***Enhancing Reading Ability through Vocabulary Learning and Reading
Satisfaction of Grade Eight Thai Rural Students with Self- Made Stories of Virtue
and Morality***

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Abstract
Reading is the main English language skill mostly emphasized in all Thai educational
levels. Therefore, the English's reading ability of Thai learners is highly expected
despite the fact that most of them still lack this ability and need to be enhanced
(Chawwang, 2008). Thus, to solve this problem, this study implemented "Self-Made
Stories of Virtue and Morality" emphasizing fundamental vocabulary for lower
secondary students based on Thai National English Core Curriculum with the
following objectives: 1) to develop reading ability of grade eight rural students 2), to
enhance their vocabulary learning, 3) to improve their satisfaction in learning new
vocabulary through reading these selected stories. 36 students were purposively
selected as the study samples at Ban Chumsang School, Office of Buriram Primary
Educational Area Services 4, Office of the Basic Education Commission, Ministry of
Education, Thailand. The research tools were pre/post tests of reading comprehension
exercises, questionnaires, and tests of learning achievement. They were tried out three
times in the similar groups of students in two relevant schools nearby. Quantitative
data collected were presented in term of t-test (Dependent Sample), and percentage.
The major findings showed that although both of students' vocabulary learning and
their reading ability were averagely enhanced, they were significantly satisfied with
learning new vocabulary through reading selected English Stories of Virtue and
Morality. This clearly reflects that selected stories for creating satisfaction on English
reading helps improve vocabulary learning and language acquisition (Loukia, 2006;
Zugel, 2012).

Keywords: Reading ability, vocabulary learning, reading satisfaction, self-made
stories of virtue and morality

1. Introduction

English language is a core course for all and the outcome is that they will be able to use the language for daily and internationally communication, regarding to Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC, 2008). The abilities in reading English are required for young Thai rural learners of English as foreign language (EFL), (OBEC, 2008). Despite the fact that most of them lack the reading competence to communicate or gain information from different types of sources (Noom-ura, 2013; Chawwang, 2008; Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008).

In addition, most of young Thai learners have negative attitude towards English learning (Noom-ura, 2013). Their imagination of English language is monster-like. This negative attitude hampers the motivations to learn and improve language ability (Noom-ura, 2013). Also, the opportunities to use the language are limited and they are unconfident when participating in English environment because they are afraid of losing face (Noom-ura, 2013).

Considering the results of the ordinary national educational test (O-NET) of all young Thai learners in Thailand, English subject was the lowest score of all subjects (Noom-ura, 2013). It seems a shortcoming regarding the objective of improving the learning achievements of Thai rural learners of English language. It raises the questions 'what happened and why? What should teachers do to help them improve their reading?'

Moreover, young Thai rural students are not eager to read perhaps because they have vocabulary limitation (Noom-ura, 2013; Chawwang, 2008; Chomchaiya & Dunworth; 2008). They are not able to read a word neither understand its meaning. As a result, they become poor readers in English as foreign language. The situation is worse since they lack the reading ability. Some students cannot read a single word. This has been considered the crucial problem of Thai rural learners of English and, for years, the researchers have been putting an effort to help improve the language learning and ability of Thai rural students; however, the increase has been small.

Several studies revealed the problems in learning English, particularly reading, of Thai learners (Noom-ura, 2013; Chawwang, 2008; Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008). However, more studies are still required on how to solve the problems and help improve language ability of young learners. It is necessary to improve the reading ability of Thai rural kids, so that they can acquire knowledge and be able to effectively communicate in the ASEAN community and in the 21st century. The present study was conducted in order to test the enhancing of reading ability of Thai rural learners through reading stories (Nomnian, 2013).

2. Review of Literature

Vocabulary learning is the centre of improving reading ability. Understanding vocabulary and its correct usage helps learners to read extensively and to permanently build up their reading ability. Based on this assumption, reading stories is administered to grade eight Thai rural students. This part reviews extensive reading, reading satisfaction and vocabulary learning, reading and language acquisition, and self-made stories and vocabulary learning.

2.1 Extensive reading: reading stories
Extensive reading includes reading stories, comic, news, and other materials that enable learners to read and study new vocabulary through context. It also helps learners to understand the correctly usage of the vocabulary. Collecting vocabulary will retain for the future retrieval (Mehring, 2005).

