociolinguistics strategies materials self-access writing genre learner centred curriculum evaluation morphology course design teacher training resource based language learning English language teaching reading principles methodologies study skills research content based learning cognition speaking classroom research English language teaching integrative testing eliciting listening comprehension communication strategies discourse competence assessment individual differences self esteem cooperation self-directed learning portfolios collaborative learning peer teaching classroom culture monolingual classes non-native speakers language awareness groupwork metalanguage jigsaw reading discipline negotiation of meaning interaction observation journals managing innovation curriculum renewal micro-skills projects tasks affective strategies keywords formulaic phrases metaphors conversation analysis lexical approaches continuous assessment rhetorical structure text input monitoring participation

Volume 11

January 2008

ISSN 1513-5934

Volume 11

January 2008

rEFLectiOns

KMUTT Journal of Language Education

Department of Language Studies

School of Liberal Arts

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

Thailand

Editorial Staff

Editors: Jonathan Hull & Wareesiri Singhasiri

Editorial Board: Suvalee Chinkumtornwong, Pornapit Darasawang, Kanjana Jaroenkiatboworn, Sonthida Keyuravong, Wilaksana Srimavin, Nuantip Tantisawetrat, Saowaluck Tepsuriwong, Ananya Tuksinvarajarn, Richard Watson Todd, Kulawadee Yamkate

Research Assistant: He Murray

Information for contributors

rEFLECTIONS is an annual publication featuring original articles on a wide range of EFL topics, mostly in Thailand. We welcome contributions from all sources. No payment will be made but contributors will receive two free copies of the journal.

Manuscripts for articles should be no longer than 5,000 words and should follow the conventions of the articles in this issue as far as possible. Please include an abstract and a biographical note. Send 2 hard copies together with a diskette (preferably *Microsoft Word*), or attach the article as a *Word* document to an email, to the editors at the address below:

Department of Language Studies
King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi
Bangmod
Tung Khru
Bangkok 10140
Thailand

Email: jonathan.hul@kmutt.ac.th & wareesiri@yahoo.com

Fax: (662) 428 3375

Deadline for the next issue: 31st October 2008

Editorial

This volume of *rEFLECTIONS* has six articles covering four broad themes: self-access learning centres, learners' use of modality in writing, the use of questions and questioning techniques, and teachers' attitudes to conducting research. All but one of the articles describes research conducted in Thailand. As in past issues, some of the papers report on masters students' research.

Issues surrounding the conduct and management of self-access centres are covered in the first two articles. The first, by Hayo Reinders, investigates whether students attending advisory sessions on their written work at a university self-access centre in New Zealand revisit the centre for subsequent independent study; the article discusses why only a quarter of the subjects did so. The second article, by Chada Kongchan, focuses on the management of self-access centres. Looking in detail at how change was initiated and followed up at a university self-access centre, she provides a wealth of ideas for those in similar centres who, like her, want to be not merely managers but leaders of change.

The third article, by Montri Tangpijaikul, looks at Thai learners' repertoire of English modality in academic writing and electronic bulletin board writing. He found that his undergraduate subjects made substantially greater use of modality in the relatively informal bulletin board writing and that expressions of modality in both genres tended to be confined to a narrow range. An important pedagogic implication of this finding is that teachers need to raise students' awareness of the potential breadth of ways to express doubt, certainty and vagueness in written English.

Nuttawarin Teerakornvisatpugdee & Wilaksana Srimavin studied questioning techniques used by three university teachers and if these techniques affected the level of student responses. They found considerable variation in response rates and concluded that, apart from the techniques themselves, factors that foster responses include the difficulty level of questions and students' background knowledge. The article by Jureeporn Malelohid, Sutaree Prasertsan & Monta Chatupote looks at responses to literal and reinterpretation questions in reading comprehension, focusing on change over time among young learners at two proficiency levels. They found that the lower-proficiency group's responses to literal questions improved the most. It may be that this group's language proficiency improved faster than that of the higher group and that learning to reinterpret in reading is a relatively difficult skill for these learners to develop.

The final article is on research, a theme that is becoming increasingly important for all teachers. Specifically, Jethiya Chanateepakul & Wilaksana Srimavin surveyed the attitudes towards conducting their own research of ten teachers of English at tertiary level. Most of them recognized that doing research was professionally developmental; but, crucially, there was also a prevailing view that they needed greater departmental support in terms of such matters as training and mentoring as well as funding.

We hope that you find this issue of *rEFLECTIONS* both interesting and stimulating.

Jonathan Hull & Wareesiri Singhasiri, Editors

Contents	Page
Do Advisory Sessions Encourage Independent Learning? <i>Hayo Reinders</i>	1
Management of Change in a Self-Access Learning Centre <i>Chada Kongchan</i>	8
Thai EFL Learners' Repertoire of English Modality in Academic and Electronic Bulletin Board Writing <i>Montri Tangpijaikul</i>	19
Questioning Techniques and Student Participation <i>Nuttawarin Teerakornvisatpugdee & Wilaksana Srimavin</i>	28
Using Questions to Develop Young Learners' Reading Comprehension <i>Jureeporn Malelohid, Sutaree Prasertsan & Monta Chatupote</i>	40
Teachers' Attitudes towards Doing Research <i>Jethiya Chanateepakul & Wilaksana Srimavin</i>	52

Do Advisory Sessions Encourage Independent Learning?

Hayo Reinders

University of Hawaii

Abstract

Many self-access centres, writing centres and individual teachers around the world offer tertiary students help with their (academic) writing by offering feedback on essays. Many students appear to use such services expecting a 'quick fix' to help them submit their essays on time with as few errors as possible. Many teachers, on the other hand, hope to raise students' awareness of the weaknesses in their writing and encourage further study by recommending strategies and materials. Little research has been done to establish if they are successful. This study looked at one university self-access centre's writing support, as offered through its language advisory sessions, and monitored the subsequent work students did to find out if they had followed up on the recommendations made by their advisor and returned to the centre for independent study. It was found that, in general, this was not the case. It appears that students take a rather instrumental view of the sessions, one that may not align with that of the advisors helping them.

Literature review

Language advising is an increasingly popular form of learner support. Many self-access centres offer one-on-one advice and writing centres (especially in the United States) offer help specifically with writing skills. The purpose, from the staff's perspective, is generally to encourage the development of independent learning skills; however, evaluating whether such services succeed in this is problematic for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to decide what to evaluate. Should such services be 'measured' in terms of their contribution to student learning? Or should they be measured in terms of their success in developing autonomous learning or raising student awareness? Generally speaking, the literature on advising has tended to focus on evaluating the latter (cf. Mozzon-McPherson, 2001; Tsang, 1999), but it is notoriously difficult to operationalise, let alone measure these.

One indirect approach has been to look at (changes in) learners' beliefs about independent learning. Pemberton & Toogood (2001) looked at students' and advisors' expectations using a number of instruments including recordings of advisory sessions and interviews. They found that learners and advisors had very different expectations and assumptions about the purpose of the sessions. For example, where advisors were eager to focus on learning skills, students often were looking for answers to specific language-related questions. Similarly, students often saw the sessions as a chance to practise their spoken English, not so much to improve their learning skills. These mismatches sometimes surfaced in the sessions or became apparent from the analysis of the recordings. The authors recommend such analyses as a check to avoid these mismatches in subsequent sessions. Analyses of advisory sessions were also conducted by Crabbe et al. (2001) and these showed that there was a mismatch between learners' long-term and short-term language learning goals. They argue for the investigation of learners' beliefs when investigating advisory sessions as this will shed light on their expectations of such sessions and therefore possibly the outcomes. A student who comes in with practical

questions may expect that an advisory session will provide answers to them and that this may help them to become better at learning the language. The advisor, on the other hand, may recognise that the student uses an inefficient approach to language learning and feel the need to focus on extending the range of the student's learning strategies. Unless such mismatches are identified and perhaps discussed between advisor and learner, they can lead to students discontinuing the sessions.

Reinders (2006) investigated learners' perceptions of an advisory service offered in one New Zealand university through a questionnaire completed by 54 participants. He found generally high levels of satisfaction with the available advisory service, something which previous studies have also found (Voller et al., 1999; Mak & Turnbull, 1999). However, there were indications that many students had not understood the purpose of the advisory sessions, which was to improve their learning skills; instead, they expected a kind of conversation practice, or a private tutor who would teach them rather than facilitate their learning. Fu (1999) attributes this to possible lack of experience with this mode of learning:

“The approach [language counselling] may [...] seem vague and flexible to the users when we say, for example, that the counsellors can ‘give recommendations on language learning strategies for improving English’ or ‘can help users design their personalized Language Improvement Plan’. In other words, to these users what really is a ‘strategy’ or what does ‘design’ really mean? It may all seem rather confusing and appear to be just a lot of hard work.” (Fu 1999, p. 108)

One of the most common types of help students seek is with essay writing skills. With the very high demands on students' time and the difficulties of producing quality academic writing, this is one area where students may be eager simply to get their English corrected, rather than focus on improving their skills. Little research has been done to investigate what effects advisory sessions in this area have and whether they are used by students as an opportunity to have their work proofread, or whether the sessions can encourage students to continue to learn. The small-scale study described here is one attempt to look into this area.

Background to the study

The self-access centre where this study took place offers language learning materials, workshops and a language advisory service to university students. The centre is firmly built on the principle of fostering autonomy and there are a number of procedures in place to encourage students to develop skills for independent learning. The language advisory sessions play an important part in this. In these sessions, students come to talk with an advisor about their learning, get help with analysing their needs and planning their learning, get recommendations for materials and workshops and receive feedback on their progress. In the first session, we explain to students that the purpose of the sessions is not to provide individual teaching but rather ‘coaching’ so that they can develop the skills to learn by themselves. We take time to explain that it is the students' responsibility to learn and that what we do is support them in that process. In following sessions, we go over the work students have done since the previous session and we encourage them to bring examples of their work.

In addition to the advisory sessions, we offer workshops. These focus on the development of learning skills, rather than on the teaching of content (e.g. we would show students how to proofread their own writing or how to brainstorm with other students, rather than practise writing with them in class). Students can also use the centre whenever they wish to access our resources. These are offered through the Electronic Learning Environment, a programme designed in-house for the purpose of giving students access to online language learning materials and to encourage the development of learner autonomy (Reinders, 2007).

In the past, we had noticed that an increasing number of students came in with drafts of their essays to get advice on their writing skills. In principle, the centre does not have a problem with this. We gladly read some examples of students' work to identify common errors and make recommendations on how to improve. We do make it clear to students that we cannot proofread their essays and that it is not the goal of the advisory sessions to help them with one essay, but rather to help them with their writing skills in general. Nonetheless, some students seemed to be more interested in feedback on a specific essay only. Since the advisory sessions are very staff-intensive (in addition to the one-on-one time, there is also preparation time and subsequent monitoring involved), they are one of the most expensive parts of the centre's operation. We wanted to ensure that our resources were put to best use and establish if such sessions led to increased independent learning or whether they were used by students mainly as a 'quick fix'. In other words, did the sessions lead to students taking up further study to improve their writing and other English skills, or did they use the sessions simply to get some feedback on an essay in order to be able to hand it in on time?

Methodology

The participants in this study are all full-time students at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, for whom English is an additional language. All of them were undergraduate students in a wide range of subject areas. The participants investigated in this study all used the services of the centre voluntarily; they did not receive credit for their study there. None of them had been trained in independent learning or in the use of self-access at the University of Auckland (although it is possible that they had instruction in these areas in their home countries). The study took place during the second semester of 2006 (July-December) and we avoided tracking students (see below) at the start or towards the end of the semester as the end-of-year exams may otherwise have skewed our results. There was also no financial incentive for students to participate in the study.

To establish if there was a link between the advisory session and subsequent independent learning, we used the following procedure.

Identify students who request an advisory session for feedback on their writing

To do this, we only selected students who had not been to the centre before and had not participated in any of our workshops. We were interested in seeing if the sessions would lead students to return to the centre and prior visits would have obviously confounded the answer. We identified twenty such students over a period of one month. All information pertaining to these students was recorded in our Electronic Learning Environment.

Record any subsequent meetings with the advisor and their purpose (essay check or otherwise)

We recorded subsequent meetings over a period of one month after students' initial session. Although recording subsequent meetings over a longer period of time may have been useful, it would have meant that monitoring would have had to continue during semester breaks, when the centre operates on restricted hours. All the participants studied with the same advisor. This decision was made to avoid confounding the data. The advisor was a highly qualified teacher, trained in the area of language advising.

Record the number of workshops attended

It is common practice for the advisors to recommend students with writing problems to attend one or more of the (free) workshops the centre offers on academic writing skills and we were interested to see if this recommendation would actually lead students to enrol.

Record the number of visits to the centre

Any subsequent visit to the centre for the purpose of self-study was electronically recorded. Advisory sessions always conclude with recommendations for materials to use in the centre. Through our electronic monitoring system, we were able to see if such recommendations were followed up on.

Obviously looking only at return visits to the centre, workshop attendance and advisory sessions gives a limited picture of the effects the sessions may have had. It is possible that a student does not return but that the advice given leads her to study independently elsewhere. We were unable to track learning outside the self-access centre and this is a weakness of the study. However, considering that the recommendations by the advisor are specifically to attend workshops, to return for follow-up sessions, and to use materials in the centre, uptake of these recommendations was seen as one useful indication of the effects of the session.

Results

The results are presented in the table below. This shows 1) the number of advisory sessions the subjects attended, 2) the number of workshops they attended, and 3) their total number of visits to the centre.

The results show that subjects only attended on average 1.45 sessions in four weeks; this includes the initial session. Only 5 subjects (25%) had more than one session. Two had one additional session, two had two more sessions and one subject saw the advisor four times in four weeks. A previous study done in the centre (Reinders, 2006) showed an average of 3.55 sessions for all users in the centre who, at the time, had had at least one session. Although that figure was obtained by looking at student visits over a longer period of time (seven weeks), most visits fell into a relatively short time-frame, with students seeing the advisor several times in short succession. The figures presented here thus appear to be considerably smaller.

Next, in looking at workshop attendance, we find that only four subjects attended one or more workshops. Previous figures obtained in the centre showed an average of 1.3 workshops and the students in this cohort thus frequented the workshops considerably less often. Finally, the average number of visits to the centre was only 0.55 (this does not

include the advisory session, which took place in the centre), compared with 3.6 for the general centre student body. In fact, 15 (75%) of the subjects never came to the centre for self-study.

There appears to be no pattern in the results: subjects who had several sessions did not come to more workshops or study in the centre more often than those who did not; similarly, subjects who came to the centre more often did not have more sessions. Almost half of the subjects (9, or 45%) only came to the advisory session and did not return, either for a follow-up session, a workshop or for self-study.

Table: Subjects' use of the self-access centre

Subject	Initial advisory sessions	Subsequent sessions	Workshops	Self-study
1	1	0	0	0
2	1	0	0	3
3	1	0	0	0
4	1	0	0	0
5	1	0	1	0
6	1	2	0	0
7	1	1	2	0
8	1	0	0	0
9	1	2	0	3
10	1	0	0	1
11	1	0	0	0
12	1	0	0	0
13	1	0	1	2
14	1	0	0	0
15	1	1	0	0
16	1	3	0	0
17	1	0	0	0
18	1	0	1	2
19	1	0	0	0
20	1	0	0	0
		Average 1.45 (including initial session)	Average 0.25	Average 0.55

Discussion

What do we make of these results? It is clear that students who request help with writing do generally not return for independent study as much as students who come to the centre for other purposes. In this sense, they appear to take a rather instrumental approach to the advisory sessions. Previous research (e.g. Voller et al., 1999) has made similar observations. A prior study conducted in the centre (Reinders, 2005) investigated the reasons for the lack of participation in a guided self-study programme. Students had been offered the free programme after completing a diagnostic test that had identified them as needing to improve their language skills. The reasons found were of two types. On the one hand, there were practical reasons such as lack of time and difficulty fitting language study into a full study programme. A more subtle, and in some ways, more important

reason, appeared to be a misunderstanding on the part of the students about the type of support that such a programme would offer. Many students expressed a preference for teacher-led tuition, preferably one-on-one.

Similarly, it is possible that the students in this study were 'scared off' by the initial session with its heavy emphasis on self-responsibility and autonomy. It appears that the sessions failed to convince students of the potential benefits of this type of learning, possibly due to a lack of experience on the part of the students or a lack of preparation offered by the staff. It appears that students who come in for a practical purpose (e.g. having their essay proofread) may not easily be 'converted' to continue to learn independently. Perhaps this requires a certain predisposition on the part of the student or a different approach on the part of the advisors. A previous study (Reinders & Cotterall, 2001) found that one of the main reasons for the success, or lack thereof, of the language support offered at the self-access centre at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, was the amount and quality of learner training preceding students' self-access language learning. Since the students in this study were new to the centre and had not had prior training (at least not at our university), this could explain the results.

The results reported here confirmed the suspicion that the advisors in the centre held. Having these figures is nonetheless useful as it allows us to have some evidence and act on it. Management can draw on this data to make decisions about whether or not to continue to offer such services. It would be difficult to identify students who are not going to follow-up on the recommendations beforehand and indeed it is questionable if this would be the best approach. An alternative approach we have taken so far is, first, to place even greater emphasis on informing students about the purpose of the session. When they sign up for a session, the assistant confirms with them that they are aware of and comfortable with the goals of the session. At the start of the session, the consultant once again double-checks that the student knows about the purpose of their meeting.

There are a number of limitations to this study. Even though we monitored students for four weeks, there were only 20 who matched our requirements. The period over which we monitored return visits was also small at one month. As mentioned above, we made the decision to restrict monitoring to learning during the semester. It is possible that the effects of the advisory sessions are more delayed and that some of the students will come back at a later date. Finally, the perennial problem with studies on self-access learning is that one cannot be sure that one is getting the complete picture. It is possible that some of the students in this study went on to study independently outside the centre. Nonetheless the data presented here offer one piece of the puzzle that is self-access learning.

Conclusion

We strongly believe that advisory sessions can have an enormously beneficial effect on language learners. In practice, however, there are a number of reasons why their potential may not be realised. Students who come in for help with their writing may be particularly instrumental in their view of the help that is on offer in our centre. It is our job as educators to help them realise that developing their own writing skills, rather than relying on others to correct their writing, is the only viable long-term strategy. From this small-scale study, it appears we still have some way to go.

