

Enhancing EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Reading Strategy Instruction through Locally and Globally Contextualized Materials

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Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 15 Jan 2025 Accepted: 30 Jun 2025 Available online: 7 Jul 2025	<i>Effective teacher preparation goes beyond enhancing EFL pre-service teachers' English proficiency. It also involves equipping them with the skills to design culturally relevant course materials. However, little attention has been paid to how locally and globally contextualized materials influence EFL pre-service teachers' reading strategy competencies, material design skills, and cultural awareness in EFL practices. As such, in this study, we examined the impact of integrating local and global contexts into reading strategy materials on 32 Thai EFL pre-service teachers at a public university. This study particularly explored how the participants developed competencies in reading strategies, material design, and their understanding of culture, identity reflection, and contextualized language learning. Findings showed that the intervention helped the participants to develop culturally contextualized materials significantly improved their reading strategy competencies and material design skills. We also found that these materials influenced their learning in five major areas: (1) contextualized language learning, (2) local cultural knowledge incorporated in meaning-making, (3) cultural and identity reflection, (4) local and national identity integrated into reading instruction, and (5) integration of local and global cultural contexts in EFL practices. These results indicate the need for teacher education programs to provide pre-service teachers with culturally responsive instruction and training in material design so that they are prepared to navigate diverse learning contexts effectively.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

Effective teacher preparation programs play a central role in improving pre-service teachers' English proficiency and instructional capabilities particularly in EFL contexts (Darling-Hammond, 1997), including in Thailand, where the inadequacy of pre-service teacher training has been documented (Noom-ura, 2013). Despite the increasing demand for skilled English teachers, many pre-service teachers struggle to develop both linguistic competence and effective pedagogical strategies (Hong, 2010; Jantarach, 2017). According to the Education First (EF)

English Proficiency Index (2022), Thailand ranks 21st among 113 Asian countries, falling into the “very low” proficiency category (Chantaraphat & Jaturapitakkul, 2023). This issue is particularly evident in reading, where Thai students’ performance has steadily declined, reaching the lowest scores recorded between 2000 and 2022 (OECD, 2023). As such, addressing this challenge requires well-prepared pre-service teachers who can effectively support students in developing essential reading skills.

Reading proficiency is fundamental to language learning, as it supports the development of writing and speaking skills (Adunyarittigun, 2021; Fotovantian & Shokrpour, 2007). However, many pre-service teachers in Thailand receive insufficient training in reading instruction (Pathomchaiwat & Thongrin, 2024). Teacher preparation programs often emphasize general pedagogical skills while neglecting specialized training in reading strategies (Pathomchaiwat & Thongrin, 2024), leaving teachers unprepared to guide students in developing essential reading skills.

Effective reading instruction requires integrating reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, identifying context clues, and understanding text structures (Afflerbach et al., 2008). To teach these effectively, pre-service teachers need both pedagogical knowledge and well-designed instructional materials. However, the materials used in EFL classrooms may not provide comprehensive or systematic instruction in reading strategies (Grabe, 2009). Integrating locally and globally contextualized materials is reported to enhance engagement and comprehension, as such materials make learning more relevant to students’ cultural backgrounds while also expanding their global awareness (Byram, 2008; Cummins, 2001; Hinkel, 2011; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996).

The integration of local and global contexts into reading materials is widely recognized as an effective approach in EFL instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Rattanawong & Thongrin, 2023; Thongrin, 2018). As Gay (2010) and Kramsch (2001) emphasize, locally contextualized materials help students connect learning to their own experiences, while globally relevant texts expose them to diverse perspectives and real-world applications of English. Although the benefits of culturally relevant materials have been well-documented (see Cabello, 1984; Cummins, 2001; Gay, 2010; Hinkel, 2011; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996), research examining their impact on pre-service teachers’ ability to teach reading strategies effectively remains insufficient.

To address this gap, we examined the impact of integrating local and global contexts into reading strategy materials on Thai EFL pre-service teachers’ reading strategy competencies and material design skills. Specifically, our study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How does integrating local and global contexts in instructional materials impact pre-service English teachers’ reading strategy competencies and material design skills?
2. How does the use of locally and globally contextualized materials influence EFL pre-service teachers’ reading strategy instruction, particularly in terms of cultural knowledge, identity reflection, and contextualized language learning?