Reading stories is the type of extensive reading that is, according to many studies, effective in improving vocabulary learning and reading ability (Krashen, 2006; Wang, 2013; Loukia, 2006; Kickman, Pollard, & Vaughn, 2004; Zugel, 2012; Min & Hsu, 2008; Korte,n.d.). Examining the current situation in Chinese Universities, for teaching and learning how to read, Meng (2009) proved that extensive reading certainly improve reading competence as well as linguistic capabilities.

Free time reading in school is an alternative path of extensive reading, apart from reading traditional materials in classroom, that allows students to read other materials they are interested to. In a study about the reading of online materials for enhancing extensive reading of high school students done by Guo (2012) it is submitted that students' vocabulary and language acquisition were significantly increased with those practices. In addition to other studies employing reading stories with EFL students, Fojkarl, M.D., Skela, J., & Kovač, P. (2013) confirmed that reading helps to increase fluency in reading. The consequence of the study on reading fluency in EFL classroom through extensive reading of high school students in Japan also strongly confirmed that extensive reading effectively enable students to read more fluently (Iwahori, 2008).

2.2 Self-made stories and vocabulary learning
Self-made stories are the stories that the researcher created and developed as tools for improving students' extensive reading. Krashen states that poor readers need extra motivation to read (Krashen, 2013). Teachers should provide books and materials that are easy to read, understandable, attractive and interesting for learners, such as comic books, story books, and short stories with the consideration of learners' age and interests in order to provide what they really want to read (Krashen, 2013, 2006). Learners themselves were also allowed to select what they really want to read. It encourages enjoyable reading that can influence vocabulary learning and improving reading ability, as a result. This has been confirmed by some studies on suitable reading materials for students in different ages (Min & Hsu, 2008).

2.3 Reading satisfaction

Reading satisfaction refers to readers' happiness in reading. In other words, a reader read productive information pleasurably (Krashen 2006). Krashen (2006) points out that what fosters happiness in reading is reading material and readers' interests. It is so challenging and rewarding for readers to select interesting and comprehensible reading materials by themselves and read it. Because it is pleasant for them to enjoy what they have read. As a result, it is evidenced that self-selected readers become addicted to reading (Krashen, 2006; Wang, 2013).

In Nohora Inés, N. & González, P. Porras (2010), elementary students were allowed to create and read their own stories and that resulted in the increase of their participation and motivation in reading. Moreover, it is shown that students have learnt more new vocabulary.

It is important for teachers of EFL to organize and provide interesting materials or provide opportunities for learners to select reading material by themselves. This make learners feel great to read regarding their own interests, and this increase their motivation to read more: re-read or read other interesting materials, (Krashen, 2006; Wang, 2013). It is relevant to the suggestions of Chomchaiya and Dunworth (2008) on some effective factors that should be considered for increasing learner's reading motivation; interesting reading materials and classroom environment.

2.4 Reading and language acquisition

Learners of English as a foreign language acquire the language through different ways of learning, including both receptive and productive. Reading is one of the most effective ways in acquiring the language, particularly for EFL learners immerse in an environment where English is not spoken (Wang, 2013). Learners can learn vocabulary through reading. They have to memorize vocabulary and understand the story, particularly when they have to read and subsequently answer questions about what they have read (Krahen, 2013). In some situations, when learners do not comprehend a word, what they have to do is re-read and attempt to understand, thereby pushing them to acquire vocabulary and language in contexts or situations.

Vocabulary learning is important as a center of improving reading ability (Wang, 2013; Moeller, Ketman & Masmaliyeva, 2009) because it provides paths to access all forms of productive information. Learners of English as a foreign language are able to collect and store a new vocabulary through reading. This is consequent with Duke and Mosses (2003) that vocabulary learning is the basis for building up and developing reading ability.

Without learning a word, learners are unable to understand content in reading materials. However learning a single word alone does not help readers to comprehend what they read. Therefore, extensive reading is a combination of single vocabulary comprehension, usage and contextual comprehension (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006).

3. Research Methodology

This study is a quantitative research. It was conducted with the 36 Thai rural students of a public lower secondary school, under Buriram Primary Educational, Service Area Office 4, Office of Basic Educational Commission, Ministry of Education, Thailand. The main purpose is to help improve their reading ability, vocabulary learning and their satisfaction of learning the language through extensive reading. The research procedures cover the stories selection and making, tying out the stories, the use of the stories with the targeted students, collecting and analyzing data, and, at last, conclude the research.

3.1 Research Tools

The study used the following research tools to collect data: stories books, achievement test and questionnaire of satisfaction. Each story book contained reading comprehension exercises, pre-post tests and vocabulary lists. Stories illustrations were attached to each story which was relevant to its content. In addition, the lesson plans and learning behavior observation were also employed.