References

- Crabbe, D., Hoffmann, A. & Cotterall, S. (2001) Examining the discourse of learner advisory sessions. *AILA review* 15: 2-15.
- Fu, G. (1999) Guidelines for productive language counselling: tools for implementing autonomy. In Cotterall, S. & Crabbe, D. (eds.), *Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Defining the Field and Effecting Change*, pp. 107-111. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.
- Mak, B. & Turnbull, M. (1999) The personalised English programme: piloting structured language learning support in a university self-access centre. In Morrison, B. (ed.), *Experiments and Evaluation in Self-Access Language Learning*, pp. 43-59. Hong Kong: HASALD.
- Mozzon-McPherson, M. (2001) Language advising: towards a new discursive world. In Mozzon-McPherson, M. & Vismans, R. (eds), *Beyond Language Teaching towards Language Advising*, pp. 7-22. London: CILT.
- Pemberton, R. & Toogood, S. (2001) Expectations and assumptions in a self-directed language-learning programme. In Mozzon-McPherson, M. & Vismans, R. (eds), *Beyond Language Teaching towards Language Advising*, pp. 66-83. London: CILT.
- Reinders, H. (2005) Non-participation in a university language programme. *JALT Journal* 27 (2) 209-226.
- Reinders, H. (2006) University language advising: is it useful? *Reflections in English Language Teaching* 5:1.
- Reinders, H. (2007) Big brother is helping you. Supporting self-access language learning with a student monitoring system. *System* 35 (1) 93-111.
- Reinders, H. & Cotterall, S. (2001) Language learners learning independently: how autonomous are they? *TTWiA* 65: 85-97.
- Tsang, E. (1999) Resistance to self-access learning. In B. Morrison (ed.), *Experiments and Evaluation in Self-Access Language Learning*, pp. 25-42. Hong Kong: HASALD.
- Voller, P., Martyn, E. & Pickard, V. (1999) One-to-one counselling for autonomous learning in a self-access centre: final report on an action learning project. In Cotterall, S. & Crabbe, D. (eds.), *Learner Autonomy in Language Learning: Defining the Field and Effecting Change*, pp. 111-128. Frankfurt am Main: Lang.

Hayo Reinders (www.hayo.nl) works at the Department of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii. Previously, he was a senior lecturer at RELC in Singapore. Before that, he was founding Director of the English Language Self-Access Centre at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He is editor (with Terry Lamb) of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, published by Multilingual Matters. His most recent publications include a book on teaching methodology and one on learner autonomy.

Management of Change in a Self-Access Learning Centre

Chada Kongchan

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

The management of self-access centres is an interesting and challenging job; in fact, it is so challenging that managers of such centres often have to consider whether they want merely to maintain the existing state or, since change will not come overnight or without sustained effort, persist with the long-term extra work involved in being leaders for change. This paper aims to show how, after a decade in existence, major changes were initiated and implemented in the Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC) at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). In doing so, it is hoped that it can serve as a useful example to managers of other self-access centres who are contemplating change.

What is a self-access learning centre?

A self-access centre is seen as a place where language learners come to take charge of their own learning by using self-access materials and services provided in the centre to improve their target language skills. Therefore, the main purposes of most centres are to support independent learning and help learners improve their target language. Each centre may be a unit in a language institute, a school of languages, or a school of liberal arts; the centre may be managed by a group of people or even one person.

Gardner & Miller (1999) indicate that a self-access centre has two major functions: first, it provides self-study language-learning materials which independent learners can use to satisfy their own needs and wants; second, it prepares learners for greater independence by encouraging the development of individualized strategies as well as reflection on, and taking responsibility for, learning. They emphasize that a centre offers language-learning opportunities that would not be possible in formal lessons; it may also offer some kinds of simulation of a native-speaker environment where learners can choose to immerse themselves in their target language, interact with authentic materials and perhaps also talk to native or near-native speakers.

Running a self-access centre

According to Gardner & Miller (1999), the task of management is about operating an organizational unit in a way which makes the best use of its resources in order to achieve its goals. Therefore, a major task of a manager is to run the centre in a way which optimizes the use of its resources so that it can help learners practise independent learning and improve their target language proficiency. Gardner & Miller also state that the management of a self-access centre involves ensuring support for learners and staff development. Management of resources and support for learners and staff development are now discussed in more detail.

Management of resources

Language learners come to a self-access centre to practise independent learning and improve their language skills; therefore, a crucial job of the centre is to provide self-access language materials to serve their needs. Gardner & Miller (1999) clarify the management of resources as the manager's responsibility to find a way to collect

information about the needs, goals and achievement of learners, including the learners' perceptions of current resources. Moreover, information about uses, the amount of time learners spend using the current resources and the effectiveness of these resources need to be considered so the centre can provide the right materials for learners. Furthermore, the requirements of the taught courses in the institution where the self-access centre is located should be addressed. Finally, the manager has to reconsider the capability of production of in-house materials or making use of sources of published materials. In Sheerin's (1996) opinion, students must be able to use self-access materials in the centre on their own. They should also be able to find materials which are at their level easily and the materials should satisfy their perceived needs. Moreover, students should be able to evaluate their own work by checking what they have done against a key, model answers or various other forms of feedback provided.

Support for learners

Gardner & Miller (1999) define learners in a self-access centre as absolutely different from students in a language class. Firstly, the range of differences in the ability, proficiency level, motivation and time available of learners who come to such centres is much wider than among students in a normal language class. In addition, teachers in a class can take control over learning activities whereas, in a self-access centre, there is likely to be no teacher control over learning activities that students choose. The responsibility of the self-access centre is to help learners define their goals and find ways to persuade them to experiment with materials more widely; the following activities are examples of learner-support work that Gardner & Miller (1999) suggest:

- providing orientation sessions;
- providing counselling services for individual learners to encourage them to work on their needs analyses, set up their goals, plan their studies, report on what they have learnt, and assess their strengths, weaknesses and progress (Sheerin, 2002, cited in Gardner & Miller, 1999);
- providing workshops for skills or particular materials;
- providing individual learners with pathways or guidelines through materials;
- forming learners into study groups;
- assigning learners to a mentor;
- recording attendance;
- accrediting self-access work.

Staff development

Since most self-access centres are managed by a group of people, it is the manager's responsibility to make sure that support staff feel included in the aims of the centre and that their work contributes to the achievement of the centre (Gardner & Miller, 1999). Consequently, the manager needs to consider how to involve staff in the decision-making process; the procedures for defining standards of work; the requirements of each position (job description, working hours and responsibility); the rewards of each position; assessment or feedback given; and the procedures for staff to make complaints.

A manager or a leader?

Wynn & Guditus (1984) state that managers typically involve themselves in maintaining existing structures and procedures while leaders are defined as more dynamic people who are constantly looking for ways of moving forward. They must

respond effectively to the real and perceived needs of individuals as well as to the goals of the organization. West-Burnham (1992) claims that no leader has ever been regarded as great because of his/her ability to maintain the existing state. He sees leaders as managers of change who welcome the challenge and facilitate the changes of others (learners and staff). He mentions that there is a great deal of overlap between the roles of managers and leaders and that it is probably more fruitful to see them as two aspects of a single role. Woolls (1994) supports West-Burnham by using the term 'leader manager'.

This paper will now focus its attention on a self-access centre where major changes have been initiated and managed over several years, that of King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT).

KMUTT's Self Access Learning Centre

Organization

The self-access centre at KMUTT is called the Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC). It was established by teachers of English in 1991 as a unit in the then Department of Languages (now, the Department of Language Studies) in the School of Liberal Arts. Although a manager was selected to deal with the management of the centre, some decisions had to be approved by the department. Many years later, the centre was reorganized as a separate unit of the School of Liberal Arts. The committee of the centre included the administrative committee and the SALC staff. This was the beginning of more freedom for the SALC management because the Head of the centre could plan the work and budget instead of waiting for the budget managed by the Department of Languages.

At present, the centre is organized as one of the three units run by the Centre for Information and Learning (CIL) in the School of Liberal Arts (the other two being the Resource Centre and the Learning Technology Unit). The administrative committee of the CIL is made up of the Head of the CIL (chairperson), the Dean and Vice Deans (advisors), representatives from all departments of the faculty and a secretary. The Head of the SALC and the secretary take more responsibility than in their previous jobs as, respectively, the Head and secretary of the CIL. The SALC staff includes the Head of the SALC, a secretary, a material designer and two associate secretaries. The computer staff of the Learning Technology Unit support the SALC. This new organization is remarkably beneficial to the Self-Access Learning Centre, especially to its development, because the administrative committee works collaboratively with the centre, giving advice on policy and the budget as well as supporting all the centre's work. However, the centre has complete freedom to run itself according to its policy and plans. The Learning Technology Unit's team is also of great assistance to the centre by offering help with computer work. This is as Sheerin (2002) suggests; that is, one way of making the most of the centre is involving people in its management.

Objectives

The objectives of the SALC are as follows:

- To promote and support self-access learning and teaching
- To provide services for the university's students and staff in language learning
- To put self-access theories into practice

- To offer help, information and practical advice to those who want to set up a self-access centre in their own educational institutions

Accordingly, the major mission of the centre is to provide self-access learning services for the university's students and staff in order to enable them to practise their English language skills independently according to their needs and learning styles.

Users

There are three groups of users who come to the centre in order to practise independent learning and improve their language skills: undergraduates, postgraduates and the university's staff. Since the School of Liberal Arts is responsible for teaching English to students of all faculties in the university and the use of the centre is integrated into the English curriculum, about 150 users come to the centre every day. In addition, a lot of teachers from schools, colleges and universities throughout Thailand and overseas visit the centre regularly in order to study and exchange experience and ideas about setting up and managing self-access centres. From 2002 to 2007, visitors to the centre numbered 2,648; these were mostly Thai teachers but there were also 65 foreign teachers from overseas.

How change was initiated and implemented at the SALC

The influence of globalization has made English the most widely utilized international language, one that many workplaces in Thailand require their employees to use as a means of communication. Thus, a lot of graduates find it hard to get a good job if they cannot achieve this requirement; therefore, increasing numbers of students come to the SALC in order to improve their English. However, those students do not have much time to spend there because they are science and engineering students, most of whose time is devoted to their major subjects. Although the university's staff are also required to improve their English skills and many of them come to the centre, they have limited time to spend in the centre. Thus, in order to deal with the urgent needs and limited time of its users, the SALC needed to be radically changed.

Accordingly, in 2002, the Head of the centre decided to be a leader manager taking on the extra work involved in being a leader of change rather than merely maintaining the existing state. Innovations made include producing self-access learning materials, designing a pathway index programme, counselling, organising an annual self-access festival, forming special interest groups for learners, providing workshops and designing an electronic SALC (E-SALC) programme. These developments in the SALC exemplify management for change, and they are now described in more detail.

Management of resources

In-house materials and materials adaptation

Since the materials in the centre had been produced and purchased over ten years ago, they were old and out of date. Hence, the centre proposed two new projects in 2003: in-house materials production and materials adaptation. For in-house materials, one part-time expert was employed to produce learner training materials for note-taking, summary writing, speed reading and so on. Scholarships were offered to two master's degree students in the then Department of Applied Linguistics (now, the Department of Language Studies) to work on materials adaptation. In 2004, the three-year project of producing more in-house materials was approved and one full-time teacher was

employed as a material designer. By 2008, these in-house materials will have been evaluated and then there will be more paper-based and online materials for users. The capability of designing its own materials is one crucial role of the centre; otherwise, the centre would have to pay a lot of money purchasing new materials every year and, unfortunately, those materials might not be suitable for its users.

Pathway index programme

The centre is organized and divided into five rooms including various 'corners', for listening, CALL (computer assisted language learning), video (listening through films), reading for pleasure, self-instructional reading, cassette friends (speaking), grammar, writing, study abroad and so on. All the materials in the centre are classified into skills for each corner. Before 2002, there was a problem accessing materials because there were so many materials in each corner that students could not easily find the material they wanted. Though there were placement tests provided in some corners (i.e. the listening and self-instructional reading corners) to enable learners to access materials at the right level, some learners came to the centre with their own specific purposes. Therefore, they did not need to do the placement tests. For example, they might want to search for some grammar points to help them edit their written work or practise talking on the phone or giving directions. In such cases, the centre could not serve their needs properly and rapidly because there was no support system to help them find the materials they wanted within a short time. Moreover, Susan Sheerin, an expert in self-access learning from Sussex University, UK, was invited to evaluate the centre in May 2002. She reiterated that most of the materials in the centre were not user-friendly in the sense that they were not easily accessible.

Therefore, in 2003, the centre proposed a four-year project of a pathway index programme in order to employ technology to facilitate the accessing system. Financial support was offered by the School of Liberal Arts and the university. Two teachers of English who were studying a master's degree programme in the faculty were offered scholarships to work for the project under the supervision of the centre's advisor as well as the Head and the secretary; the work involved analyzing all the materials in the centre in terms of skills, sub-skills, titles, functions, structures, lexis and examples of language use. The computer technician used Microsoft Office Access to design the programme, which provided a database of all the centre's materials.

Since 2004, students and staff of the university have been able to find materials in the centre more easily through the pathway index programme. After the SALC website was designed, the programme could be accessed more conveniently through the website (it can be reached at <http://arts.kmutt.ac.th/salc>). This means that, at present, by typing skills, sub-skills, titles, functions, structures or key words into the programme, learners can easily find materials they want to use. Although this programme may be seen as only a catalogue, it is an initial step towards further improvement. Moreover, a barcode system is employed to facilitate the use of materials in the centre. In order to run this system, the centre's staff have to remove the former codes of all the centre's materials and replace them with barcodes. This task takes a lot of time and energy as these materials have been designed and purchased since 1991; in addition, this job has to be done continually because new materials are designed or purchased every year.

E-SALC (My English)

Since technology is the only way to enable students who have limited time on a university campus to use the centre's services to improve their English anytime and anywhere, the committee for improving students' English language skills of the university led by the former dean of the School of Liberal Arts and the academic vice dean proposed the E-SALC project (also known as *My English*) to the university in 2005. When the project was approved, Hayo Reinders, who was, at the time, Head of the Self-Access Centre at Auckland University, New Zealand, was invited to work with the committee, the centre staff, and the postgraduates from the Department of Computer Engineering to design the E-SALC. Materials in the centre, including online materials, were selected and analyzed; a short description of each material was written and put into the E-SALC programme. Tests were also designed to motivate learners to assess their progress. Fortunately, the pathway index programme had already been conducted; analyzing and writing the descriptions of the centre's materials were much easier and took less time than they would have done without this programme. The piloting and evaluating stages had already been done.

Now, university students and staff can access the virtual centre or E-SALC anytime and anywhere (at <http://www.kmutt.ac.th/myenglish> or at <http://myenglish.kmutt.ac.th>) to set their goals, plan their studies, find suitable resources, implement their plans, record their studies, take tests, chat and get help from their teachers or the SALC staff online. Besides, by accessing the programme, teachers of taught courses can observe their students' learning plans, learning records and progress. They can facilitate their students' independent learning by giving advice including feedback via the programme's online counselling and chatting modes. In addition, at the time of writing, the CALL corner is being expanded and 116 computers are being installed in order to provide more equipment for online self-access learning.

Management of learners

Although the SALC has always provided students with some support, there were still a lot of students and staff who did not know how they could make use of the centre effectively to improve their English. Regular counselling services and orientation sessions were offered but not enough were available for a large number of students. Moreover, the numbers of visitors from schools, colleges and universities in Thailand and overseas have increased. Accordingly, the centre needs further changes, especially a support system. The following are examples of activities the centre offers users to support their independent learning.

Providing a new style of orientation session

In 2002, an English-language brochure introducing the location and services of the SALC was designed and distributed to users and visitors together with the previous Thai version. PowerPoint and video introductions to the centre were also produced to facilitate the orientation session. Therefore, the new orientation session is more meaningful and interesting.

Providing counselling services

In 2002, the counselling service was restarted by Head of the SALC working as a counsellor. Then, some other volunteers including the centre's advisors also offered counselling services to individual learners through learner profiles, which included a

needs analysis form, a learner contract and a learning reflection form. Therefore, individual learners were encouraged to take charge of their own learning by analyzing their needs, setting their goals, planning their self-study, implementing their plans and assessing their strengths, weaknesses and progress. In addition, the Head of the Department of Language Studies regularly asks teachers in the department to be counsellors of the centre. At present, learners can consult the centre's counsellors both in the centre and online through the E-SALC programme.

Providing workshops for skills or particular materials

Workshops for the university's students and staff are organized regularly. TOEFL exam preparation was the first workshop organized by the centre, in collaboration with a private language school in 2002. Nowadays, the centre provides more workshops, on such matters as job hunting, studying abroad and the E-SALC. The E-SALC workshop is run to enable learners and teachers of English to make use of the centre more effectively both within the centre itself as well as online.

Forming study groups for learners

Special interest groups

Reading and speaking groups have been functioning as special interest groups since 2003. The Head of the SALC formed the reading group and was a group leader at the starting period. Students who joined this group chose to read whatever they wanted to and presented what they had read and learned from reading passages. Presentation and discussion skills were also taught. Alternatively, students might select and read the same graded readers and then listen to the storyteller through cassette tapes which come together with the books. Apart from reading, members of the group learned grammar and new words in context. Two teachers, who were native speakers of English, volunteered to be the group leaders and facilitate the speaking groups, and the Head of the Department of Languages asked other teachers to run additional such groups. Topics introduced by all the group leaders were posted on the notice board; therefore, students who were interested in practising speaking could sign up to join appropriate sessions.

Now, some other teachers of English and postgraduates from the faculty's master's degree programme in Applied Linguistics and foreign students from other faculties in the university have volunteered to run over ten other special interest groups (a grammar clinic, movies, public speaking, writing, dictionaries, news, German, Japanese, Chinese, radio and TOEIC preparation, etc.). The Head of the Department of Language Studies has also asked native speakers of English to be group leaders. These special groups serve a lot of students for their specific purposes. There are more and more students who join these groups. From 2006 to 2007, the centre served 1,290 students with various special groups. The university's staff also join the groups; especially popular is the Chinese group, whose students and staff can be seen participating happily in the same group.

SALC Festival

The SALC Festival is an activity which aims to encourage students who are interested in the same English skills to join in the activity in order to improve their English. The festival has been organized since 2002. The first festival focused on reading skills. Throughout the year, students were motivated to read the first story in the famous *Harry Potter* series, and hundreds of questions about the story were prepared. When students

went to the centre, picked up a question and answered it correctly, they would get a prize from the centre. On 14th February, 2002, a Harry Potter Quiz was organized. Twenty-one teams of students, with three students in each team, joined the quiz. The three winning teams were offered scholarships and SALC certificates. Apart from the Harry Potter Quiz, there were a book fair and a quiz game about the SALC. The evaluation of the festival showed that 99.34% of the students and teachers who answered the evaluation forms wanted the centre to organize the festival again.