Building on these questions, the findings are expected to inform the development of more effective EFL teacher preparation programs by equipping pre-service teachers with the skills necessary to enhance reading strategy instruction through locally and globally relevant materials.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of effective reading materials is important for EFL instruction. However, the integration of cultural contexts into reading materials remains a critical area for improvement in teacher education programs. This literature review consequently discusses the significance of cultural integration in EFL instruction, the role of culturally relevant materials in EFL reading instruction, and existing research on integrating local and global cultural elements in EFL teaching materials.

Importance of cultural integration in EFL instruction

Cultural integration in language learning plays a vital role in creating meaningful and engaging educational experiences. As Kramsch (2001; 2009) emphasizes, language and culture are inseparable, so understanding cultural contexts is essential for effective language learning. In EFL reading instruction, students tend to encounter challenges as a result of unfamiliar cultural references in reading texts. To solve this problem, teachers can integrate students' cultural backgrounds into reading instruction to bridge these gaps and make learning more engaging and meaningful (Carrell, 1987). This approach is acknowledged within culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), as it not only enhances students' learning engagement but also supports their cognitive and emotional development.

Suggested by Byram (2008) and Hinkel (2011), teachers can integrate local and global cultural contexts into learning enriches students' experiences by incorporating their familiar cultural elements in learning tasks. This then leads to their comprehension with broader global perspectives. Also, this approach nurtures their intercultural awareness and equips them for global communication. More importantly, with this approach, teachers help students develop both linguistic proficiency and cultural competence, both of which are essential skills for navigating today's interconnected world (Kramsch, 2009).

Culturally relevant materials in EFL reading instruction

Integrating culturally relevant materials into EFL reading instruction fosters students' learning engagement and lesson comprehension. When materials reflect students' sociocultural backgrounds, learning becomes more meaningful and relatable (Gay, 2010), and finally fosters a sense of empowerment (Vavrus, 2008). Using localized materials with familiar cultural references not only enhances students' communicative competence across all four language skills but also strengthens their problem-solving abilities and cognitive development (Cummins, 2001; Duarte, 2008). Equally important, such materials promote students' critical thinking as they are encouraged to analyze texts within culturally meaningful contexts. This then helps them gain deeper comprehension and knowledge retention.

To maximize the effectiveness of reading instruction, teachers can design materials using a structured reading framework that incorporates three stages: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. The pre-reading stage activates students' background knowledge and establishes the context for learning (Anderson, 2008). The while-reading stage guides students in applying reading strategies such as predicting, inferring, and summarizing to construct meaning (Thongrin, 2015; Wichanee & Thongrin, 2024). The post-reading stage helps students reflect on their understanding and maintain comprehension (Wallace, 1992).

Beyond comprehension, culturally relevant reading materials also contribute to students' cultural awareness. Exposure to texts reflecting their own cultural contexts helps students recognize the relationship between language and culture, reinforcing their language proficiency (Gay, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2011). Along the same line, materials that incorporate global perspectives can broaden students' views and foster their intercultural competence (Byram, 2008). For pre-service teachers, the ability to design and implement culturally integrated reading materials is very important. With this skill, they are able to address diverse classroom needs while developing their own instructional competence (Byram, 2008). In other words, integrating local and global perspectives in reading instruction equips future educators to foster students' cultural awareness so that they can navigate cross-cultural communication in a globalized world more effectively. This conforms to Robertson's (1995) concept of glocalization, where students can engage with global discourses while preserving their cultural identity. By balancing global awareness with local context, educators can empower students to think critically, appreciate diverse perspectives, and confidently participate in an interconnected world.

Studies on integrating local and global cultures in EFL reading materials

Research on the integration of local and global cultural elements in EFL teaching materials underscores the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy in language learning. While the theoretical foundation for cultural integration in language education is well established (see Byram, 2008; Gay, 2010; Kramsch, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tomlinson, 2013), empirical studies focusing on its application in designing EFL reading strategy materials remain limited.