3.2 Stories selecting and developing

Firstly the researcher reviewed and analyzed the core curriculum of English language, to see what students have to learn and what ability they were required to have. It demonstrated students were required to have reading ability on different types of material, including, labels, newspaper, and stories (OBEC, 2008). Next, the researcher selected ten stories and developed it with the content integration of other subject matters, age, and student's interests. Each story has different content. Some teaching and morality were hidden at the end of the stories. This was to shape up behavior and moral thinking of the students. It was so called self-made "Stories of Virtue and Morality". Vocabulary used in the stories was selected according to the national corpora (OBEC, 2008). Each story book contained a story, comprehension exercises, pre-post tests and vocabulary lists. Stories illustrations were attached to each story with relevance to its content. All the stories, then, were brought to five education specialists for correcting and editing. Lastly, the story books were tested before they were employed into a classroom.

3.3 Trying out the stories

To increase reliability and validity of the story books, all of them were tested. There were, in total, 3 try outs. Each try out was done with different students from a different school of the school where the research was to be conducted. The first try out was "one to one testing" (1:1) and was made with three students (one good, one average and one weak student) selected according their result in previous study. It took two hours for students to read and do all the exercises, including pre-post tests. The first try out found that some parts of the stories were confusing, the vocabulary used was too difficult and the illustrations were not relevant to the stories. Those parts were adjusted to be suitable. The second try out was a "small group testing" with totally 9 students (3 good, 3 average, and 3 weak students). It was found they enjoyed the stories. The last try out was tested with the whole class of the students in a school in order to see if the self-made stories were suitable to be brought into classroom for improving the students' abilities regarding vocabulary learning and reading. The try out results showed that they were reliable and suitable to be employed into classroom.

3.4 Employing the stories in the classroom

The subjects were 36 lower secondary students of a public school in a remote area of Thailand. The experiment was conducted from 2nd January to 28th February 2013. Students had two hours to complete the whole activities provided with one story. Lesson plans were designed as a teacher manual for planning the classroom activities with explanations on how to use each story as a teaching material. In total there were 10 stories of virtue and morality.

The procedure of applying the stories in classroom was as follows. At the beginning, the whole class students took the pre achievement test (50 items) before they start to read every story. This was to discover the students' comprehension about the stories and vocabulary contained in all stories. Students were expected to learn and acquire the vocabulary through the reading of all the stories. After they completed the reading and studying of all stories the post achievement test was administered to them. The results of pre and post tests were compared to see if they have made any progress in reading comprehension.

The next step was reading stage. Before they started to read each story, they had to do the pre-test of each story. The outcome of the pre-test was collected in order to subsequently measure the improvement they would have made after they completed the reading and had done doing all exercises of each story. Then the students started to read the stories followed by exercises to review their understanding of vocabulary. This was to monitor their reading comprehension and help motivate them to actively concentrate on their vocabulary learning and reading. Finally, they had to do the post-test of the stories; again the result was collected to compare the progress of their reading ability. The students had to follow the learning reading stories mentioned earlier from the first to the last of the stories.

Classroom activities were well designed and planned to support the students learning. Apart from that, friends helped and facilitated each other during accomplishment of trial. Classroom learning environment was also another important factor encouraging students to read and enjoy the stories. It helped by motivating them to improve reading.

3.5 Data Collections and Analysis

The data were collected with the following tools: achievement tests, pre-post tests of each story, reading comprehension exercises, and satisfaction questionnaire. The data were analyzed by using percentage and average $(\overline{X})$ and S.D (Standard Deviation) and t-test.

4. Results of the Study

The findings of the study are presented in three parts: The efficiency and the effectiveness of the stories in helping improving vocabulary learning and reading ability, the comparison of the pre and posttest results, and the students' satisfaction of learning from the stories of virtue and morality.

4.1 Reading Ability

The research data in this part were collected from administering post-test of each stories and pre-post test of reading comprehension exercises. The result was presented below.