The second festival was organized in 2003, when the competitions focused on speaking, writing and singing contests and a SALC Big Fan contest including a performance and a book fair. The evaluation of the festival showed that 100% of the participating students and teachers agreed to have it again. Therefore, the third festival was organized in 2004, and reading, listening and story-telling contests were added. Again, 100% of the participants stated that they wanted the centre to organize the festival again. This is why the SALC Festival is now organized every year.

The number of scholarships has been increased for both the university's staff and students, including a singing contest for staff and an academic competition for students, such as one on technological design requiring students to present the machines or gadgets they have designed in their English classes. Students from primary and secondary schools are also invited to join the competitions. Teachers from the Departments of Language Studies and Engineering are invited to be referees in the competitions. This activity makes more students and staff know about the centre and motivates them to come and use its services. Because of this activity, a new network between the centre and teachers of the Department of Engineering has been created. Hopefully, it will involve more people in the process of running the centre. Besides, the activity encourages the centre to expand its help and services to the communities near the university campus. It is the beginning stage of the collaboration among self-access learning centres in order to strengthen all the centres. The following activities are the first two types of collaborative work initiated due to the SALC Festival.

An open house and workshops

Apart from regularly presenting and sharing ideas about setting up and managing a self-access centre to groups of visitors from schools, colleges and universities throughout Thailand and overseas, an open house and workshops are organized annually. Teachers from schools and universities nearby were invited to join an open house and self-access learning discussion in 2002. A workshop on independent learning was organized for high school students in 2003. The centre also collaborated with Thailand TESOL (a teachers' organization) and the university's School of Liberal Arts, organizing self-access learning workshops on various topics for teachers of English throughout Thailand. In 2003, the topics were material adaptation and self-access learning; in 2004, the topic was preparing and supporting learners in their self-access work; in 2005, it was twenty-five years of self-access and learner independence; and, in 2006, there was an open house. From 2002-2005, the Head of the centre also worked for Thailand TESOL as chairperson of the Self-Access Learning Special Interest Group (SAL-SIG), running a group discussion on self-access learning for SAL-SIG members during the annual meeting of the Thailand TESOL international conference. A seminar on self-access learning is being organized in 2008 in order to motivate teachers who run a self-access

centre to participate and share their experience managing their centres and show what innovations they have implemented.

Setting up a reading corner

In March 2007, the centre was supported by the university to set up a reading corner for Prarachathan Thaplamu School, one of the tsunami victim schools in Pang-Nga, in the south of Thailand. Reading materials including learner profiles and record sheets were provided. A workshop for teachers of the school was also offered in order to train them to use the corner effectively. Evaluation of the use of the corner is in progress.

Accrediting self-access work

The centre accredits students who participate well in special interest groups and SALC Festivals; it offers certificates and scholarships to the winners of each competition of the festivals and the best participants of the special interest groups. The centre is planning to accredit students for their self-access learning, especially students who work systematically for a period of time with one of the centre's counsellors.

Staff development

Aims of the centre and decision-making process

The first innovation initiated by the Head of the Centre in 2002 was changing the secretary's and the associate secretaries' roles from taking responsibility for only secretarial work to dealing collaboratively with the centre's decision-making process in order to make sure that the support staff feel included in the centre's mission. Currently, an academic year plan and a budget or a financial year plan are set up and proposed to the administrative committee by all the centre's staff.

Requirements of each position

In addition to general secretarial work, in 2002, the secretarial staff were trained to be coordinators of academic work, including the speaking and reading special interest groups, the pathway index project and self-access learning workshops. Then they reported the results and problems of their work to the Head of the centre instead of having every single piece of work planned by her.

Nowadays, each staff member takes responsibility for academic and administrative tasks. The secretary of the centre works for the Centre for Information and Learning (CIL) as a secretary of the centre taking care of the financial and secretarial work of the three aforementioned units of the centre. For the SALC part of her job, she takes care of the centre's website, the E-SALC programme, financial work, self-assessment and other crucial activities of the centre such as the 2008 SALC seminar on sharing ideas about managing self-access centres. The material designer designs in-house materials and manages other academic work for the centre such as counselling and chatting services both in the centre and online through the E-SALC. One of the associate secretaries deals with the database of materials, training and taking care of postgraduates who have scholarships to work for the centre. Another associate secretary does the secretarial work and takes care of running special interest groups and the SALC Festival. The Head is in charge of all the centre's work and the CIL.

Rewards of each position

For staff development, the secretarial staff have a chance to leave the office for an hour a week in order to practise English by using self-access materials in the centre. In addition, in 2003, the secretary was encouraged to attend a course in Applied Linguistics on setting up and managing self-access learning centres. She was finally supported to further her studies for a master's degree in Resource-Based Learning (RBL) or Self-Access Learning in the university's former Department of Applied Linguistics.

Standards of work, assessment or feedback and complaints

Every month, a staff meeting is organized to provide a chance for the SALC staff to discuss ways to assess the quality of their previous and future work. In addition, the Head of the centre spends this time giving feedback on their work while the secretaries can make use of the meeting session to reveal the results of their work and to make complaints. Then problem-solving and suggestions for improvement are discussed among the staff in a friendly environment. Once a semester, a meeting for the administrative committee is set up in order to report all work done and to consult each other on crucial problems.

Conclusion

Setting up a self-access centre is not simple; moreover, maintaining and developing it is even more difficult and complicated. Gardner & Miller (1999) assert that a clear picture of the operation of a self-access centre is not only to show its success but also to identify areas which need further improvement. They add that, if managers consider themselves not just maintainers of the existing state but leaders looking for challenging new approaches as well as greater efficiency and effectiveness, they need to conduct serious evaluations of their self-access operations. Moreover, Sheerin (2002) proclaims that making the most of a centre concerns involvement, integration and interest; accordingly, contributions from upper executives, colleagues, staff and students are needed. These people can help the centre to set policy, decide on its aims, produce materials, support students, design or re-design the centre's layout, evaluate the centre and so on. She also suggests the integration of learner training and development of self-access learning into curriculums, courses and classroom work. In order to achieve a centre's goals, she emphasizes that self-access learning should be integrated into the institutional culture. In addition, the centre should interest teachers and learners as well as entire institutes. Otherwise, fewer and fewer people are likely to want to support a centre's work; thus, Sheerin's (2002) advice for self-access centres is 'Keep Yourself Visible'.

As Head of the self-access learning centre described in this paper, my own view is that asking for a budget or manpower to help maintain or develop a centre does not easily work if the centre starts by merely requesting these things. On the other hand, a centre can achieve its goals if its staff show initiative by doing something for their centre themselves. Then, help and support are more likely to be offered from others.

References

- Gardner, D. & Miller, L. (1999) *Establishing Self-Access: From Theory to Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sheerin, S. (1996) *Self-Access*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Sheerin, S. (2002) *What is Independent Learning?* Presentation at School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand (15th May).
- West-Burnham, J. (1992). *Managing Quality in Schools: A TQM Approach*. London: Longman.
- Woolls, B. (1994) *The School Library Media Manager*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Wynn, R. & Guditus, C. W. (1984) *Team Management: Leadership by Consensus*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing.

Acknowledgements

The following people have made major contributions towards the management of change in KMUTT's Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC) since 2002:

Dean of the School of Liberal Arts: Dr. Sasitorn Suwannatthep
 Former Dean: Asst. Prof. Nuantip Tantisawetrat
 Head of the Department of Language Studies: Ms. Suvalee Chinkumtornwong
 Former Head of the Department of Languages: Mr. Wichai Kritprayoch
 Former Heads of the Self-Access Learning centre:
 Asst. Prof. Wilaksana Srimavin, Mr. Wichai Kritprayoch, Asst. Prof. Dr. Wareesiri Singhasiri, Ms. Gunchong Kritprayoch

Administrative Committee of the Centre for Information and Learning (CIL)

Dean (Advisor): Dr. Sasitorn Suwannatthep
 Academic Vice Dean (Advisor): Asst. Prof. Dr. Pornapit Darasawang
 Special Affairs Vice Dean (Advisor): Asst. Prof. Kasamaporn Maneekhao
 Head of CIL (Chair): Asst. Prof. Chada Kongchan
 Head of Resource Centre: Asst. Prof. Dr. Wareesiri Singhasiri
 Representative from the Department of Language Studies: Dr. Ananya Tuksinvarajarn
 Representative from the Department of Social Studies and Humanities: Dr. Jureeporn Kanjanakaroon
 Secretary of SALC (Secretary of CIL): Ms. Busarin Jirakarn

SALC advisor

Ms. Kulawadee Yamkate

SALC staff

Head of SALC: Asst. Prof. Chada Kongchan
 Secretary: Ms. Busarin Jirakarn
 Material Designer: Ms. Shannoy Vasuwat
 Associate Secretaries: Ms. Wanida Samanye, Ms. Nittra Cheu-in

Grateful acknowledgement is also due to all the teachers and students in the School of Liberal Arts who have offered significant help to the centre since 1991.

Assistant Professor Chada Kongchan is a lecturer in the School of Liberal Arts, KMUTT. She has been Head of the university's Self-Access Learning Centre since 2002 and has also been Head of the Centre for Information and Learning since 2005.

Thai EFL Learners' Repertoire of English Modality in Academic and Electronic Bulletin Board Writing

Montri Tangpijaikul
Macquarie University

Abstract

Modality is central to language use, allowing expression of, for example, doubt, certainty and vagueness. It has been reported, however, that the use of modality is limited among L2 learners of English, one possible reason being that classroom activities do not encourage them to express themselves in this way. This study aimed to compare student use of modality in online bulletin boards and in academic essays. The findings reveal that students use more modal markers in online bulletin board writing than in academic writing.

Introduction

In everyday conversation, we do not normally express our opinions or meanings straightforwardly. For reasons such as tact and politeness, we convey our meanings indirectly, even intentionally unclearly. This aspect of language can be reflected in the use of modality. In *The Oxford English Grammar*, Greenbaum (1996) explains that modality is a semantic category that deals with two types of judgments: epistemic and deontic.

Epistemic modality signals the speaker's or writer's judgment referring to the factuality of what is said or the truth of a proposition. Hence, epistemic modal devices, which are realized by the use of modal verbs (e.g. *MAY*, as in '*that may be wrong*', or *WILL*, as in '*she will be there*'), and modal adverbs (e.g. *PROBABLY* as in '*that is probably right*') are ones which allow speakers to express the possibility, probability and certainty of meanings in their utterances. Deontic modal devices, on the other hand, have to do with some kind of human control over the situation or the proposition, mainly to convey the speaker's obligation or suggestion and are realized basically by the use of modal verbs (e.g. *SHOULD*, as in '*the university should provide more funds*', or *MUST*, as in '*I must go now*'). In systemic functional linguistics, modal devices can come in forms other than modal auxiliaries and modal adverbs (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). For example, some lexical realizations, such as *IN MY OPINION* and *IN MY VIEW*, or mental clauses, such as *I THINK*, *I GUESS*, and *I FEEL*, are also viewed as functioning to express the speakers' degree of commitment towards the truth of the utterances by generally saying that what follows in the propositional utterances is only true based on the speakers' perspectives. Aijmer (1996) argues that *I THINK* has been grammaticalized as a discourse marker or modal particle. It is used to signal the attitude or certainty of speakers or writers towards the content of the proposition.

Both epistemic and deontic modal devices allow speakers to express appropriately the meanings of possibility, prediction, obligation, suggestion, modesty, confidence and lack of confidence in their utterances. However, according to Hyland & Milton (1997: 183), non-native speakers use fewer modal devices compared to native speakers. They note "The ability to express doubt and certainty appropriately in English is a complex task for language learners, but one which is critical to successful academic writing". Other researchers (e.g. Karkkainen, 1992; Gibbons & Markwick-Smith, 1992) also found underuse of modality among non-native English learners.

Online bulletin board writing is interpersonal by nature as it shares some features that are typical of speech (Crystal, 2006); hence, the writing is informal and more carefree. In other words, it is similar to the genre of personal letters, which is condensed with first- and second-person pronouns, while academic writing is more informational and less personally involved (Biber, 1988). As modality is said to be found more in informal contexts than formal ones (Holmes, 1983), it is interesting to find out whether online bulletin board writing would allow language learners to exercise their repertoire of modality in English more than formal academic writing. This is the issue addressed in this study.

Purpose

The aim of this research is to find out whether students use more modal devices in electronic bulletin boards than in academic essays. If this is the case, the use of online bulletin boards as a communicative writing activity would appear to provide learners with an opportunity to exercise their repertoire of modality in English. The findings of this research are expected to raise awareness of this area of learners' command of modality.

Methodology

Subjects

The participants were Thai second-year undergraduate students majoring in English at Kasetsart University in Bangkok from two sections of a writing class (Writing II). Prior to this course, they had gone through basic courses such as English Foundation III and Writing I. Most of them had had little experience writing formal academic essays and, even though all of them had a basic background in composition writing from high school, they were, in effect, making the transition from secondary to tertiary education level and were still limited in academic discourse competence. Outside the classroom, they had access to the internet in many campus areas: at the faculty, there were two spots for using the internet; in addition, the university provided access via a home wired-internet connection and at the university IT center.

The two parallel sections utilized in this study were taught by different teachers but used the same course material, criteria for assessment and course syllabus. Both classes met twice a week for one and a half hours in a regular classroom. The sample subjects comprised a population of 39 students, with 35 females and 4 males.

Instrument

This was the subjects' written work. Each subject wrote three responses to bulletin board topics and three academic essays (see Procedures, below, for details).

Procedures

Since the subjects varied in their computer skills, they were initially given a training session on how to participate in online bulletin board discussion on the course website. Then, in their writing course, they were asked to write in response to three discussion topics on an online bulletin board; they were also asked to submit three academic writing samples on topics similar to the ones online. Both the bulletin board writing and the academic writing activities were done outside the classroom.

Topics on the online bulletin board were posted once every four weeks, at about the same time as when parallel topics in academic writing were assigned. In this way, the subjects could decide based on their own freewill which task they wanted to perform first. The

following topics were adjusted from the students' coursebook, *Introduction to Academic Writing* (Oshima & Hogue, 1997).

Topics assigned in academic writing

1. Write about the most frightening movie or TV program you have ever seen.
2. Write about the changes that a modern invention (e.g. mobile phone, automobile or other technological devices) has already caused or will cause in the future.
3. People's personalities are reflected in their hairstyles and clothing. Do you agree or disagree?

Topics posted for online bulletin board writing

1. Write about the most frightening experience you have ever had.
2. Write about the effect that the internet has already caused or will cause you in the future.
3. People's personalities are reflected in the way they live their lives. Do you agree or disagree?

With regard to the number of words in the two corpora, the subjects were told to write approximately 500 words for each academic essay, resulting in a total of about 1,500 words for each subject for the three topics. In the parallel online writing, the subjects were divided into eight groups of four or five members and, in each group, they were told to post five messages on each discussion topic during the four-week period, with approximately 100 words in each posting. This resulted in a total word length of about 1,500 words for each person on the three online topics.

Data analysis

After collecting the two types of writing, the bulletin board writing (BB corpus) and the academic writing (ACAD corpus), I examined the two corpora and tagged all the modal devices. The corpora were roughly equal in size with approximately 60,000 words in each. After the modal devices were annotated, a computer concordancing program (ConcGram Concordancer) was used to count the frequency of modal items.

Findings

Tables 1-4 present the learners' use of modal devices in the bulletin board and academic writing tasks, with the area of focus divided into four: *modal auxiliaries*, *adverbs*, *lexical verbs* and *parenthetical elements*. Modal auxiliaries are sometimes distinguished in form between central and semi modal verbs (e.g. Perkins, 1983). Central modal verbs include *SHALL*, *SHOULD*, *WILL*, *WOULD*, *CAN*, *COULD*, *MAY*, *MIGHT* and *MUST* while semi modals include *HAVE TO*, *NEED TO*, *OUGHT TO*, *HAD BETTER* and *BE SUPPOSED TO*. These semi modal verbs can sometimes be used semantically like central modal verbs.

Will / Would

Table 1, below, shows that *WILL* was used more than twice as much in the bulletin board writing tasks as in the academic writing tasks, being found 404 times in the bulletin board writing and only 192 times in the academic writing. This may be because the use of *WILL* in bulletin board writing also functions to imply volitional or intentional meaning of the speaker such as in '*I'll be back.*', '*I will come back soon.*' or '*I'll talk about ...*'. This finding corresponds with that of Biber et al. (2002), who found that *WILL* occurs more than twice as often in conversational settings as in academic settings. Meanwhile, *WOULD* was used more frequently in the subjects' academic writing (72 occurrences) than in their

bulletin board writing (64 occurrences), but the difference in terms of frequency between the two genres was not of much significance.

Table 1: Frequencies of modal auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries	ACAD	BB
<i>Central modal verbs</i>		
will	192	404
would	72	64
can	537	510
could	128	59
may	64	76
might	33	33
shall	0	2
should	66	100
must	46	42
<i>Semi modal verbs</i>		
have to	118	169
need to	15	20
be supposed to	0	2
had better	0	2
ought to	0	1
Total	1,271	1,484

Can / Could

CAN was by far the most frequently used modal verb and there was no significant difference in its use between the two modes of writing. *COULD* was found around twice as much in the academic writing (128 occurrences) compared to the bulletin board writing (59 occurrences). Though the subjects may have realized that *COULD* is a more formal and tentative form of *CAN*, it was found that most cases of *COULD* were simply used as a past form of *CAN* in conveying past achievement rather than as a marker of tentativeness, as in ‘At last, they could do that within 3.50 mins.’

May / Might

MAY was used slightly more in the bulletin board writing (76 occurrences) than in the academic writing (64 occurrences) while, coincidentally, *MIGHT* was used equally in the two writing modes. Findings from both corpora also show that the subjects used *MAY* more frequently than *MIGHT*, both in the academic and the bulletin board writing tasks. This is not the case in L1 writing, where *MAY* is used much more than *MIGHT* in academic genres whereas, in conversation, *MIGHT* is used much more than *MAY* (Biber et al., 1999).