Several studies have investigated the impact of localized materials on reading instruction. For example, Razavi and Gilakjani (2007) examined the effects of incorporating cultural context into reading instruction for intermediate EFL learners in Iran, and found a significant improvement in reading comprehension. In the same fashion, Aminullah et al. (2019) and Royani (2013) explored the impact of local cultural texts in Indonesian EFL classrooms, revealing that this approach enhanced students' class engagement and improved comprehension. Kristiawan (2012) supported these findings, highlighting the importance of integrating local culture into English teaching materials to enhance learning outcomes. In Thailand, Kanoksilapatham (2018) developed "Thainess-Based English Lessons" for elementary students in northern Thailand. The study showed that incorporating local cultural identity into English instruction increased students' motivation and comprehension. However, when EFL students encounter reading materials that feel culturally distant, they may experience anxiety. Al-Shboul et al. (2013) observed this in Jordanian EFL learners, who struggled with unfamiliar vocabulary, topics, and cultural contexts, which resulted in learning anxiety. These findings indicate that while culturally

relevant reading instruction supports comprehension, the absence of cultural familiarity can create cognitive and emotional barriers to learning.

Although the benefits of culturally integrated materials are well-documented, research on their role in teacher education programs remains limited. Some studies have explored the challenges pre-service teachers face in reading instruction. For example, Pantawee (2008) identified specific difficulties and proposed an EFL reading instructional system tailored to their needs. Similarly, Prapinwong (2018) examined intercultural awareness among pre-service teachers in physical education and mathematics, suggesting important areas, such as knowledge acquisition, stress management, language development, and self-awareness. Building on these results, Rattanawong and Thongrin (2023) highlighted the importance of balancing local and global cultural elements in university-level EFL textbooks to strengthen students' intercultural competence. These studies suggest that teacher education programs should actively prepare pre-service teachers to integrate culturally relevant materials into their future classrooms, equipping them with the necessary skills to foster meaningful and inclusive learning experiences.

Also, research on reading strategy instruction for EFL teachers provides further insights. Petchinalert and Aksornjarung (2017) examined reading strategies used among in-service EFL teachers in southern Thailand. Findings revealed three major strategies: global reading strategies, problem-solving strategies, and support strategies. Although this study focused on in-service rather than pre-service teachers, its findings highlight the essential reading strategy competencies that future educators should develop. However, we still see that research specifically examining how pre-service teachers design and implement culturally integrated reading strategy materials remains scarce.

As a result, further research that emphasizes how culturally relevant materials impact EFL pre-service teachers' instructional practices is needed. To address this need, we explore how integrating culturally relevant materials shapes the instructional approaches of Thai EFL pre-service teachers at a university serving students from diverse social backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY

Research approach and design

We conducted this research through a quasi-experimental study with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The study aimed to assess the improvement of 32 Thai EFL pre-service teachers in reading strategy competencies, material design skills, and the impact of locally and globally contextualized materials on their reading instruction. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' learning engagement and skills in materials design, we employed a mixed-methods analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), combining both quantitative and qualitative data.

Research context and the course

This study took place at a medium-sized public university in central Thailand, which serves students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, including middle-class urban students and those from low-income families in surrounding provinces.

The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2022 academic year, within the Teaching Methodology II course. This course focuses on English language instruction, including reading strategies and materials design. One of the researchers served as both the course instructor and researcher, while the other acted as a co-researcher, validating teaching tasks, research activities, and data analysis.

To minimize bias in data collection and analysis, we invited an external observer, an experienced educator in teacher education, to observe all class sessions and document her thoughts in a reflective journal. Her role in peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) provided us with critical feedback to ensure the credibility of the data. Most importantly, her observations helped us achieve intersubjective agreement, further strengthening the trustworthiness of the qualitative data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research participants

The participants of this study were 32 English major pre-service teachers enrolled in the Teaching Methodology II course, which is part of the English Education curriculum. As criteria for our participant recruitment, before enrolling in this course, the participants needed to successfully complete a prerequisite course, the Teaching Methodology I course, which covered the general principles of teaching methodology, and had earned at least a passing grade of C, as required by the curricular policy.

Data sources

We collected data from two primary sources. First, we collected quantitative data from pretest and posttest scores assessed the effects of locally and globally contextualized materials on participants' reading strategy competencies and material design skills. Second, we also collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, the participants' reflective journals, classroom observations with field notes, and the external observer's reflective journal.

Research instruments

In this study, we had four instruments-the first three for data collection and the fourth for the teaching process.