Table 1: Students' average score from doing exercises and post-test of each story and the achievement test

Stories	N	Full Scores	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	Percentage
1. The Sufficiency Economy Village					
Exercises	36	10	9.06	1.04	90.56
Posttest	36	10	8.19	0.82	81.94
Total Scores	36	20	17.25	1.63	86.25
2. You Are What You Eat					
Exercises	36	10	8.86	0.96	88.61
Posttest	36	10	8.47	0.81	84.72
Total Scores	36	20	17.33	1.51	86.67
3. The Smart Bella and Billy					
Exercises	36	10	8.83	0.97	88.33
Posttest	36	10	8.19	0.75	81.94
Total Scores	36	20	17.03	1.52	85.14
4. The Magic Crystal					
Exercises	36	10	8.67	0.99	86.67
Posttest	36	10	8.28	0.88	82.78
Total Scores	36	20	16.94	1.53	84.72
5. Princess Angela					
Exercises	36	10	8.86	0.87	88.61
Posttest	36	10	8.64	0.93	86.39
Total Scores	36	20	17.50	1.63	87.50
6. The Colorful Pumpkins					
Exercises	36	10	9.33	0.99	93.33
Posttest	36	10	8.61	0.90	86.11
Total Scores	36	20	17.94	1.57	89.72
7. The Turtle and the Red Swan					
Exercises	36	10	8.78	0.93	87.78
Posttest	36	10	8.11	0.92	81.11
Total Scores	36	20	16.89	1.51	84.44
8. The Sweet Island					
Exercises	36	10	8.61	0.87	86.11
Posttest	36	10	8.25	0.97	82.50
Total Scores	36	20	16.86	1.48	84.31

Table 1 (Continue)

Stories	N	Full Scores	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	Percentage
9. The Moth and the Coward Girl					
Exercises	36	10	8.72	1.00	87.22
Posttest	36	10	8.22	0.72	82.22
Total Scores	36	20	16.94	1.37	84.72
10. The Beggars' Daughter					
Exercises	36	10	9.00	0.83	90.00
Posttest	36	10	8.39	0.77	83.89
Total Scores	36	20	17.39	1.34	86.94
Total average scores	36	200	172.08	11.85	86.04
Achievement Test	36	50	44.19	2.32	88.39
The effectiveness of the stories in helping improving vocabulary learning and reading ability is 86.04/88.39.					

Table 1 illustrates the average score of the students in each exercise after reading the stories. The average score was 172.08 out of 200 marks or 86.04 percent. This was considered a highly outcome and reflected a high effectiveness of enhancing vocabulary learning and reading ability through reading stories. Similarly, the average score from doing achievement test was 44.19 out of 50 marks or 88.39 percent. It represented a good result of learning. It also reflected that students were able to read and understand the stories quiet well. They have learnt some new words and comprehend the stories pretty good. Thus, reading these self-made stories of virtue and morality can enhance vocabulary learning and reading ability. In other word, students developed reading competence through reading stories.

4.2 Vocabulary Learning
The data collected from administering pre-post test of test of reading achievement. The result of pre-test was compared to the result of post test of the achievement test and presented in the table 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: The percentage of the achievement test, average score and the efficiency of the stories

Tests	N	Total Scores (1,800 Points)	Percentage	E.I.
Pre-test	36	838	46.56	0.7827
Post-test	36	1,591	88.39	

According to the results shown in Table 2, the average score of the achievement test was at 46.56 percent for the pre-test. This is considered very low performance. The students might not understand the words in the stories they had read or they might have lacked reading ability, thus leading to the very unsatisfactory results of the pre-test. On the contrary, the post test score was at 88.39 percent. This shown that the students gained some improvement after they studied and learned vocabulary. It was assumed that students have re-read to better comprehend some new vocabulary in

order to make a better results of exercises as was shown in the effectiveness index (E.I.) of 0.7827 or 78.27 percent.

Table 3: The Results of the achievement test

Samples	N	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	t
Pre-test	36	23.28	3.90	69.923**
Post-test	36	44.19	2.32	

Note ** with the significant level of .01 ($_{.01}t_{35} = 2.4366$)

Table 3 presents the average score of the achievement test of the 36 students. It compares average score of the test done before and after the self-made stories were employed in their practice. The result of the pre-test was very low with the average of 23.28 out of 50 marks. The post-test average score was obviously increased at 44.19 out of 50 marks. This can be interpreted in the sense that the students have significantly improved their vocabulary learning and reading ability through self-male stories of virtue and morality.

4.3 Reading Satisfaction
This result gained from distributing a questionnaire of satisfaction on reading stories to the students after they have read all the stories provided during the study. There were 30 questions about the reading and learning vocabulary through reading self-made stories. The questionnaire consisted of 5 rating scales of satisfaction: 1-5 for the lowest, low, moderate, high, and the highest respectively. The results are presented below.