Shall / Should / Must

SHALL was not found at all in the subjects’ academic writing and was found only twice in their bulletin board writing; one of these occurrences was in the regular formulaic form of persuasive tag ‘*shall we?*’ and the other was in the strong sense of *WILL* probability (e.g. ‘*I shall write about negative ones soon*’). This seems to suggest that *SHALL* is marginal in the repertoire of many learners’ modality, which is not at all surprising given that it has become relatively rare in English (Biber et al., 1999). *SHOULD* was used more in the subjects’ bulletin board writing (100 occurrences) than in their academic writing (66

occurrences). This may be because *SHOULD* conveys deontic meaning by giving personal advice or suggestions; in conveying deontic meaning, speakers or writers tend to be more self-engaged. The result seems to suggest that bulletin boards allow learners to express themselves through advice-giving in this way more often than in academic writing. However, this does not seem to be the case with *MUST*, which was found slightly more in the academic writing (46 occurrences) than in the bulletin board writing (42 occurrences).

Have to / Need to / Be supposed to / Had better / Ought to

While similar in meaning to *MUST*, *HAVE TO* was used much more frequently in both corpora, being used 169 times in the subjects' bulletin board writing and 118 times in their academic writing. This finding is similar to that of Biber et al. (1999), who reported that *HAVE TO* was found more frequently in speech while *MUST* was more common in academic genres. *NEED TO* was also found more in the bulletin board writing than in the academic writing, though with a smaller range in frequency. Similar to *SHALL*, the semi modals *BE SUPPOSED TO*, *HAD BETTER* and *OUGHT TO* were not found at all in academic writing; in the bulletin board writing, *BE SUPPOSED TO* and *HAD BETTER* were found only twice each while *OUGHT TO* was found only once.

Table 2: Frequencies of adverbs

Adverbs	ACAD	BB
really	43	111
actually	9	44
truly	3	10
in fact	3	11
indeed	13	1
in reality	0	3
maybe	30	63
probably	18	10
possibly	3	2
perhaps	2	4
of course	1	12
surely	6	5
for sure	2	5
Total	133	281

Really / Actually / Truly / In fact / Indeed / In reality

Table 2 shows that, except for *INDEED*, all the epistemic adverbs conveying actuality were found more in the subjects' bulletin board writing than in their academic writing. This finding for *INDEED* corresponds with the L1 data given by Biber et al. (1999), where it was found more in academic writing than in conversational contexts.

Maybe / Probably / Possibly / Perhaps

MAYBE was used more frequently than other epistemic modal adverbs in both genres. This is not the case in L1 writing, where native speakers tend to use *MAYBE* less than *PROBABLY* in academic genres (Biber et al., 1999). While *MAYBE* is mostly used in sentence medial position, particularly in front of the main verb, both corpora also show occurrences of *MAYBE* in sentence initial position (10 times in the academic writing and 18 times in the bulletin board writing). *POSSIBLY* and *PERHAPS* were used much less frequently than *MAYBE* and *PROBABLY*.

Of course / Surely / For sure

According to Holmes (1988) and Carter & McCarthy (2006), the use of adverbs such as *OF COURSE*, *SURELY* and *FOR SURE* is more common in spoken contexts than in academic writing. In the present data, this seems to be the case for *OF COURSE* and *FOR SURE* while there is no significant difference in the use of *SURELY* between the two writing modes.

Table 3: Frequencies of lexical verbs

Lexical verbs	ACAD	BB
I think	27	372
I believe	6	30
I guess	4	21
I feel	0	10
Total	37	433

As shown in Table 3, learners rely more on lexical patterns through the primary clause structure of ‘1st person pron. + mental verbs’ when writing online than offline, with *I THINK* being used the most (372 times in the bulletin board writing and only 27 times in the academic writing). It is also interesting to note that learners used *I THINK* in this function more than alternatives such as *I GUESS*, *I BELIEVE* and *I FEEL*. The idea of using one form rather than many others seems to correspond with what Thomas (1983: 103) says: “L2 learners select one from many options of modal verbs and stick with it for their uses in all contexts”. Larsen-Freeman & Long (1991: 26) agree, saying that “Learners will use only those aspects in which they have the most confidence”.

Table 4: Frequencies of parenthetical elements

Parenthetical elements	ACAD	BB
For me,	10	44
To me,	2	25
In my view,	4	37
In my opinion,	6	34
*In my point of view,	0	5
*In my idea,	0	2
*In my eyes,	0	2
TOTAL	22	149

*These parenthetical elements are very unlikely to be used by native speakers.

It is clear from Table 4 that these parenthetical adverbial phrases were used much more in the subjects’ bulletin board writing than in their academic writing, with *FOR ME*, *TO ME*, *IN MY VIEW* and *IN MY OPINION* being used the most. These phrases are used more often in speech than in writing. This repeats the pattern observed above, namely that online writing shares expressions commonly found in speech. According to Swan (2005), parenthetical elements such as *IN MY OPINION* and *IN MY VIEW* make opinions and statements sound less dogmatic and suggest some degree of commitment to the truth value of the utterance by opening a chance for disagreement, as the proposition is only based on the individual speaker’s viewpoint.

Since these parenthetical elements remain unchanged throughout the subjects' writing and all of them are put in the sentence initial position, they can be used as memorized chunks and they can play an important role in L2 language use. As Ellis (1994: 88) puts it, "The development of target-like L2 ability, then, requires the memorization of a large set of formulaic chunks and patterns".

Discussion

While modal auxiliaries are central to the concept of modality in English, other 'metaphorical realizations of modality', such as some adverbs, adverbial phrases and lexical verbs, can also function semantically like modal auxiliaries (for the concept of metaphorical expansion of modality, see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 613-625). While many epistemic modal auxiliaries were used more in the subjects' bulletin board writing than in their academic writing, others were not. The frequencies of epistemic modal auxiliaries in the two writing modes varied greatly. However, almost all deontic modal auxiliaries were found more in the bulletin board writing than in the academic writing. This suggests that online bulletin boards allow learners to express their opinions through advice-giving more than academic writing.

Students should realize that there are many adverbs which can be used to convey degree of probability, so that they do not have to rely on only a few limited items and use them over and over again, which would make their writing sound redundant and lexically limited. For example, while the subjects used *MAYBE* much more than *PROBABLY*, English native speakers tend to use them with similar frequencies; in fact, according to Biber et al. (1999), *PROBABLY* is found even slightly more than *MAYBE* in both British and American conversation and academic prose.

Similarly, the overwhelming use of *I THINK* suggests that Thai learners rely too much on a single lexical form while, in fact, there are many other items that can be used interchangeably to convey similar modal meaning. There seems to be an attempt, though, for learners to use various phrases such as *IN MY EYES* and *TO ME, IN MY VIEW* and *IN MY POINT OF VIEW*, some of which are rarely (if ever) used by English native speakers. The latter would, for instance, almost certainly use *FROM MY POINT OF VIEW* instead of *IN MY POINT OF VIEW*; however, *FROM MY POINT OF VIEW* cannot always be used in all cases where *IN MY OPINION* is used (for explanation of the use of *IN MY OPINION* and *FROM MY POINT OF VIEW*, see Swan, 2005: 434). Additionally, *MAYBE*, which is an epistemic modal adverb, has often been confused with the use of epistemic modal *MAY* plus copula 'be'. For example, '*That may be true*' is sometimes written, incorrectly, by learners as '*That maybe true*' while, just as erroneously, a sentence such as '*Maybe that is true*' is written as '*May be that is true*'. To improve the pragmatic competence in conveying doubt and certainty in English, what matters is not only the quantity and variety but also the ability to use these modal devices correctly and appropriately in different genres.

Learners should also be aware of the possibility that some modal devices can be used in a variety of positions in a sentence and that their different syntactic positions can convey different meanings. For example, *I THINK*, when used in initial position, conveys a stronger claim than when it is used in medial or final positions, which tend to show speakers' doubt or uncertainty (Holmes, 1995). To interpret the present data, it seems that many students are unaware of this nuance as *I THINK* was almost invariably used in initial position. Since learners have some difficulties using modality appropriately in English,

before being introduced to online bulletin board writing activities, they should be advised of a wide range of modal devices in English and given enough practice to become familiar with these linguistic devices.

Conclusion

This study provides a preliminary view of Thai learners' command of modality in two written genres: academic essays and online bulletin board writing. Its findings show that writing modes have a significant impact on learners' use of modality. In academic writing, learners tend to be more formal and less involved than in online bulletin board writing. Therefore, bulletin board writing can be used as a communicative activity as it plays a significant role in giving learners a chance to practise using modal features that are common in speech. The activity can help develop learners' ability to express themselves more subtly, showing various levels of confidence or tentativeness through their utterances. These linguistic features play a part in pragmatic competence and are, thus, important in everyday communication. As a result, the findings of this study clearly have implications for ELT, particularly for Thai learners. However, I am aware that simply counting modal items, regardless of their functions or how they are used in context, may not provide us with a comprehensive insight into learners' command of modality. A more in-depth study needs to be done at the micro pragmatic levels. This preliminary study can only attempt to answer the question in a very limited way; ultimately, the paper's more important task is to open up more pressing questions regarding the use of modality by non-native learners of English.

References

- Aijmer, K. (1996) '*I think* – an English modal particle'. In T. Swan & O. J. Westvik (eds.), *Modality in Germanic Languages: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, pp. 1-47. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Biber, D. (1988) *Variation across Speech and Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G. & Conrad, S. (1999) *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. London: Longman.
- Biber, D., Conrad, S. & Leech, G. (2002) *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Essex: Longman.
- Carter, R. & McCarthy, M. (2006) *Cambridge Grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2006) *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1994) *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gibbons, J. & Markwick-Smith, V. (1992) Exploring the use of a systemic semantic description. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 2 (1) 36-49.
- Greenbaum, S. (1996). *The Oxford English Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. & Matthiessen, C. (2004) *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Holmes, J. (1983) Speaking English with the appropriate degree of conviction. In C. Brumfit (ed.), *Learning and Teaching Languages for Communication*, pp. 100-113. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.
- Holmes, J. (1988) Doubt and certainty in ESL textbooks. *Applied Linguistics* 9 (1) 21-44.
- Holmes, J. (1995) *Women, Men and Politeness*. Harlow: Longman.

- Hyland, K. & Milton, J. (1997) Qualification and certainty in L1 and L2 students' writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 6 (2) 183-205.
- Karkkainen, E. (1992) Modality as a strategy in interaction: Epistemic modality in the language of native and non-native speakers of English. *Pragmatics and Language Learning* 3: 197-216.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. & Long, M. H. (1991) *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. London: Longman.
- Oshima, A. & Hogue, A. (1997) *Introduction to Academic Writing*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
- Perkins, M. R. (1983) *Modal Expressions in English*. London: Frances Pinter.
- Swan, M. (2005) *Practical English Usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thomas, J. (1983) Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics* 4 (2) 91-112.

Montri Tangpijaikul works in the Department of Foreign Languages, Kasetsart University. He is currently on study leave at the Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Australia. His research interests are English modality and intensifying elements in English used by Thai learners.

Questioning Techniques and Student Participation

Nuttawarin Teerakornvisatpugdee

Wilaksana Srimavin

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

Abstract

This paper investigates the use of Cole & Chan's (1987) questioning techniques to see the factors affecting the success of their use. The study was conducted with three native teachers of English who used the same topic in three classes of undergraduate students in the Engineering Faculty of a Thai university. The research instrument was the transcripts from the video recording of the classes. The results of the study indicate that the teachers varied in their use of questioning techniques to help their students answer questions. While 'redirecting' was the only technique that none of the teachers used, the most successful technique was 'prompting'. However, the success of teachers' questioning did not depend on the numbers of techniques used. It can be concluded that, in order to get students' participation when asking questions, teachers should be aware of the difficulty level of the questions in terms of such matters as students' language proficiency and background knowledge, waiting time and classroom atmosphere.

Introduction

In the past, most teachers usually gave their knowledge and experience to students directly, controlled them and corrected their performance. It seemed that everything depended on the teachers being teacher-centered and the students waiting passively for their teachers to lecture them. Nowadays, there is a modern learner-centered approach used to change passive learners into active ones. Students are expected to be more involved in learning and teaching. Dickinson (1987) states that, in a learner-centered approach, there are many ways that teachers can give learners opportunities to use language to communicate and participate in the classroom, for instance, using pair work or group work; letting students guess the meanings of words; or eliciting, which is a technique that activates students to participate more in the class.

Literature review

Elicitation and questioning

Practically, there are many ways to elicit information from students. Gower et al. (1995) suggest that teachers could elicit information from their students by using gestures, pictures, information from previous lessons, or providing prompts or cues. Questions could be used as well to elicit information from students. Watson Todd (1997) supports the idea that teachers could use a series of questions to elicit the required information from students. Ur (1996) adds that using questions makes student active in learning and also allows weaker students to have a better chance to participate. Thus, it is clear that questioning is one elicitation technique that creates interaction between teachers and students in the classroom.

Why teachers use questioning techniques

Teachers frequently ask questions in the classroom, and there are many reasons why. Freiberg & Driscoll (2000) mention the three most common purposes: to check for students' understanding of instructions, to evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson, and to increase higher-level thinking. Watson Todd (1997) adds some further reasons: questions

can be asked to facilitate communication; questions can be used to focus attention on a topic; and to stimulate motivation, interest and participation.

Furthermore, Ur (1996) supports the idea that questioning can be used to find out facts, ideas or opinions from learners. Lastly, concerning language learning, Richards & Lockhart (1994) state that the teacher can use questions to elicit particular structures or vocabulary items. From the ideas aforementioned, it is obvious that questions are important for teaching and learning in the classroom.

How teachers use questioning techniques

Normally, teachers often ask questions, get responses, give feedback and then ask new questions; however, they do not always get responses from the students. White & Lightbown (1984, cited in Chaudron, 1988) found that three secondary ESL teachers asked up to four questions per minute and 40% of the questions did not receive responses. There are many reasons why students may not answer questions; for example, students are thinking, do not hear clearly or have no ideas to tell the teacher. To deal with this, teachers should know effective questioning techniques.

There are many techniques that teachers can use to let students talk and participate in the classroom. Cole & Chan (1987: 122-4) describe ten techniques for teachers to help students formulate an appropriate response.

- *Pausing*: The teacher might give the student time to think about the question and formulate a response.
- *Prompting*: The teacher gives a cue or prompt, which could be visual or verbal, to help students find the answer.
- *Repeating*: During repetition, the teacher might stress key words and phrases to highlight underlying meanings in the question.
- *Rephrasing*: The teacher might rephrase the question, such as by replacing the term 'good points' with 'advantages'.
- *Providing additional information*: The teacher then might give the missing information that might have caused the difficulty.
- *Asking supplementary questions*: If students' answers are too broad or too narrow, the teacher might ask a sub-question to help them give a more appropriate answer.
- *Encouraging students to predict answers*: Students might not be sure about an answer, so the teacher might encourage them to think about possible answers by asking a question or making a statement to help them to predict the answer.
- *Redirecting*: The teacher asks other students to answer a question if the first nominee cannot answer.
- *Changing level of cognitive demand*: If the question is too difficult or needs cognitive skills that are beyond students' level of competency, the teacher might have to change the cognitive demand level to suit the students. This could be done by making the vocabulary easier, providing a diagram or model or aid to assist in the interpretation of the question, shifting the emphasis of the question from comprehension to recall, or changing a wh-question to another one.
- *Structuring*: Teachers can link the answers to a sequence of questions with evaluative comments or interpretations, or summarize the information at the end of a question-and-answer series.

When teachers use questioning techniques

Normally, teachers can use questioning for different purposes, but this study focuses only on asking questions to elicit information from students. Moreover, the researchers believe that, assuming use of the paradigm 'presentation, practice, production' (PPP), amount of

elicitation used in the presentation stage is higher than the amount of elicitation used in the practice or production stages. Supporting this idea, Watson Todd (1997: 69-70) says, "Eliciting can occur at any time in the lesson, but is perhaps most commonly conducted during the presentation stage".

Methodology

This section describes the participants, instrument, procedures and data analysis.

Participants

Subject teachers

This study focuses on the use of questioning techniques by native teachers of English. Due to limitations of time, the researchers decided to have only 3 subjects, all native teachers of English teaching the same topics in a course that emphasized oral communication (Oral Communication I). This course was selected because it provided a lot of interaction between the teacher and the students. To try to protect the research from being biased, the first researcher did not tell the subject teachers directly that she would observe their questioning techniques but just informed them in general terms that the study was about teachers asking questions and students participating in class.

Students

The students who participated in this study were undergraduates studying in the oral communication course. There were three classes, with 25-30 students in each, all of them from the Faculty of Engineering and with intermediate proficiency in English.

Instrument

The researcher used a video recorder to capture the details of the questioning techniques used and the students' reactions to each questioning technique. In this study, each subject teacher was recorded only once for one hour. The video recorder was set in a corner at the front of the class, where the subject teachers and students could see it. After collecting the data through the video recorder, transcripts (see appendix) were used as the research instrument. The first researcher selected for transcription only the parts of the lessons where questioning techniques were used. The data in the transcripts were classified to identify types of questioning techniques and also analyzed to find out which types of question most frequently received responses.

Procedures

The first researcher asked permission from each of the three subject teachers to video-record their class for one hour; the topic of each recorded class was job interviews. Next, the episodes of questioning techniques in the presentation stage were selected and transcribed. Since the first researcher did not directly observe the classes and the subject teachers did not use microphones, she sometimes could not hear some words clearly. Therefore, she asked one of her MA classmates to double-check the video and the transcripts. Then, she labeled each type of questioning technique used to find out which ones were most likely to receive a response. A response is defined as at least one word that is meaningful in the context.

Data analysis

The data in the transcripts were analyzed and categorized under Cole & Chan's aforementioned questioning technique categories. After that, the data from the transcripts were tallied to show the number of each subject teacher's use of questioning techniques. Later, the questioning techniques were arranged in descending order of frequency. Finally, the data from the transcripts were analyzed again for techniques most likely to receive a response. In the same way, the percentages of success (i.e. subject teachers

obtaining a response) were arranged from maximum to minimum in order to interpret the results.

Data presentation

This section begins by presenting the questioning techniques used by the subject teachers and then focuses on those that were most likely to receive a response.

General findings

The frequency of use of the questioning techniques by each subject teacher is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of use of questioning techniques by each subject teacher

Questioning techniques	ST1	ST2	ST3	Total
Pausing	3	3	7	13
Rephrasing	0	2	9	11
Asking supplementary questions	1	1	9	11
Repeating	3	0	7	10
Providing additional information	1	0	7	8
Prompting	0	1	4	5
Changing level of cognitive demand	0	0	3	3
Encouraging students to predict answers	0	1	0	1
Structuring	0	0	1	1
Redirecting to other students	0	0	0	0

Note: ST1 = Subject Teacher 1, etc.