The first instrument was the pretest-posttest designed to assess the participants' reading strategy competencies. The pretest and posttest were identical to ensure consistency in measuring the same underlying construct over time (Creswell, 2014). This approach is effective when there is a sufficient time span, like the 10-week period in this study. Following the principles

of reading strategy competency test development proposed by Osterlind (1998) and Pearson and Johnson (1978), we adapted a reading strategy test consisting of 50 multiple-choice items. Forty items were derived from standardized reading TOEFL tests, representing global contexts, while an additional 10 items were developed to reflect local context-based reading tasks. The test specifications consisted of nine objectives, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Reading strategy competency test specifications

No.	Objectives	No. of items (50)	Cognitive levels	Weight (%)	Scoring	Time (minutes)
1	To identify main ideas of the reading passage.	5	Comprehension	10	1	70
2	To identify details and specific information.	9	Comprehension	18	1	
3	To skim and scan the reading passage.	8	Comprehension	16	1	
4	To summarize the reading passage.	5	Comprehension	10	1	
5	To identify pronoun references from the reading passage.	5	Comprehension	10	1	
6	To use the internal sentence clues to get the meaning of unknown words.	5	Comprehension	10	1	
7	To indicate connectors and text structure of the reading passage.	4	Comprehension	8	1	
8	To interpret the statement from the reading passage.	5	Comprehension	10	1	
9	To indicate the author’s purpose from the reading passage.	4	Comprehension	8	1	
Total number of test items: 50						

The 50-item reading strategy test required 70 minutes for completion. It was validated by three ELT experts and piloted with a separate group of pre-service teachers to ensure reliability and effectiveness of the test.

The second instrument consisted of a pretest and posttest, both identical, and was designed to assess the participants' material design skills. The objective of the test was to measure the extent to which the participants had developed their ability to design reading strategy lessons for teaching. First of all, the test specifications were established with 12 test objectives, incorporating four assessment modes targeting comprehension and evaluation skills.

Table 2
Test specifications for materials design skills

No.	Objectives	Modes	Cognitive Levels	No. of items (30)	Weight (%)	Scoring	Time (minutes)
1	To identify stages of reading instructions.	Reading instruction	Comprehension	5	16.67	1	45
2	To activate learners' background knowledge.		Comprehension	4	13.34	1	
1	To identify activities for the pre-reading stage.	Reading strategy identified in the materials design	Comprehension	1	3.33	1	
2	To identify activities for the while-reading stage.		Comprehension	2	6.67	1	
3	To identify activities for the post-reading stage.		Comprehension	2	6.67	1	
4	To select suitable reading texts for reading instruction.		Comprehension	1	3.33	1	

No.	Objectives	Modes	Cognitive Levels	No. of items (30)	Weight (%)	Scoring	Time (minutes)
5	To identify vocabulary items from texts for instruction.	Reading strategy identified in the materials design	Comprehension	2	6.67	1	45
6	To identify language structures from reading texts.		Comprehension	2	6.67	1	
7	To implement reading strategies in teaching reading instruction.	Reading strategies incorporated in the materials	Comprehension	1	3.33	1	
8	To provide an example of how to use reading strategies to comprehend the text.		Comprehension	2	6.67	1	
9	To identify the reading strategies used in reading materials.		Comprehension	3	10.10	1	
10	To indicate the importance of reading strategy instruction in EFL contexts.		Comprehension	2	6.67	1	
11	To foster the implementation of culturally relevant instruction and course materials.	Cultural aspects in the reading strategy materials	Evaluation	1	3.33	1	
12	To see the value of locally and globally contextualized reading texts in EFL practices.		Evaluation	2	6.67	1	
Total number of test items: 30							

The test consisted of multiple-choice questions relevant to reading passages as input for test items. To ensure validity, three ELT experts evaluated the test using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), with all test items achieving IOC values of 0.67 or higher. Then, the test was piloted with a separate group of pre-service teachers, and their feedback was used for final revisions.

The third instrument included a set of semi-structured interview questions designed to elicit the participants' reflections on their learning experiences, and the materials they developed. We used interview questions to gather the participants' views on six key areas: (1) the course objectives and overview, (2) the instructor's teaching, guidelines, and feedback, (3) the design of reading strategy materials based on the local-global context, (4) the benefits and limitations of the course, (5) the participants' learning process, and (6) their learning outcomes. The interview questions were also validated by three ELT experts.