Table 4 Students' satisfaction on stories in enhancing vocabulary learning and reading ability

Items	Questions	Students' satisfaction		
		$\overline{X}$	S.D.	Level of satisfaction
1	A story book is boring reading material.	4.47	0.51	high
2	I like to read stories.	4.36	0.49	high
3	I think the content of the stories should been reduced.	4.42	0.50	high
4	A story books useful to improve reading.	4.69	0.52	highest
5	I am confused when reading a story.	4.58	0.55	highest
6	Reading stories can help promote reading fluency.	4.83	0.38	highest
7	I feel lonely when reading stories.	4.36	0.49	high
8	I feel happy and relaxed when reading.	4.72	0.45	highest
9	I feel stressful when reading stories.	4.39	0.49	high
10	I always focus on reading stories.	4.97	0.17	highest
11	These stories are attractive and interesting.	4.50	0.61	highest
12	I can learn vocabulary from reading stories.	4.36	0.49	high
13	Learning from reading is process learning.	4.67	0.48	highest
14	I feel pleasant when reading a story.	4.81	0.40	highest
15	I do not want to learn from reading.	4.28	0.45	high

Table 4 Students' satisfaction on stories in enhancing vocabulary learning and reading
   ability (Continue)

Items	Questions	Students' satisfaction		
		$\overline{X}$	S.D.	Level of satisfaction
16	Reading a story can help improve my language.	4.97	0.17	highest
17	Reading a story is an old style of learning.	4.39	0.49	high
18	A story book is understandable.	4.56	0.50	highest
19	A story book is a suitable reading material.	4.75	0.44	highest
20	It is worth reading a story.	4.42	0.50	high
21	A story book is a useful material.	4.64	0.49	highest
22	Reading can help me understand vocabulary better.	4.72	0.45	highest
23	I want to read these stories again if I have time.	4.58	0.55	highest
24	Story books reinforce me to learn better.	4.58	0.50	highest
25	Reading makes me become a fast learner.	4.72	0.45	highest
26	I want to learn vocabulary from reading.	4.67	0.48	highest
27	I love to participate in reading activities.	4.33	0.48	high
28	Reading make me become loving to learn a language.	4.81	0.40	highest
29	Reading encourages me to have problem solving skill.	4.75	0.44	highest
30	I have a lot of fun reading the stories.	4.39	0.64	high
	Total/Average	**4.59**	**0.19**	**highest**

Regarding Table 4, students were very satisfied with learning the language through
reading stories with the average level of satisfaction at 4.59 out of 5.00. This reflects
that the stories employed in improving reading ability were helpful. Moreover, the
students had fun and enjoyed to read the stories, however, the results shown some
negative attitudes as highly as positive attitudes towards reading the stories. Students
strongly commented that story books are boring at 4.47 of the average levels of
satisfaction. They said the content of the stories should have been cut down. This can
be implied that the vocabulary used in the stories were too difficult for them to be able
to comprehend. When they did not understand what they read, they could not enjoy
the stories. Considering the positive opinion on reading stories, it found that students
were happy to read. They found story books enhanced them to become a better reader.
It supported that reading stories help motivate vocabulary learning and improve
reading competence.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Reading ability is an important receptive skill in learning a language. Lack\ of this
ability might cause ineffective reception of information or failure of understanding.
Vocabulary is the fundamental factor to comprehend a text.

Reading stories can encourage students to learn vocabulary that leads to understand
the language. To discover whether or not readers can understand what they have read,
questions were given to readers. It is acceptable that if a reader correctly answers the
questions, it can be assumed that he had learnt vocabulary and he has reading ability
(Wang, 2013). Questioning helps to encourage readers that are attempting to learn and
to understand the vocabulary, including grammar and language in situations.

Reading with pleasure is considered the most appropriate way to enhance a poor reader to be a better reader (Krashen, 2006). Reading materials is another factor that plays an important role in promoting vocabulary learning and reading competence. Interesting and comprehensible reading materials regarding to readers' ages and their own interests are best suitable to motivate students to read. Readers should have opportunities to select reading materials they want to read by themselves, as well as, teachers should provide varieties of reading information for them.

In conclusion, the way of extensive reading that consists in reading stories effectively improves vocabulary learning. Moreover, reading interesting and understandable information promotes the reader's happiness and pleasure. Through the reading of enjoyable, interesting and comprehensible materials the reader can pleasantly gain new vocabulary and knowledge (Krahen, 2006). The retention of what he has learnt lasts life-long and is retrievable in the future usage. Apart from learning vocabulary through reading, the reader might also acquire contextual and grammatical language. This is strongly supported by many studies. Hence, to help learners of English as a foreign language, the materials provided to read should be attractive and interesting for them, in the overall context of the organization of a suitable and relaxing classroom environment for students.

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