Table 1 shows that the subject teachers used ‘pausing’ more frequently than any of the other questioning techniques (totalling 13 times); meanwhile, ‘rephrasing’ and ‘asking supplementary questions’ were equally used (11 times). Another technique which was used fairly frequently was ‘repeating’ (10 times), as was ‘providing additional information’ (8 times). The techniques that were used less often were ‘prompting’ (5 times) and ‘changing level of cognitive demand’ (3 times). The techniques used only once were ‘encouraging students to predict answers’ and ‘structuring’. There was only one technique, ‘redirecting to other students’, that none of the three subject teachers used to help students respond.

Focusing on individual subject teachers, Table 1 shows that 4 questioning techniques were used by the first subject teacher (ST1). ‘Pausing’ and ‘repeating’ were used the most (3 times each); both ‘asking supplementary questions’ and ‘providing additional information’ were used only once. The second subject teacher (ST2) used ‘pausing’ more than other techniques (3 times) to give students time to answer questions; ‘rephrasing’ was used twice; and the least used techniques (only once each) were ‘asking supplementary questions’, ‘prompting’ and ‘encouraging students to predict answers’. In contrast to the other two subject teachers, the third subject teacher (ST3) used many techniques: ‘rephrasing’ and ‘asking supplementary questions’ were the most used (9 times) whereas ‘pausing’, ‘repeating’ and ‘providing additional information’ were used less often (7 times each). This subject teacher also helped students give answers by ‘prompting’ (4 times), ‘changing level of cognitive demand’ (3 times) and ‘structuring’ (once).

Questioning techniques that received a response

In order to see which questioning techniques are most likely to receive a response, the total frequencies of each technique to receive a response and non-response and also the percentages of success in using such techniques (i.e. triggering a response) are presented in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Questioning techniques that received responses

Questioning techniques	Successful				Unsuccessful				Total	Success (%)
	ST1	ST2	ST3	Total	ST1	ST2	ST3	Total		
Prompting	0	1	3	4	0	0	1	1	5	80.00
Changing level of cognitive demand	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	3	66.67
Asking supplementary questions	0	1	6	7	1	0	3	4	11	63.64
Pausing	1	3	2	6	2	0	5	7	13	46.15
Rephrasing	0	0	3	3	0	2	6	8	11	27.27
Providing additional information	0	0	2	2	1	0	5	6	8	25.00
Repeating	1	0	1	2	2	0	6	8	10	20.00
Encouraging students to predict answers	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
Structuring	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Redirecting to other students	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: ST1 = Subject Teacher 1, etc.

From Table 2, it can be seen that ‘prompting’, with a success rate of 80%, was the technique that was most likely to receive a response from the students; the subject teachers used ‘prompting’ a total of 5 times, but it failed to work only once. The percentages of success for ‘changing level of cognitive demand’ and ‘asking supplementary questions’ were quite high: respectively, 66.67% (3 times used, worked twice) and 63.64% (11 times used, worked 7 times); this means both these techniques also worked well. The subject teachers used ‘pausing’ a total of 13 times and it worked 6 times (46.15%). However, they were not very successful at using ‘rephrasing’, ‘providing additional information’ and ‘repeating’ techniques, as evidenced by the fairly low percentages of success (27.27%, 25% and 20%, respectively). Worse, two rarely used techniques, ‘encouraging students to predict answers’ and ‘structuring’, were completely unsuccessful (0%). ‘Redirecting to other students’ was not used; consequently, there was no information to reveal whether it worked or not.

Discussion

This discussion includes implications and recommendations.

The unused technique

In this study, the questioning technique ‘redirecting’ was unused. In cases where the first student failed to respond, the subject teachers did not call upon any other students to answer the questions. Considering the data in the transcripts (see appendix), there were some reasons why the subject teachers did not do so. Initially, the students might know the answers, so they answered the question right after hearing it. Next, the subject teachers might have seen that the students regularly participated in the classroom; thus, it was not necessary to call a student’s name to draw his/her attention. Alternatively, they may have thought that the students wanted time to think, so they tried to use other techniques, such as ‘pausing’, ‘paraphrasing’ or ‘repeating’.

Additionally, the researchers believe that there might be other reasons why the subject teachers may not have wanted to use this technique. Watson Todd (1997) mentions a

number of relevant factors. First, class size is an important factor; if the class is big, 'redirecting' might be avoided. Second, the cultural environment might affect the teacher's decision-making in the sense that some cultures might prefer choral responses. The last factor is classroom atmosphere; the teacher might not want to put pressure on an individual student to answer.

The researcher also believes that, in some cases, a teacher should use 'redirecting' because it encourages students to participate. Gower & Walters (1983: 48-50) mention that calling a student's name might make the student feel good that the teacher sees them as important in the class. However, they add that "the student's name is best used after the question has been asked or the instruction given"; if the person is called before the question is asked, he/she may panic or lose confidence.

Factors promoting the success of questioning

The subject teachers used many questioning techniques, some successful and others unsuccessful. The two main factors promoting the success of questioning (choosing suitable techniques for the situation and encouraging students to respond) are discussed and illustrated; this will be followed by consideration of factors hindering success. (For full contexts of the data samples in this discussion as well as transcript conventions observed, see appendix.)

Choosing suitable techniques for the situation

First of all, the subject teachers often gave proper guidance to their students. From the results in Table 2, it can be seen that 'prompting' was the most successful technique. The question-answer series below (see Extract 1, lines 4-7, in the appendix) illustrates how subjects can succeed with 'prompting'; here, ST2 guided students by giving an appropriate example, enabling them to answer the question.

ST2: What are your languages? Thai- **[Prompting]**

Ss: And English.

ST2: And English, yes.

Secondly, the wording, structure and difficulty level of questions were often suited to the students' level of comprehension. Cole & Chan (1987) suggest that the vocabulary and syntax of the questions should match the students' ability. Good & Brophy (2000: 391) support that "questions should be phrased in natural, simple language (as opposed to pedantic, textbook language) and should be adapted to the level of the class". In terms of content, Watson Todd (1997: 36) says that teachers "should try to match the level of difficulty of their questions with the students' level". According to the results (Table 2), 'changing level of cognitive demand' had quite a high percentage of success (66.67%); therefore, when the subject teachers changed from a difficult question to an easy one, the students might give a response, as shown below (see Extract 2, lines 51-60, in the appendix).

ST3: Pardon. Well, the first part is... This is an 'if-clause', you're right. And sentences with if-clauses have a name.

Ss: (Silence for two seconds) **[Pausing]**

ST3: Begin with 'c'. **[Prompting]**

Ss: Condition ...

ST3: Yes, it is conditional, isn't it? Which one is it? **[Changing level of cognitive demand]** First, second or third? **[Changing level of cognitive demand]**

Ss: Third.

In this part, when the students knew that sentences with an if-clause were ‘conditional’, ST3 changed the difficulty level of the question by using the ‘changing level of cognitive demand’ technique; as a result, he/she received responses. The reason why ST3 used this technique was probably because he/she saw that it was too difficult for the students to tell the complete name of the particular type of conditional sentences.

Next, the results in this study showed that ‘pausing’ had a 46.15% success rate. The example below (see Extract 3, lines 1-5, in the appendix) shows how this technique succeeded; ST2 used only the ‘pausing’ technique to give students enough time to think about the answers.

ST2: What about your education?
Ss: (Silence for three seconds) **[Pausing]**
S5: Major study.
S6: Name of university.
ST2: Major study, name of university. Yes.

Long et al. (1984, cited in Richards & Lockhart, 1994) found that teachers frequently used a very short wait time, around one second, which is barely adequate time for students to respond. If teachers gave more time, around three to five seconds, student responses would almost certainly increase.

Another technique utilized by the subject teachers was ‘providing sufficient information’ or additional information to the students; the following data sample (see Extract 2, lines 45-51, in the appendix) provides an illustration.

ST3: Now, what name do we give to this structure?
Ss: Because ...
ST3: What name? This structure ‘if and the past tense, *would* and the base verb’ has a name. **[Providing sufficient information]**
Ss: (Whisper)
ST3: Pardon. Well, the first part is ... This is an ‘if-clause’, you’re right.

Before this interaction took place (see Extract 2, lines 1-44, in the appendix), ST3 had read the sentence, “If I had that kind of marriage, we wouldn’t have much at the home.” Then the subject teacher asked the students about the name of the structure. Such a question was too difficult; therefore, when the subject teacher added that the structure consists of ‘if’ followed by ‘would’ and the base verb, the students were able to respond. In short, the subject teachers could help their students by ‘providing sufficient information’ to answer the questions.

Encouraging students to respond

Apart from the role of questioning techniques in promoting students’ responses in questions, the data showed that the subject teachers also obtained responses by encouraging their students. There were several ways in which they did this. For instance, ST2 raised his/her voice and this was successful in eliciting a response, albeit a silent one (see Extract 1, lines 1-3, in the appendix):

ST2: How many people here have more than one language? **{Question}** Yes. Put your hands up, please. All of you? **{Encouraging students to answer}**
Ss: (@ Raise their hands. @)

Meanwhile, another subject teacher successfully coaxed his/her students to respond by giving words of encouragement, such as “come on, don’t be timid”.

Factors obstructing the success of questioning

There are some factors which caused the use of questioning to fail. One factor is the asking of vague questions. If the question is too broad, students might not know the focus and so be unable to respond. In this study, sometimes the subject teachers asked vague questions, as illustrated below (see Extract 4, lines 1-5, in the appendix).

ST3: We are going to listen to something about ideal jobs, an ideal job, so close your books. What words do you think is ideal? **{Question}** What is that?
Ss: (Silence for two seconds)

Even though ST3 then repeated the question, the students did not respond. It might be because the subject teacher’s question was vague. The students did not know what the subject teacher wanted them to answer. Brown (2001) mentions that a vague question that uses abstract or ambiguous language may depress interactive learning. Groisser (1964, cited in Good & Brophy, 2000) says that, when teachers ask a vague question that can be responded to in too many ways, such questions will confuse students. To solve this problem, teachers should ask obvious, straightforward questions at the beginning.

Moreover, students’ knowledge and language ability are also important factors. If teachers ask questions which are not suited to their language ability, they may not be able to answer because of difficulties with vocabulary or grammatical structure. In addition, students might have no idea how to answer because they do not have sufficient background knowledge. The example below (see Extract 2, lines 53-66, in the appendix) illustrates how students’ insufficient knowledge and/or language ability can obstruct the success of teachers’ questioning.

ST3: And sentences with if-clauses have a name. **[Rephrasing]**
Ss: (Silence for two seconds) **[Pausing]**
ST3: Begin with ‘c’. **[Prompting]**
Ss: Condition.
ST3: Yes, it is conditional, isn’t it? **[Providing additional information]** Which one is it? **[Changing level of cognitive demand]** First, second or third? **[Changing level of cognitive demand]**
Ss: Third.
ST3: There are four types of conditional sentences. **[Providing additional information]** We give them a number. **[Prompting]** Which one is it? **[Repeating]**
Ss: (Silence for two seconds) **[Pausing]**
ST3: I’m not sure. OK. In this case, this is the second. OK.

Here, ST3 asked about the name of a structure that has an if-clause, but students could not answer the question. Next, ST3 tried to help them by giving the prompt, until they could name the structure; however, the answer was not complete. Later, he/she used many techniques to help them, but they still could not give the answer. It was because they had no idea how to answer and their language abilities were not good enough. From this study, it seems that providing suitable information might assist teachers in solving this problem. This idea is reinforced by Cole & Chan (1987) as they state that, if teachers asked questions appropriate to students’ knowledge, experience and abilities, students would respond because they understand and have enough knowledge to do so.

However, sometimes the subject teachers asked suitable questions, but the students still did not answer. This is possibly because they lacked confidence and felt reluctant to speak out or were afraid to lose face if their answer was wrong. Tarone & Yule (1989: 139) state that “self-confidence is normally assumed to have an influence in successful learning”. Hence, to solve this problem, teachers might try to create a secure atmosphere in class such as by asking an easy question before a difficult one so students could take risks to answer. Watson Todd (1997) adds that a series of questions can be sequenced from the familiar to the new, from general to specific, from factual to inferential, or in a chronological order. Cole & Chan (1987: 131–132) support the idea, saying, “asking questions in the order from easy to difficult, students will gain confidence”. They add that students prefer teachers to ask questions that they are able to answer and so get positive reactions from their teachers or friends. Brown (2001) mentions that teachers should make students believe in their ability and suggests many ways to encourage every student to take risks. Firstly, teachers should create an atmosphere in class by encouraging students to try to respond and not simply wait for a volunteer. Moreover, they might try to respond to students’ answers in a positive way such as praising; in doing so, students will dare to take further risks in answering questions.

Conclusion

This study was designed to find out how three teachers used questioning techniques (Cole & Chan, 1987) and which of these techniques was most likely to elicit student responses. The results of the study indicate that each teacher used different questioning techniques to help students answer questions. ‘Redirecting’ was the only technique that none of the teachers used. The most successful technique in terms of triggering student responses was ‘prompting’. It should be noted that the success of teachers’ questioning did not depend on the frequency of use of each technique. There are many factors promoting the success of questioning, such as proper guidance, sufficient time, appropriate wording, structure and level of difficulty, and encouragement. As illustrated in the implications and recommendations in this study, to prevent failure in questioning and so they can give proper support, teachers should be aware of their students’ background knowledge and level of language proficiency.

References

- Brown, H. D. (2001) *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd edition). New York: Longman.
- Chaudron, C. (1988) *Second Language Classrooms: Research on Teaching and Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cole, P. G. & Chan, L. K. S. (1987) *Teaching Principles and Practice*. Sydney: Prentice Hall.
- Dickinson, L. (1987) *Self-Instruction in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freiberg, H. J. & Driscoll, A. (2000) *Universal Teaching Strategies* (3rd edition). Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.
- Good, T. L. & Brophy, J. E. (2000) *Looking in Classrooms*. New York: Longman.
- Gower, R. & Walters, S. (1983) *Teaching Practice Handbook*. London: Heinemann.
- Gower, R., Phillips, D. & Walters, S. (1995) *Teaching Practice Handbook*. Hong Kong: Heinemann.
- Groisser, P. (1964) *How to Use the Fine Art of Questioning*. New York: Teachers’ Practical Press.
- Long, M. H., Brock, C., Crookes, G., Deike, C., Potter, L. & Zhang, S. (1984) *The Effect of Teachers’ Questioning Patterns and Wait-Time on Pupil Participation in Public High School Classes in Hawaii for Students of Limited English Proficiency*.

Technical Report 1. Honolulu: Center of Second Language Classroom Research, Social Science Research Institute, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Richards, J. C. & Lockhart, C. (1994) *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tarone, E. & Yule, G. (1989) *Focus on the Language Learner*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ur, P. (1996) *A Course in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Watson Todd, R. (1997) *Classroom Teaching Strategies*. London: Prentice Hall.

White, J. & Lightbown, P. M. (1984) Asking and answering in ESL classes. *Canadian Modern Language Review* 40: 228-244.

Wilén, W. W. (1984) Implications of research on questioning for the teacher educator. *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 17: 31-35.

Appendix: Transcripts

@	=	Laughing	↗	=	Raising voice
-	=	Stopping in middle of phrase	[]	=	Overlapping speed
()	=	Acting or unclear words	...	=	Pausing
[Q]	=	Name of each technique	{ }	=	Initial question/Question/
[sic]	=	Error from subject			Encouraging students to answer
[5]	=	Line number in original transcript			

Extract 1: Subject Teacher 2

This extract came after the subject teacher elicited the contents of resumés and, with this in mind, asked the students about their languages.

ST2: How many people here have more than one language? **{Question}** Yes. Put your hands up, please. All of you? **{Encouraging students to answer}**

Ss: (@ Raise their hands. @)

ST2: Yes. What are your languages? **{Initial Question}** [5] Thai- **{Prompting}**

Ss: And English.

ST2: And English, yes.

Extract 2: Subject Teacher 3

In this extract, the subject teacher let the students do a dictation activity. After they finished it, the subject teacher used the dictation passage to discuss a language point, the second conditional, beginning by trying to elicit the name of the structure.

ST3: Now, I want you to look at some of the language used particularly in this last paragraph. Look at the first sentence, "If I had that kind of marriage, we wouldn't have much at the home." Do you know what structure is? **{Initial Question}** [5] What grammar is it? **{Rephrasing}** We have a name for it. **{Providing additional information}** What's the first word? **{Asking supplementary questions}**

Ss: (Silence for three seconds) **{Pausing}**

ST3: First word in the sentence? **{Rephrasing}**

S1: [10] If.

ST3: Right. What tense is the verb? **{Asking supplementary questions}**

Ss: Past.

ST3: Past tense. [15] Now, what's the next word? **{Asking supplementary questions}** "If I had that kind of marriage..." Is this 'I' or 'we'? **{Asking supplementary questions}**

Ss: We.

ST3: What's after that? **{Asking supplementary questions}**

Ss: [20] Would, wouldn't.

ST3: And then? **{Asking supplementary questions}**

Ss: Have much.
 ST3: OK. So, what tense is 'have'? **[Rephrasing questions]**
 Ss: Simple.
 ST3: [25] Not really. No. Does it change? **[Asking supplementary questions]** If it was the simple present, we would say "we wouldn't has". **[Providing additional information]** Does it change? **[Repeating]** [30] Sorry! "He wouldn't has [sic]". Does it change? **[Repeating]** If it was 'he' instead of (unclear), what would come next? **[Asking supplementary questions]**
 Ss: [35] Have.
 ST3: Have or has? **[Changing level of cognitive demand / Providing additional information]**
 Ss: Have.
 ST3: It always (unclear; base verb ...) It would never be 'has', always 'have'. **[Providing additional information]** [40] Let's put the verb here. If I – **[Prompting]**
 Ss: Had.
 ST3: 'Had' OK. We wouldn't – **[Prompting]**
 Ss: Have.
 ST3: Have much at the home. [45] Now, what name do we give to this structure? **[Rephrasing]**
 Ss: Because.
 ST3: What name? **[Repeating]** This structure 'if and the past tense, would and the base verb' has a name. **[Providing additional information]**
 Ss: [50] (Whisper)
 ST3: Pardon. Well, the first part is ... This is an 'if-clause', you're right. **[Structuring]** And sentences with if-clauses have a name. **[Rephrasing]**
 Ss: (Silence for two seconds) **[Pausing]**
 ST3: [55] Begin with 'c'. **[Prompting]**
 Ss: Condition.
 ST3: Yes, it is conditional, isn't it? **[Providing additional information]** Which one is it? **[Changing level of cognitive demand]** First, second or third? **[Changing level of cognitive demand]**
 Ss: [60] Third.
 ST3: There are four [sic] types of conditional sentences. **[Providing additional information]** We give them a number. **[Prompting]** Which one is it? **[Repeating]**
 Ss: [65] (Silence for two seconds) **[Pausing]**
 ST3: I'm not sure. OK. In this case, this is the second. OK.