The fourth instrument covered all course materials, including lesson plans, a teacher's manual, and lesson samples, all of which were designed based on principles of materials development (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Lee, 2015; Pressley, 2002). Following the approaches of Carrell, Devine, and Eskey (1988) and Grabe and Stoller (2002), these materials were developed based on the identified problems and needs of key stakeholders—twenty-seven pre-service teachers, five ELT experts, three ELT teachers, five school mentors, and twenty alumni (see Pathomchaiwat & Thongrin, 2024). The materials were then constructed to guide the participants in designing instructional content for effective materials development.

The reading topics and strategy types included in these materials were determined through input from all the key stakeholders. The reading topics were related to places, cuisine, people, history, tales and legends, traditions and life styles, customs, and novels and music. Also, the fourteen reading strategies included (1) finding main ideas, (2) identifying text structures, (3) summarizing, (4) paraphrasing, (5) using context clues, (6) predicting stories, (7) making

inferences, (8) previewing the texts, (9) identifying pronoun references, (10) skimming and scanning, (11) indicating discourse markers, (12) transferring information from the texts, (13) interpreting the author's purposes, and (14) setting reading goals. To ensure alignment with course objectives and adherence to the three-stage reading strategy framework (pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading), the materials were validated by three experts using the Index of Congruence (IOC) method, with all components achieving an IOC value greater than 0.67.

Research procedure

Data collection took place during Semester 2 of the 2022 academic year following ethical approval from Thammasat University (Approval No. 037/2022). The participants were recruited through convenience sampling on a voluntary basis. Our research followed the following three steps:

Step 1: Pretest

The participants completed a pretest that aimed to assess their knowledge of reading strategy instruction and material development.

Step 2: Training Phase (9 weeks)

In Weeks 1-3, we provided training on reading strategies and the principles of instructional material design. Then, Weeks 4-6 were focused on developing lesson materials, where the participants were taught to incorporate both locally and globally contextualized content into the course materials. After completing the training on course material development, the participants worked in pairs during Weeks 7-9 to collaboratively revise the materials they had created. Throughout this 9-week period, an external observer who attended all sessions documented her observations and reflections.

Step 3: Posttest, Interviews & Reflective Journals

In the final week, the participants completed posttests that assessed their reading strategy competencies and material design skills, followed by semi-structured interviews. Throughout the course, the participants wrote five reflective journals, and the external observer documented her views related to the class observations in eight reflective journals. The reflective journals written by both the participants and the observer provided us with valuable insights into the course instruction and the participants' class engagement and learning outcome. With these multiple data sources, we were able to apply triangulation, which enhanced the reliability and validity of our findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data analysis

To analyze the data more thoroughly, we employed a mixed-methods analysis to interpret the data. In the quantitative analysis, pretest and posttest data were analyzed using paired t-tests

to assess improvements in the participants' reading strategy competencies and material design skills. For the qualitative data, we conducted thematic analysis as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify patterns of the data from the participants' semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and classroom observations.

In this study, reflective journals played a key role in our analysis. The journal entries enabled us to capture the participants' evolving perspectives and engagement (Schön, 1983). Additionally, the external observer's journal provided valuable input for validating the data. This offered an independent perspective that served as peer checking in our qualitative data analysis.

Ethical considerations in the teacher-researcher role

Throughout our research process, we were aware of the ethical challenges posed by the dual role of teacher-researcher, particularly in terms of potential bias and power dynamics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). To address these concerns, we took three important steps. First, we used independent data analysis, where two separate raters coded and analyzed the participants' reflective journals and classroom observations to ensure our objectivity. Second, we adhered to the principles of participant autonomy during recruitment and data presentation. The participants were clearly informed about the voluntary nature of their involvement, confidentiality procedures, and the anonymity of their responses. Third, we followed the ethical guidelines for educational research outlined by the British Educational Research Association (2018) to maintain research integrity and protect the participants. These measures were implemented to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings while safeguarding the participants' physical and emotional well-being.

RESULTS

Research question 1

How does integrating local and global contexts in instructional materials impact pre-service English teachers' reading strategy competencies and material design skills?

The data analysis through a mixed-methods approach revealed two major areas: the participants' competencies in reading strategies and materials design skills, and their reflective views on these competencies.