Extract 3: Subject Teacher 2

For this teaching, the subject teacher let the students write a resumé for a job application and tried to elicit what they should put it. At the beginning, this subject teacher asked the students "Tell me! What needs to go on your resumé?" and then the students gave a lot of answers. Until the teacher asked them about their education, questioning techniques were used.

ST2: What about your education? **{Initial Question}**
 Ss: (Silence for three seconds) **[Pausing]**
 S5: Major study.
 S6: Name of university.
 ST2: [5] Major study, name of university. Yes. In the resumé, ...

Extract 4: Subject Teacher 3

Here, the subject teacher taught the students about ideal jobs, initially eliciting what they think about ideal jobs.

- ST3: We are going to listen to something about ideal jobs, an ideal job, so close your books. What words do you think is ideal? **{Initial Question}** What is that? **[Repeating]**
- Ss: (Silence for two seconds) **[Pausing]**
- ST3: [5] What vocabulary by ideal? **[Rephrasing]**
- Ss: (Silence for three seconds) **[Pausing]**
- S1: (Whisper) High salary.
- ST3: I can't hear you. Ideal. What about ideal? **[Rephrasing]** [10] Do you understand this word? **[Asking supplementary questions]**
- Ss: Yes.
- ST3: Perfect, (unclear; so that you can guess.) Think about what you think is an ideal job. **[Rephrasing]** What goes to that? **[Rephrasing]** [15] What goes towards an ideal job? **[Repeating]**
- Ss: (Silence 2 seconds) **[Pausing]**
- ST3: Come on. Don't be timid. **{Encouraging students to answer}** Give me some. **{Encouraging students to answer}**
- S1: High salary.
- ST3: [20] OK.

Nuttawarin Teerakornvisatpugdee is a lecturer of English at Christian University, Nakornpathom province. Her main interests are in teaching techniques, language awareness and materials design.

Assistant Professor Wilaksana Srimavin works in the Department of Language Studies, School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. She works as a teacher of English to undergraduate and graduate students in several faculties for both compulsory and elective courses.

Using Questions to Develop Young Learners' Reading Comprehension

Jureporn Malelohid, Sutaree Prasertsan & Monta Chatupote
Prince of Songkla University

Abstract

This study investigated whether training in pre-, while- and post-reading questioning enhances the English reading comprehension ability of high- and low-proficiency Prathomsuksa 6 students and whether it affects their responding abilities to literal and reinterpretation questions. This paper reports on part of a full-scale study, which had experimental and control groups, and focuses only on the experimental group. The results show that, after being trained with pre-, while- and post-reading questioning, reading comprehension and responding ability to literal and reinterpretation questions of both groups improved in general, with particular improvement in the lower group's responses to literal questions. This suggests that training in such questioning is beneficial, especially for low-proficiency students responding to literal questions.

Background

In Thailand, the Ministry of Education has been aware that English is important for all Thai people and has made it obligatory in all educational levels. In the 2001 curriculum, which is currently in use, English is the only compulsory foreign language and reading is one of the skills required in all core English courses. In the upper elementary curriculum and syllabus, students are required to read two text types, fables and short stories or narratives, not only to understand the information that is directly presented in the passages but also to interpret the meaning implied in the passages as well as to think logically and critically. In short, students are required to achieve two levels of reading comprehension: literal and reinterpretation. However, to achieve this, elementary students who learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL) need to be trained with explicit instruction so that they can develop their reading ability in general and at the required reading level.

Questioning has been chosen as an explicit instruction in this study because the results of previous studies have shown the effectiveness of both self-generated and teacher-generated questioning. For example, Davey & McBride (1986) found that self-generated questioning works well with native English speakers while Wong (1985) found that it is effective with graduate students. Kramut (2001), on the other hand, found that teacher-generated questioning works well at the secondary level in Thailand, an EFL context.

In the case of Thai elementary students, who possess more limited language skills than the secondary ones in Kramut's study, teacher-generated questioning seems to be a better choice than self-generated questioning. Moreover, elementary classes are generally heterogeneous, with more than 40 students in each class. Therefore, for these young learners, teacher-generated questions may be better as a tool to develop reading comprehension ability as well as responding abilities to different types of questions. Arguably, this is because questioning may not only promote students' involvement and interaction with texts but also encourage them to think logically and critically.

In terms of teaching, questioning can be integrated in normal phases of reading procedures, which can be classified into pre-, while- and post-reading (Williams, 1994). The use of pre-, while- and post-reading questioning can encourage students to achieve the purposes of each reading phase and guide them to read interactively, the way which is widely viewed as effective in reading (Eskey, 1988; Samuels & Kamil, 1988; Silberstein, 1994). In other words, questioning requires students to employ both top-down and bottom-up processes when reading, that is, relating their knowledge of the world to make predictions about the text and decoding the meaning from the words, phrases or sentences to better understand information in detail (Eskey & Grabe, 1988).

In each reading phase, pre-, while- and post-reading questioning can be employed for different purposes. In the pre-reading phase, questions can be used to prepare students to read purposefully and also make reading activities more meaningful (Grant, 1987; Srivardhana, 2002). This is because pre-reading questions are general questions employed to activate students to think and to relate their relevant background knowledge to the text, to preview important points, and to set the purposes for reading (Shin, 1992; Williams, 1994). In this phase, students are required to use top-down processes because they need to relate their knowledge to make predictions about the text. This seems to activate their schemata, which helps them interpret the meaning of what they read (Samuels & Kamil, 1988; Wallace, 1992).

In the while-reading phase, literal questions can be used to check students' understanding of textual details of content and the process of reading, which can enhance their comprehension (Williams, 1994). Students need to use bottom-up processes to analyze words, phrases and sentences in texts to verify their anticipation from the pre-reading phase and to understand the details of the text (Carrell, 1988; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988; Brown, 1994; Chia, 2001). It can be seen that while-reading questions may enable students to understand the details of what they read thoroughly.

Then, after reading, reinterpretation questions that enable students not only to review or conclude what they have read from the text but also to integrate the textual information into their own experiences can be used. In this phase, top-down processing is needed. This means that students are guided to think beyond the text and relate their knowledge of the world to what they read, to discuss, to react, and to express their opinions. Because of this, students will have to think logically and critically (Williams, 1994; Anthony & Raphael, 1996).

It can be seen that the use of pre-, while- and post-reading questioning not only involves students in interacting with the text but also guides them to read the texts purposefully and meaningfully in each phase of reading.

Based on the idea that questioning seems to be an effective way of teaching reading comprehension in EFL contexts, it is interesting to verify their effectiveness with a heterogeneous class consisting of both high- and low-proficiency students. Therefore, this research sets out to find answers to the following questions.

- Does pre-, while- and post-reading questioning affect high- and low-proficiency students' English reading comprehension ability?
- Does such questioning affect high- and low-proficiency students' responding abilities to literal and reinterpretation questions?

Methodology

Subjects

Forty-three Prathomsuksa 6 students who were studying English in the first semester of the 2005 academic year at Pattani Municipality School 4 were divided into high-, mid- and low-proficiency groups based on their pre-test scores. Using the twenty-seven percent technique (Hughes, 1989), the top 27% (12 students) were considered the high-proficiency group and the bottom 27% (12 students) were considered the low-proficiency group. The mid-proficiency group (19 students) was not used in this study; thus, there were 24 subjects.

Instrument

Pre-/Post-test: The pre-test, which was also used as a post-test (see Appendix 1), comprised 20 multiple-choice items on three passages of two text types: one fable and two narratives. It was designed to tap two levels of reading comprehension specified by the upper elementary curriculum and syllabus (literal and reinterperation). As literal comprehension is the basis for students' global comprehension, and the subjects were only in Prathomsuksa 6, which means that they have limited reading ability, more concentration was put on the literal level of questions. Hence, twelve items were literal comprehension questions and eight items were reinterperation comprehension questions (see Table 1, below). The test was piloted and the reliability was found to be .86.

Table 1: Literal & reinterperation questions for each reading passage

Passages (text types)	Types of questions		Number of items	
	Literal	Reinterperation		
A Greedy Monkey (fable)	3	3	6	20
Camping is Fun (narrative)	4	3	7	
A Grandma's Exciting Story (narrative)	5	2	7	

Note Although the passages appear without their titles in the pre-/post-test (see Appendix 1), in fact they occur in the test in the same sequence as shown in this table.

Reading texts

Ten passages from *Say Hello 6* (Apidet et al., 2003), consisting of two text types, fables (4) and narratives (6), were used as material for the training.

Lesson plans

Ten lesson plans applying the use of pre-, while- and post-reading questioning were written to be used during the training (see Appendix 2).

Procedures

Pre-test: This was administered to a class of Prathomsuksa 6 students to divide them into high- and low-proficiency groups based on their scores using the 27% technique (Hughes, 1989).

Training: Conducted over 10 periods, the training was designed to tap the objectives of the three reading phases, as follows.

In the pre-reading stage, through the pre-reading questions, the subjects predicted important points from the pictures and the titles of the texts they were going to read and also related their background knowledge to the texts to get the general concepts,

activating their schemata which may have helped them interpret the meaning of the text they read.

In while-reading phase, the subjects were asked to read the texts silently by themselves in order to confirm or refute their predictions set beforehand and then read each paragraph of the texts again part by part and to try to find the information relevant to the (mainly literal) while-reading questions, which were gradually presented on a transparency.

In the post-reading phase, the subjects were divided into groups of five or six and randomly assigned to answer one of the post-reading questions to discuss the key concepts, review and summarize what they had read and integrate the textual information with their knowledge of the world by putting themselves in the situation of the texts to give comments and express their ideas about what they had read. After that, the representative of each group was asked to speak out to the whole class. By doing this, the subjects were encouraged to think more, and to learn more by listening to the others' opinions; in other words, the post-reading questions were likely to enrich students' thinking process in various aspects as well as improve their ability to discuss different aspects of what they had read.

Post-test: This was administered to the subjects to see the differences between the high- and the low-proficiency groups' reading English comprehension abilities and their levels of comprehension.

Data analysis

The mean scores of the pre- and post-test of the high and low groups were compared using the paired samples t-test to see any changes in both groups' English reading comprehension ability after the experiment.

Results

As seen in Table 2, the pre-test mean scores of the high and low groups were significantly different at $p < 0.01$ level. This means that, before being trained with the pre-, while- and post-reading questioning, the high-proficiency subjects had significantly better English reading comprehension ability than the low-proficiency subjects.

Table 2: High & low groups' pre-/post-test results on reading comprehension

Tests	Proficiency groups	Mean	SD	t-values	Two-tailed test
Pre-test	High	11.000	2.522	6.601	** .000
	Low	4.083	1.164		N=12
Post-test	High	14.833	4.063	1.892	.085
	Low	11.833	2.790		N=12

** significant at $p < 0.01$ level

However, after the training, though the reading ability of both groups improved, there was no significant difference between their achievements, which means the low-proficiency subjects increased their level of English reading comprehension ability to a level close to that of the high-proficiency students'. Figure 1, below, shows these changes.

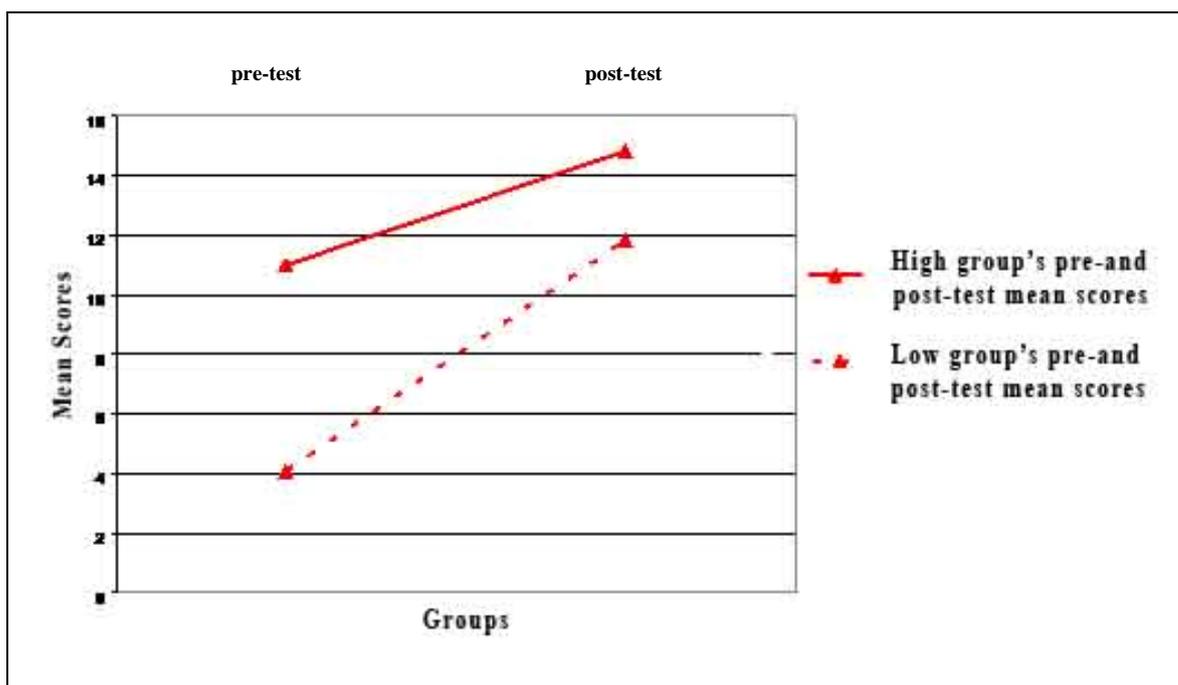


Figure 1: High & low groups' mean reading comprehension scores

Besides, the mean scores of the pre- and post-tests of both groups in responding to each kind of reading questions were compared using the paired samples t-test, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: High & low groups' pre-/post- test results on comprehension questions

Tests	Comprehension question types (numbers of items)	Groups	Mean	SD	t-values	Two-tailed Tests
Pre-	Literal (12)	High	6.333	2.229	5.242	** .000
		Low	1.75	1.138		N=12
	Reinterpretation (8)	High	4.666	.887	6.567	** .000
		Low	2.333	.984		N=12
Post-	Literal (12)	High	9.083	2.353	1.308	.218
		Low	7.667	2.015		N=12
	Reinterpretation (8)	High	5.75	2.137	2.258	* .045
		Low	4.166	1.193		N=12

** significant at $p < 0.01$ level

* significant at $p < 0.05$ level

The data presented in Table 3 show that the pre-test mean scores on responding to both literal and reinterpretation questions of each group were significantly different at $p < 0.01$ level. However, the post-test mean scores of the responding ability in the literal questions, though improved in both groups, showed no significant difference (0.218). This indicates that the two proficiency groups had similar responding abilities to the

literal questions. It appears that the questions guided the low-proficiency subjects to understand the texts thoroughly, so their scores apparently improved; that could be why there is no significant difference between the two groups.

In terms of the reinterperation questions, the post-test mean scores of the two proficiency groups' responding ability were significantly different at $p < 0.05$. The level of significance changed from $p < 0.01$ to $p < 0.05$. This indicates that, after the training, the low-proficiency subjects had better development than the high- proficiency subjects; in other words, the responding ability to the reinterperation questions of the low-proficiency subjects increased at a higher rate than that of the high-proficiency students. This may have been because, in the while-reading stage, the lower proficiency group were able to understand the details of the text thoroughly, which may have improved their responding ability to the reinterperation questions.

Figure 2 illustrates the two groups' comprehension levels of improvement in responding ability to the literal and reinterperation questions.

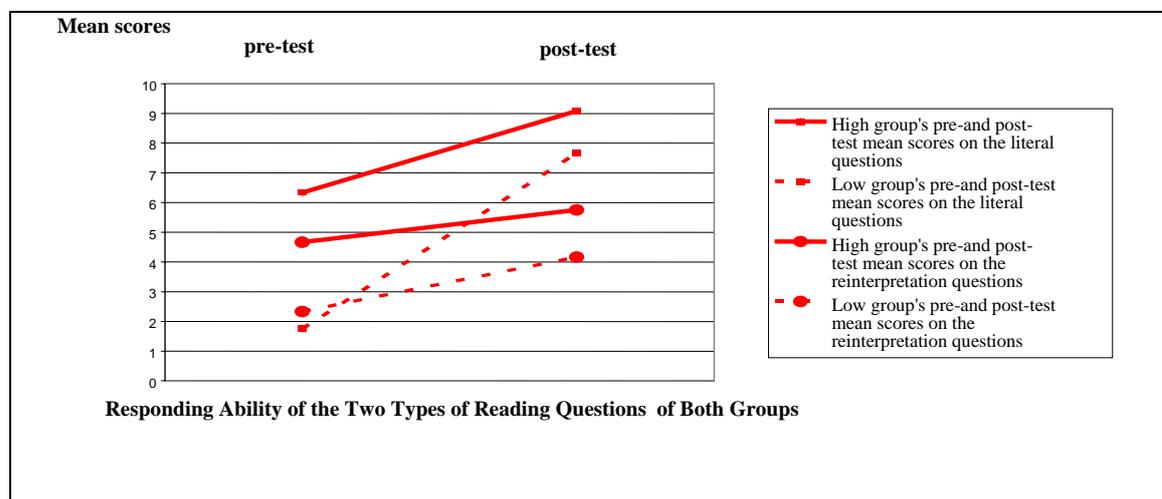


Figure 2: Groups' mean scores on literal & reinterperation questions

Discussion and implications

There are five major implications that can be drawn from the findings of the study. First, because it was found that the use of teacher-generated pre-, while- and post-reading questioning seemed to enhance both high- and low-proficiency subjects' English reading comprehension ability, it would probably be useful to employ them as a method of teaching reading, at least with those in the upper elementary level. Second, according to the findings, it seems that the low-proficiency group gained more benefits from the use of the pre-, while- and post-reading questioning than the higher group; hence, questioning may be very helpful for low-proficiency students.

Third, to succeed in employing pre-, while- and post-reading questioning, it is advisable that teachers set appropriate purposes in questioning at each reading stage. In other words, pre-reading questions should be used to activate students' background knowledge that is relevant to important points of the text, to preview its key concepts and to set purposes for reading. While-reading questions should be used gradually to check students' comprehension of the text. And the purposes of using post-reading questions should be to review and conclude what has been read from the text and to integrate the textual information with students' knowledge.

Fourth, it was found that the pre-, while- and post-reading questioning enabled the subjects not only to read interactively but also to become more efficient readers. They seemed to be able to make use of the reading process effectively and also think logically and critically, as required by the English curriculum. Fifth, since this study was conducted with upper elementary students, the levels of reading comprehension questions have been limited to only literal and reinterpretation questions. There are still higher levels of reading comprehension, such as critical or evaluative and appreciative levels, which would be interesting to investigate.

A possible limitation to this study should be noted. Since the pre-test and post-test were identical, some of the improvement in the subjects' scores may have been due to a practice effect; thus, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

Conclusion

The results of this study appear to answer the two research questions positively. The use of pre-, while- and post-reading questioning seemed to help both the high- and the low-proficiency subjects enhance their English reading comprehension ability and their responding abilities to questions at different comprehension levels. However, as significant differences between the two groups' comprehension ability and responding ability to literal questions were no longer found, it may be assumed that the lower group improved at a faster rate than the higher group. As for the ability to respond to reinterpretation questions, the level of significance decreased from 0.01 to 0.05, signifying also the greater improvement of the low-proficiency group.

References

- Anthony, H. M. & Raphael, T. E. (1996) Content area reading and learning instructional strategies. In D. Lapp, J. Flood & N. Farnan (eds.), *Using Questioning Strategies to Promote Students' Active Comprehension of Content Area Material*, pp. 244-257. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Apidet, P., Sangchaoom, P., Chaiyadecha, P., Thamapattajit, R. & Wattanopat, W. (2003) *Say Hello 6*. Bangkok: MAC Press.
- Brown, H. D. (1994) *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Carrell, P. L. (1988) Introduction: interactive approaches to second language reading. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine & D. E. Eskey (eds.), *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*, pp. 1-7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carrell, P. L. & Eisterhold, J. C. (1988) Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine & D. E. Eskey (eds.), *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*, pp. 73-92. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chia, H. (2001) Reading activities for effective top-down processing. *English Teaching Forum* 39 (1) 22-25.
- Davey, B. & McBride, S. (1986) Effects of question-generation training on reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 78 (4) 256-262.
- Eskey, D. E. (1988) Holding in the bottom: an interactive approach to the language problems of second language readers. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine & D. E. Eskey (eds.), *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*, pp. 93-100. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eskey, D. E. & Grabe, W. (1988) Interactive models for second language reading: perspectives on instruction. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine & D. E. Eskey (eds.),

- Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*, pp. 223-238. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grant, N. (1987) *Making the Most of Your Textbook*. London: London Group UK Limited.
- Hughes, A. (1989) *Testing for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kramut, T. (2001) *Effects of Schema-Activating Pre-reading Questions on English Reading Comprehension: A Case Study of M.5 Students*. Unpublished MA thesis, Prince of Songkla University Demonstration School, Prince of Songkla University.
- Samuels, S. J. & Kamil, M. L. (1988) Models of the reading process. In P. L. Carrell, J. Devine & D. E. Eskey (eds.), *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*, pp. 22-36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shin, M. (1992) Beyond comprehension exercises in the ESL academic reading class. *TESOL Quarterly* 26 (2) 289-318.
- Silberstein, S. (1994) *Techniques and Resources in Teaching Reading*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Srivardhana, P. (2002) Teaching reading comprehension in large classes. *PASAA* 33 (December) 89-91.
- Wallace, C. (1992) *Reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, E. (1994) *Reading in the Language Classroom*. London: Macmillan.
- Wong, B. L. (1985) Self-questioning instructional research. *Review of Educational Research* 55 (2) 227-268.

Appendix 1: Pre-/Post-Test

Level: P.6 Primary school students
Number of items: 20 items

Time: 40 minutes
Total score: 20 marks

Directions Read the following passages and then choose the best answer to each question by marking (X) on your answer sheet.

Once, there was a greedy monkey which went around stealing food from houses, shops, and school canteens.

One day, the monkey saw a jar in the backyard¹ of a house which was at the top of the hill.

5 “The old woman must have put something out to dry in the sun.” the monkey thought. Then it entered the backyard and crept² to the jar. There was something³ in it and the monkey quickly put one of its hands inside.

10 “Help! Help!” it shouted, pulling out its hand quickly. There were thousands of red ants in the jar and they had bitten its hand. The monkey ran down the hill shouting and crying. From that day onwards, the greedy monkey never stole food any more!

1. backyard (n.) = สวนหลังบ้าน 3. something (pro.) = อะไรสักอย่าง
2. crept (v.2) creep (v.1) = ซ่อง

1. What is this story about? (reinterpretation)

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| a. an old woman | c. a jar in the backyard |
| b. a greedy monkey | d. thousands of red ants |

2. Which is *not* a place where the monkey steals food? (literal)
 - a. the shops
 - b. the houses
 - c. the canteens
 - d. the hospital
3. What did the monkey think the jar held? (reinterpretation)
 - a. some food
 - b. some money
 - c. some ants
 - d. some snakes
4. Why did the monkey shout and cry? Because..... (literal)
 - a. it was afraid.
 - b. the old woman hit it.
 - c. the ants bit its hand
 - d. it could not pull out its hand from the jar
5. The word 'it' (line 7) refers to..... (reinterpretation)
 - a. the jar.
 - b. the backyard.
 - c. the house.
 - d. the monkey's hands.
6. According to this story, the monkey was (literal)
 - a. clever.
 - b. greedy.
 - c. friendly.
 - d. naughty.

Last summer holiday, the boys went camping. The air was fresh and the sun was shining. The boys were busy setting up their tent. Somsuk and Yut were busy hammering some pegs¹ into the ground. Note was cutting branches and gathering firewood. Pith was

5 cleaning the ground with some branches. Manop was taking some water from a nearby river.

Lert was preparing² lunch. He lit a fire and opened a can of sardines. **He** then served sardine sandwiches with cups of hot coffee. The hard work had made the boys hungry. As a result,

10 they all had a good meal. After that, they were so tired that they fell asleep.

1. peg (n) หมุด 2. prepare (v) จัดเตรียม

7. Which would be the best title for this passage? (reinterpretation)
 - a. Camping is Fun!
 - b. Lost in the Forest!
 - c. A Fine Weather Day!
 - d. A Great Adventure Day!
8. Which sentence tells you about the weather? (literal)
 - a. The boys were busy.
 - b. They all had a good meal.
 - c. The air was fresh and the sun was shining.
 - d. Note was cutting branches and gathering firewood.
9. Who was setting up the tent? (literal)
 - a. Somsuk and Yut
 - b. Manop and Somsuk
 - c. Pith and Lert
 - d. Lert and Manop
10. Who was cleaning the place? (literal)
 - a. Note
 - b. Pith
 - c. Lert
 - d. Manop
11. What did they have for lunch? (literal)
 - a. fish
 - b. hotdogs
 - c. hamburgers
 - d. sandwiches
12. The word 'He' (line 7) refers to..... (reinterpretation)
 - a. Yut
 - b. Pith
 - c. Lert
 - d. Note
13. How many boys were there altogether? (reinterpretation)
 - a. 4
 - b. 5
 - c. 6
 - d. 7

Kitty Currie is everyone's favorite grandma. She is sixty-eight years old. She has snow white hair and always wears a pink cardigan¹ and carries a big handbag. She likes knitting and looking after her five lovely grandsons. But she's not looking after them at

5 the moment. Kitty Currie has gone to prison!

Two months ago, Kitty, who lives in the village of Bovdon in Devon, robbed a bank! She took her grandson's toy gun, put a stocking over her face, and walked into Barclays Bank. She pointed the gun at the cashier and asked for some money. The cashier gave her \$20. Kitty smiled, said "Thank you very
10 much", and left. The cashier called the police and **they** caught Kitty in the next street. The money, the gun, and the stocking were all in her bag.

Kitty says, "I got married when I was sixteen. All my life
15 I've looked after my home and my children. I've got a lovely husband and I've had a happy life but I've never even done anything really exciting. I've never been abroad². I've never even had a job. Now I'm famous. I've been on TV and the newspapers³! But I'm not going to rob another bank!"

1. cardigan (n.) เสื้ออ้ากไหมพรม 2. abroad (adv.) ในต่างประเทศ 3. newspapers (n.) หนังสือพิมพ์

14. What would be the title of this story? (reinterpretation)
- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. A Lovely Grandma! | c. A Grandma's Happy Life! |
| b. A Beautiful Grandma! | d. A Grandma's Exciting Story! |
15. What is Kitty's favorite hobby? (literal)
- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| a. cooking | c. reading books |
| b. watching T.V | d. knitting and looking after her grandsons |
16. How old was Kitty when she robbed the bank? (literal)
- | | |
|-------|-------|
| a. 65 | c. 75 |
| b. 68 | d. 78 |
17. What did Kitty prepare for robbing the bank? (literal)
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| a. a gun and a stocking | c. a toy gun and sunglasses |
| b. a toy gun and a stocking | d. a pair of sunglasses and a stocking |
18. The word 'they' (line 11) refers to (reinterpretation)
- | | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| a. police | c. news reporters |
| b. cashiers | d. Kitty's grandsons |
19. Why did Kitty want to rob the bank? (literal)
- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| a. She wanted to have a job. | c. She wanted to earn some money. |
| b. She wanted to be on TV. | d. She wanted to do something exciting. |
20. Where is Kitty now? She is..... (literal)
- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| a. at her home. | c. in prison. |
| b. at the bank. | d. in hospital. |

Appendix 2: Part of lesson plan showing pre-, while- and post-reading questions

Pre-reading activities (whole class)

- The objectives of the lesson are told to the students.
- The students discuss the following questions:
 - Do you know what the word 'fables' means?
 - Have you ever read or listened to fables?
- Teacher explains the word 'fable'. Fable means a short story that teaches a lesson (a moral) or truth, especially a story in which animals or objects speak.

4. The students discuss fables. Teacher asks “Can you give me some examples of fables?”
5. Students open their books on page 36 and look at the picture.
6. Students guess the title of this story from the picture.
7. Teacher writes the title of the story on the chalkboard.
8. Students discuss the story from the picture. Teacher asks students to discuss the following questions:
 - What do you think this story is about?
 - Where was the crow?
 - Where was the fox?
 - What was the crow holding?
 - What did the fox want to do?
 - Can you guess what happened in the end?
9. Students scan the text and check their answers. Then they preview the story and tell the teacher the words they do not know.
10. Teacher presents the meaning of these words by using the context in which the words are found.
 - Teacher writes the words that have been selected on the chalkboard in sentences in the order in which they first appear in the story.
 - Teacher reads each sentence aloud and then asks students to guess the meaning of the vocabulary.
 - Teacher quickly writes the students’ ideas on the chalkboard and records other ideas expressed in the discussion.
 - After discussing, teacher concludes the definition of the words.

While-reading activities and questions

1. Teacher tells students to read one paragraph at a time silently.
2. Teacher reads a question of each paragraph presented on the transparency aloud and, if necessary, clarifies it.
3. Then students orally answer the questions.

The Fox and the Crow

A crow was in the forest. One day it found a piece of meat under a tree. It took the meat in its mouth and flew up into the tree.

1. Where did the crow find a piece of meat?

A fox was hungry. It looked for food. It saw the meat in the crow’s mouth. The fox wanted the meat, but it could not climb the tree.

2. Why did the fox want the meat?

The fox wanted the crow to open its mouth so it said, “Good morning, Mrs. Crow. You are beautiful. Can you sing?”

3. What did the fox do when it wanted the crow to open its mouth?

“Oh yes,” the crow said. When the crow opened its mouth, the meat fell on the ground.

4. What happened when the crow opened its mouth?

“Listen. I am going to sing now,” the crow said. The crow began to sing, but the fox didn’t listen to the song. It took the meat and ran away.

5. What did the fox do when the crow began to sing?

Post-reading activities (group work)

1. Teacher presents the following post-reading questions to the whole class. Then teacher reads them aloud and, if necessary, helps students to clarify any questions.
 - Who is the cleverer of the two animals in this story? Why do you think so?
 - If you were the crow, what would you do when the fox took a piece of meat and ran away?
2. Students are divided into nine groups. Each group consists of five students. A question is randomly given to each group. Teacher goes round and monitors.
3. A representative of every group is asked to read the answers. Then students summarize the main points of this story.

Extended activity: Students do exercises 16-17 on page 37 (*Say Hello* 6).

Jureeporn Malelohid is an ESL teacher at Pattani Municipality School 4. She is also Head of English Department. Her research interests are English language teaching methodology and reading strategies.

Sutaree Prasertsan (MATESL, Dip TESOL) teaches in the Department of Languages and Linguistics at Prince Songkla University, where she is also Vice Dean of Administrative Affairs, Faculty of Liberal Arts. Her fields of interest are reading and teacher education.

Monta Chatupote (Ph.D in Applied Linguistics) teaches at the Department of Languages and Linguistics at Prince Songkla University, Hat Yai Campus. Her interests are in classroom research, translation and materials design.

Teachers' Attitudes towards Doing Research

Jethiya Chanateepakul

Wilaksana Srimavin

King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate teachers' attitudes towards doing research in the Department of Language Studies at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). The subjects were ten English language teachers who had been teaching in the department for more than four years. The subjects were interviewed separately, based on questions which covered advantages, disadvantages, problems, solutions, and support in doing research. The findings reveal that, while most of the subjects seemed to understand the purposes and advantages of doing research for teaching, there was one subject who did not; also, most of the subjects expressed the need for the department to support them in doing more research and by providing statistics teachers, mentors, research training and funding.

Research definition

Nunan (1992) defines research as a process of formulating questions, problems or hypotheses; collecting data or evidence relevant to these questions, problems or hypotheses; and analyzing and interpreting data. Stringer (2004: 14) explains further that research may be defined as "a process of systematic investigation leading to increased understanding of a phenomenon or issue of interest". In general, research is conducted in many different fields, such as fiction, journalism, police work, medicine, science and technology as well as language teaching. In different fields, the term 'research' has different purposes (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). Thus, there are many kinds of research methodology for particular situations. For teachers, conducting research can be a powerful way to investigate and improve their own practice (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Purposes and benefits of conducting research

To define the purposes of conducting research, Nunan (1992) summarizes the results from interviewing graduate students about the purposes of conducting research, as follows: to get a result with scientific methods objectively, not subjectively; to solve problems, verify the application of theories and lead on to new insights; to enlighten researchers and any interested readers; to prove or disprove new or existing ideas; and to discover the cause of a problem and its solution.

For teachers, McCutcheon & Jung (1990, cited in Day, 1999: 34) say "the purposes of doing research are understanding of practice and of a rationale or philosophy of practice in order to improve researchers' practice". Thus, conducting research has many benefits for teachers, as Kincheloe (2003, cited in Lankshear & Knobel, 2004: 6) states:

- to understand (in deeper and richer ways) what teachers know from experience;
- to become more aware of how they can contribute to educational research;
- to be seen as 'learners' rather than 'functionaries' who follow top-down orders without question;
- to be seen as 'knowledge workers who reflect on their professional needs and current understandings';

- to research their own professional practice;
- to explore the learning processes occurring in their classroom and attempt to interpret them.

Besides, teachers can develop a deeper understanding of many aspects of teaching, learning and classroom investigation skills through the process of conducting research (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

How to conduct research

Kervin et al. (2006: 14) give a rough idea of the process of conducting research; this is shown in Figure 1.

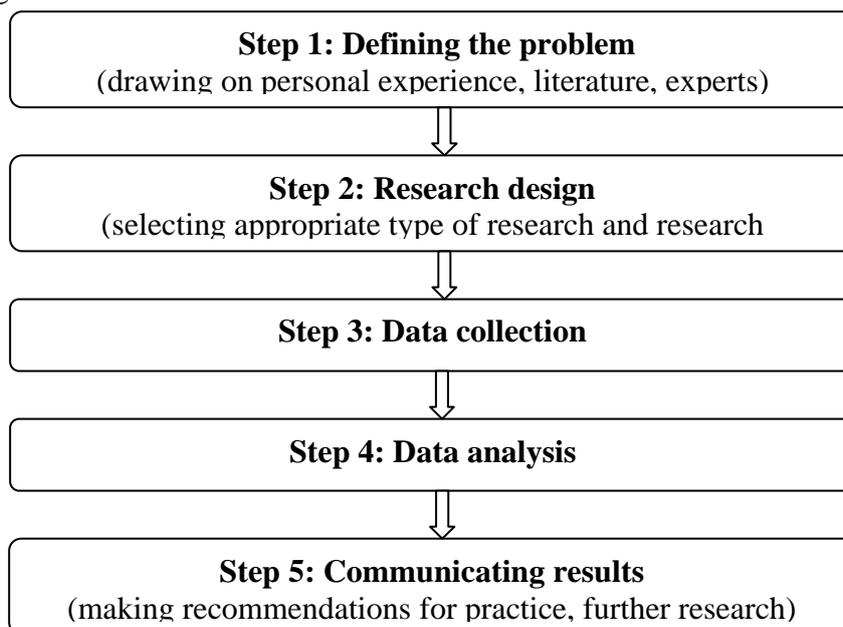


Figure 1: The research process (Kervin et al., 2006)

Kervin et al. (2006) explain that doing research is a systematic process with the following steps: in the first step, researchers have to begin with a broad area of interest and then clearly define the research question; in the second step, they have to select the appropriate type of research and plan the location, participants, data collection and data analysis techniques for the third and fourth steps; in the third and fourth steps, they have to collect and analyze data using the research methodology from the second step to match the research question from the first step; and, in the last step, they have to disseminate their work widely, decide how it will be reported and consider the implications for practice and further research.

For teachers, Stringer (2004) explains further about the last step, saying that researchers may apply the outcome of the study to solve problems, for classroom practices, curriculum development, evaluation, family and community, and school plans. Accordingly, to conduct research successfully, researchers need to have enough research knowledge to follow the research process as presented above.

Problems doing research

Although doing research has many advantages, some teachers do not do it or cannot complete it, perhaps because they encounter problems. Raksasat & Wongsawatdiwat (1990, cited in Intrarat, 2004) studied the productivity of lecturers and indicated the

following reasons why teachers would not conduct research: lack of time due to too much work; difficulty in finding research funds; no support from superiors; lack of attentive teamwork; no progress in research jobs; lack of knowledge in writing research proposals; and lack of knowledge in statistics and data analysis.

Padkate (2005), who studied the attitudes towards conducting research of the members of the Faculty of Humanities at Naresuan University, found that the teachers agreed that their reason for not conducting research was that they had more important duties and experienced obstacles in doing research. Obstacles included complicated regulation for the reimbursement of funding, too much teaching and workload, fatigue from daily work, lack of funding, and lack of facilities for conducting research (resources, journals, computers, etc.).

Nonetheless, even research-active teachers experience problems. Nunan (1992) studied the problems that may happen in the research process and found, among other things, the following:

- lack of time;
- lack of knowledge about doing research (formulating research questions, statistics, etc.);
- difficulty in identifying research areas;
- no teaching background;
- difficulty in designing questionnaires;
- lack of literature in chosen areas;
- unfamiliarity with libraries;
- lack of knowledge about where to start.

Bell & Opie (2002) recorded the research experiences of five postgraduate research students on their long journey to complete their research study. All of the students faced different problems depending on their experiences and their background in doing research. The problems they faced were as follows:

- lack of knowledge about how to conduct simple statistical procedures, especially for people with an arts background;
- they had never owned or used a computer;
- they had difficulty interpreting the results from statistics software;
- they had limited time because of job, family and other responsibilities, so they could not work on their research as much as they wished;
- they had difficulty accessing resources due to the shortage of quality literature;
- they had difficulty accessing resources because of distance;
- they had difficulty analyzing data;
- they could not gather useful data;
- they took a long time to write up their research because English is not their first language.

Teachers' attitudes towards doing research

Teachers' attitudes towards their research could affect their research achievement or their intention to do it. McKernan (1993, cited in Burns, 1999) surveyed the constraints on doing research of forty project directors in an educational setting and found that some constraints came from researchers' doubts about the usefulness of doing research. Stringer (2004) explains that those who are excited and interested in their work can do

the best research projects whereas those who are apathetic about their work or resistant to it find it harder to attain productive work.

However, Burns (1999) reports on twenty ESL teachers who had a good attitude towards doing research because of its benefits. These teachers explained their views, saying that doing research could help them evaluate their teaching, give them a chance to have discussions and share ideas for solving problems with others, increase their self-awareness, and let them understand more clearly the reasons and needs for institutional curriculum change. However, some teachers who lack understanding about doing research may believe that they do not have the skills, training or knowledge to do it; in such cases, they do not have the confidence to do it even though they are interested in the research and applying for research funding.

To summarize, with high expectation and high responsibility, teachers need to develop themselves and learn new things all the time. Conducting research has many benefits, which can help teachers develop their teaching skills and learn new things; however, teachers' attitudes towards doing research may affect their research quality or their intention to do research.

Purpose of the study

This study comprises a survey of teachers' attitudes towards doing research in the Department of Language Studies at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). The outcomes of this study may be helpful for teachers who would like to do research or teachers who would like to develop professionally.

Methodology

This section describes the subjects, instrument, procedures and data analysis.

Subjects

The subjects were 10 teachers (Subjects A-J) who were teaching English in the Department of Language Studies at KMUTT. So that they could have enough teaching experience to conduct research, a selection criterion was that they had been teaching for more than four years. Table 1, below, presents how the subjects were grouped under the criteria of their teaching experience and research experience: Group A1 comprised three subjects who had been teaching for 4-10 years and had done some research; Group B1 had four subjects who been teaching for more than 10 years and had done some research; Group A2 had one subject who had been teaching for 4-10 years and had never done any research; and Group B2 had two subjects who had been teaching for more than 10 years and had never done any research.

Table 1: Teaching and research experience

Experience Group (Subjects)	Teaching experience		Research experience	
	4-10 years (Group A)	More than 10 years (Group B)	Yes (Group 1)	No (Group 2)
A1 (B, E, F)	✓		✓	
B1 (D, G, H, J)		✓	✓	
A2 (C)	✓			✓
B2 (A, I)		✓		✓

Instrument

The instrument used in this research was a semi-structured interview (see appendix) which was used to obtain the teachers' attitudes towards doing research on the following five broad areas: their experience in doing research; their attitudes towards the advantages and disadvantages of doing research; problems and solutions in doing research; problems and reasons why they do not do research; and support and mentoring desired from the department. In order to adjust any unclear points, the instrument was piloted by interviewing five MA participants at the university.

Procedures

Ten subjects were chosen under the criteria that they had been teaching English language for more than four years. The first researcher interviewed the subjects one-by-one, audio-recording each one; each interview lasted about ten minutes. The recordings were then transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed by using grouping under themes and then interpreted in order to answer the research question: *What are teachers' attitudes towards doing research?*

Findings

Overall, it was found that the subjects had both positive and negative attitudes towards doing research. Also, they had views on problems conducting research as well as suggestions on such research-related issues as mentoring and funding.

Advantages of doing research

The results show that nine (90%) of the subjects agreed that doing research had many advantages for them, as will now be elaborated. Two subjects from Group A1 and three subjects from Group B1 agreed that it could encourage them to read more books, acquire more knowledge and develop themselves. One subject from Group A1 and two subjects from Group B1 thought that solving problems in the classroom by gathering information from students could help teachers to find effective solutions. One subject from Group A1 and one subject from Group B1 thought that it was challenging and fun to do research. Two subjects from Group B2 thought that doing research could help recording problems and solutions which could be shared with other teachers who are interested in the same or related topics. They also thought that it could improve their teaching techniques.

One subject from Group B1 had some ideas that the results of his/her research study made him/her better for class preparation and more enthusiastic than before. Moreover, he/she thought that it was the way to find solutions with evidence and supported theories. The more he/she kept doing it, the more he/she found many interesting and useful things for himself/herself or for his/her students as well.

One subject from Group B2 (Subject I) thought that doing research had the advantages already mentioned but added more ideas, as follows:

"I think, normally, all teachers have to experiment and/or find the way to develop their teaching all the time but someone just do not record and present it to the public."

However, the subject from Group A2 had no idea about the advantages of doing research.

Disadvantages of doing research

None of the subjects thought that doing research had any disadvantages. However, the subject from Group A2 (Subject C) had no idea about it, as illustrated from this extract:

“I think doing research is the researchers’ duty not the teachers’, and doing research could improve researching techniques not teaching techniques. Teachers’ duties are to develop, analyze, evaluate teaching strategies and teaching materials, and I think, to do so, it could be the private experiment of each teacher’s class. Moreover, I don’t believe that the teachers who have problems in their classroom will solve their problems by studying from other teachers’ existing research.”

Thus, most of the subjects had positive attitudes towards doing research while one subject had negative attitudes towards doing it and did not understand its advantages and purposes for teachers. However, there are many problems and needs in doing research which these teachers faced, as will now be shown.

Problems and reasons why the teachers do not do research

The subjects from Group B2 would like to do research but they could not do it because of their personal problems such as lack of research skills and time. They thought that doing research could help record problems and solutions that could be shared with others who were interested in the same or related topics, and they agreed that it could improve their teaching strategies. However, as already noted, the subject from Group A2 did not do research because he/she did not see its advantages for teachers; he/she thought that it is the researchers’ duty.

Problems and solutions in doing research

Time management

Time management is the problem faced by all the subjects from Group B1 and two subjects from Group B2. Surprisingly, it is noticed that the subjects who had problems with time management were all teachers who had teaching experience for more than ten years. In the researchers’ view, the teachers who had difficulty with time management should be those who had less teaching experience because they may need more time for preparation and practice; however, the data show that the subjects from Group B1 could handle this problem while the subjects from Group B2 could not. To help the subjects from Group B2 to have some ideas to manage their time for doing research, the department should provide a chance for groups of teachers who have difficulty with time management and groups of teachers who can handle this problem to discuss and share how to solve the problem (see Centre for Research and Services, below).

Statistics teacher

The subjects from Group A1 had problems with how to analyze data and needed a statistics consultant to help them do the statistical part of the research. The data show that the subjects who had problems with statistics were the teachers who had 4-10 years of teaching experience. To support the teachers in using statistics for research, the department should provide training and specialist teachers (see Centre for Research and Services, below).

Mentoring and support desired

Mentors

Normally, mentors are experienced teachers who provide advice and support to less experienced teachers, including discussion on content, learning processes and teachers' experience (Randall & Thornton, 2001). The findings show that subjects from Groups A1 and B1 agreed that a mentor was necessary for them in doing research.

Mentor selection

Most of the subjects from Groups A1 and B2 reported that they needed mentors to support them in doing research; however, a subject from Group B1 did not need a mentor because he/she used to have one but the mentor was not interested in his/her topic and did not have enough knowledge about it, and so he/she was disappointed with the mentor. This implies that mentors should have some knowledge about, and be interested in, their mentees' topics. For this reason, the department should select mentors who are experts and are interested in their mentees' topics.

All the subjects from Groups A1 and B1 agreed that mentors should be able to give consultations on their mentees' topics. They suggested that mentors should be available for the consultation all the time. This shows that mentors never have time for the consultation. One subject from Group B1 agreed that mentors and mentees should have chances to meet each other and he/she also mentioned that mentors of new teachers should help their mentees in every step of doing research, which means that mentors should have more time for non-research-experienced mentees than other mentors who support research-experienced mentees. Moreover, the department should arrange the timetable for mentors and mentees to have the same free period at least one hour each week and then set it as a regular time for working together.

According to the discussion above, in reality, it is impossible for mentors to be available for mentees all the time. However, the researchers would now like to suggest how to select mentors and how to facilitate mentees in conducting research.

Roles of mentor

From the findings, subjects from Groups A1 and B1 had problems selecting topics and analyzing data. They would like mentors to train them how to do research, brief them on research procedures, teach them statistics programmes, help them analyze data and be able to give consultation on a wide range of topics. Since the subjects from Groups A1 and B1 had fewer research skills, they needed support from mentors in all steps of doing research. Moreover, they thought that a good relationship between mentors and mentees could motivate teachers to do research. One of the subjects from Group B1 reported that he/she did not need a mentor because he/she thought that his/her ideas would be dominated by the mentor.

The subject from Group A2 did not think that doing research was essential for teaching. This implies that this subject did not realize the importance of doing research for teachers.

The subjects from Group B2 did not mention mentors; rather, the main problem that prevented them from doing research was lack of time. This implies that they needed mentors who could help them managing their time. Since they had no experience in doing research, their mentors also should be able to assist them in all of the research

process. From the above information, it can be suggested that mentors should know each mentee's background and know how to deal with each one.

To be successful in doing research, mentors should play roles which support mentees well. Randall & Thornton (2001) mention that advice will be more effective if mentors and mentees trust each other and feel relaxed. So, mentors should provide supportive and non-threatening advice to their mentees. Morton-Cooper & Palmer (2000) say that a good mentor should:

- have a sense of humour
- be kind and patient
- be up to date
- be trusted with personal and confidential information
- have a friendly personality
- have a smart appearance
- be a good communicator
- have research knowledge and mentoring skills.

Accordingly, mentors should not only be experts as researchers but should also understand the roles and duties of a mentor. From the discussion about the desirable characteristics of mentors above, the researchers would like to suggest that mentors should be trained to do the job and know his/her roles, such as how to give consultations, explain, give advice, be good listeners and be initiators, in order to create a good atmosphere, rapport, and trust between themselves and their mentees.

Research training

The subject from Group A2 thought that doing research was not important for teachers and it was not the teachers' duty. He/she thought that teachers could develop, analyze and evaluate teaching strategies or teaching materials by doing private experiments in each teacher's class because he/she did not think that teachers could use or study other teachers' existing research to solve their problems and/or gain more knowledge.

The findings show that that particular teacher did not have a good attitude towards doing research or did not have a clear understanding of its purpose. For this reason, the researchers would like to suggest that the department should cooperate with his/her colleagues and supervisors to motivate him/her to participate in training by making the purposes and the advantages of doing research clear to him/her. Thus, research training should be provided for teachers who would like to do research or learn about it. The training schedule should be planned together and set as regular training that all teachers can join.

Research funding

The subjects from Groups A1 and B1 agreed that they would like the department to make research funds more easily accessible with fewer conditions, such as increasing the time duration for working and decreasing the application steps. This shows that, to ensure that teachers will be confident to apply for research funds, the department should provide strong systems of proposal writing, research training and mentors' supervision (see Centre for Research and Services, below).

In addition, the subjects from Groups A1 and B1 would like the department to pay the registration fee for international research presentations. Research-experienced teachers

should get funds if there are no non-research-experienced teachers submitting papers that year. For this problem, the researchers think that the department should encourage its teachers to do research more by clarifying the distribution of funds and raising awareness of sharing resources and taking turns. The researchers recommend that every member of the department should share and vote for ideas about how to distribute the funds to everyone fairly.

International publishers

A subject from Group B1 would like the department to submit his/her paper to an international publisher for him/her. This shows this teacher had confidence in his/her research work and wanted to share it with other teachers in related fields but did not know where to submit it or even that researchers normally submit their own papers themselves (see Centre for Research and Services, below).

Centre for Research and Services

To respond to the teachers' requirements, the School of Liberal Arts (SoLA) at KMUTT established the Centre for Research and Services (CRS) to support research and to provide academic services. Short sessions are now provided for doing research as follows:

- *Resources*: For teachers who have problems with resources, the centre provides research resources such as Big Applied Linguistics Database and Research Methods Database.
- *Research discussions and workshops*: For teachers who would like to share ideas and discuss problems, the centre provides opportunities to discuss research every month. CRS also provides workshops for teachers who would like to practice their research skills.
- *Statistics support*: To help teachers solve statistics problems, CRS has set up the Data Analysis Support Unit to respond to the needs of researchers or students at the university who have problems in analyzing quantitative data using complex statistics.
- *Research regulations for SoLA funding*: CRS has proposed alternatives for reducing the problems and the difficulties which occurred in the previous situation of SoLA funding.
- *Publishing in international refereed journals*: For teachers who would like to have their papers published, CRS provides information about criteria for choosing a journal, a list of journals with the possibility to be published and the required topic areas, and the steps of writing papers and how to submit them.

(Source: <http://arts.kmutt.ac.th/crs/research.htm>)

According to the discussion above, the researchers suggest that the department should make a clear announcement, on notice boards and/or the university's website, to inform teachers about the support provided by the CRS.

Conclusion

This study attempts to discover teachers' attitudes towards doing research, consisting of the advantages, problems, solutions and support in doing research. The results of the study reveal that one subject did not understand the purposes and the advantages of doing research but the other subjects fully realized its benefits. Most of the subjects had positive attitudes towards doing research but, depending on their experience in teaching and doing research, they faced some problems that affect their research process and

research abilities. So they reported that they needed some support from the university department such as workload reduction, statistics support, mentors, research training, funds for doing research and giving presentations, and help contacting international publishers. To support teachers in doing research, the department should promote the CRS in its work supporting and encouraging teachers to do research. Finally, it is expected that the implications of this study will be useful for the Department of Language Studies at KMUTT as well as similar departments in other universities to have some ideas for supporting and encouraging its teachers in doing research for professional development.

References

- Bell, J. & Opie, C. (2002) *Learning from Research: Getting More from Your Data*. Open University Press: Buckingham.
- Burns, A. (1999) *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Centre for Research and Services (2008) Research unit. School of Liberal Arts: King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). Available online at: <http://arts.kmutt.ac.th/crs/research.htm> [accessed 5th February 2008].
- Day, C. (1999) *Developing Teachers*. London: Flamer Press.
- Intrarat, C. (2004) Problems and obstacles of KMUTT lecturers in conducting research. *KMUTT Research and Development Journal* 27 (3) 259.
- Kervin, L., Vialle, W., Herrington, J. & Okely, T. (2006) *Research for Educators*. South Melbourne: Thomson Social Science Press.
- Kincheloe, J. (2003) *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment*. New York, Flamer Press.
- Lankshear, C. & Knobel, M. (2004) *A Handbook for Teacher Research*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- McCutcheon, G. & Jung, B. (1999) Alternative perspectives on action research. *Theory in Practice* 29 (3) 144-151.
- McDonough, J. & McDonough, S. (1997) *Research Methods for English Language Teachers*. New York: St. Martin Press.
- McKernan, J. (1993) Varieties of curriculum action research: constraints and typologies in American, British and Irish projects. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 25 (5) 445-457.
- Morton-Cooper, A. & Palmer, A. (2000) *Mentoring, Preceptorship and Clinical Supervision*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Nunan, D. (1992) *Research Methods in Language Learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Padkate, W. (2005) Teachers' attitudes towards problems and obstacles in doing research. *Journal of Humanities* (Faculty of Humanities, Naresuan University) 3 (1) 53.
- Raksasat, A. & Wongsawatdiwat, J. (1990) *Research for Thai Research Development and Support*. National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA).
- Randall, M. & Thornton, B. (2001) *Advising and Supporting Teachers*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. & Farrell, T. S. C. (2005) *Professional Development for Language Teachers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stringer, E. (2004) *Action Research in Education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Appendix: Semi-structured interview

1. How long have you been teaching at KMUTT?
 4-10 years more than 10 years
2. Have you ever done any research while you have been teaching as a teacher?
 Yes No
3. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of doing research?
4. What are the problems that affect your research achievement?
5. What kind of support do you want from the Language Studies Department to help you do research more smoothly?
6. In your view, what are the advantages and disadvantages of doing research?
7. What are the problems that prevent you doing research?
8. What kind of support do you want from the Language Studies Department to enable you to do research?

Jethiya Chanateepakul holds an MA in Applied Linguistics (English Language Teaching) from King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. Currently, she is working as an air traffic controller at Aeronautical Radio of Thailand Ltd. Her research interests include teachers' attitudes towards doing research.

Assistant Professor Wilaksana Srimavin works in the Department of Language Studies, School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. She works as a teacher of English to undergraduate and graduate students in several faculties for both compulsory and elective courses.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION
(One issue per year)

Inside Thailand: 50 baht
Outside Thailand: US\$10 (including postage and registration)

Please send me one issue of rEFlections annually, beginning with
Volume No.....Year.....

Name & title:.....

Position:.....

Institute:.....

Mailing address:.....
.....
.....

Payment enclosed (please tick):

Bank cheque..... Money order..... Postal order.....

Please make cheques/orders payable to:
Khun Wacharin Sukvirat

Mail this subscription form and your payment to:

**The Editors, rEFlections,
Department of Language Studies
KMUTT
Bangmod
Tung Khru
Bangkok 10140
Thailand**