Participants' areas of competencies

In this research question, we examined the impact of integrating locally and globally contextualized materials on pre-service English teachers' reading strategy competencies, and abilities in reading materials construction. These two aspects are interrelated and essential for effective reading instruction (Grabe, 2009). These two data categories are examined collectively to provide a holistic assessment of how pre-service teachers develop essential skills in creating instructional materials for reading strategy instruction, all of which were achieved by paired t-test.

Participants' reading strategy competencies

Reading strategy competencies cover teachers' ability to apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies in their own reading and instruction. They need to have these competencies before serving in profession, which is linked to students' improved comprehension and learning outcomes (Paris et al., 1983; Pressley, 2002).

Table 3
Participants' reading strategy competencies

Tests	MEAN	S.D.	t value	Sig. level
Pretest	15.53	4.13	7.81	0.001
Posttest	18.69	4.53		

N = 32

Table 3 illustrates the participants' significant improvement in reading strategy competencies. The post-test mean (18.69) was notably higher than the pre-test mean (15.53), with a *t*-value of 7.81 at the 0.001 significance level. The data indicated that the participants could develop stronger cognitive and metacognitive strategy use after having been trained to construct the reading strategy material and used it in teaching.

The finding could be explained by explicit reading strategy instruction, particularly when grounded in meaningful, contextually relevant materials. The ten-week instruction, where the participants were trained in teaching reading strategies and designing class materials, enhanced their awareness and application of these strategies (Paris et al., 1983; Pressley, 2002). Also, integrating students' local contexts in the instruction could foster their deeper engagement with texts, promoting critical thinking and active strategy use in reading comprehension (Kern, 2000).

Participants' abilities in reading materials construction

Closely related to the first area of competencies is the participants' abilities in constructing reading strategy materials, tailored to local contexts to support culturally responsive teaching and scaffold students' learning (Tomlinson, 2013). The data showing the participants' abilities in constructing reading strategy materials are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Participants' abilities in constructing reading strategy materials

Tests	MEAN	S.D.	t value	Sig. level
Pretest	10.25	3.39	10.66	0.001
Posttest	16.69	3.34		

N = 32

As presented in Table 4, the participants' abilities in constructing reading strategy materials improved significantly. The post-test mean (16.69) was significantly higher than the pre-test mean (10.25), with a t -value of 10.66 at the 0.001 significance level. The findings indicated that after the training, the participants were more skilled at designing instructional materials with students' local contexts. This finding informs that when teachers develop their own materials, especially those incorporating culturally relevant themes, they tend to gain a deeper understanding of instructional design tailored to learners' needs (Tomlinson, 2013). More importantly, the participants' ability to create reading materials reflecting local perspectives can then link to more global perspectives. This could help students read texts more meaningfully and consequently enhance their learning engagement and lesson comprehension (Tomlinson, 2013).

Overall, the findings indicate that incorporating culturally relevant instructional materials is effective in fostering pre-service teachers' skills in reading strategies and ability to create reading strategy materials. The notable improvements in both areas indicate that we should encourage pre-service teachers to integrate cultural contexts into material design for more effective teaching in EFL contexts.

Participants' reflections on the culturally relevant materials

For a more thorough understanding of the quantitative data, we also analyzed the participants' reflections from their interview data. An external expert, who observed the entire intervention process, also validated these data to ensure credibility of our data analysis and interpretation.

The qualitative data highlighted the participants' perceptions of using culturally responsive materials. The analyzed data indicated important impact to the participants, which were categorized into 4 themes: acquired knowledge and skills, application to future teaching profession, teaching confidence and readiness, and challenges and further development.

Acquired knowledge and skills

In the first theme, the participants expressed their acquired knowledge and skills as a result of the training participation. Engaging in reading strategy instruction and contextually based material development allowed them to acquire essential pedagogical knowledge. They recognized the importance of strategic reading instruction and noted that constructing teaching materials could enhance their understanding of how to teach reading effectively. As the participants emphasized, their learning skills were not only from the course content but also from the instructor's demonstrations and their hands-on material creation. As three pre-service teachers stated,

I've gained a lot of knowledge about various reading strategies which I think is very important for preservice teachers to know before teaching reading. (PST 3)

I realized that preservice teachers should know how to teach reading strategy so that we can teach reading correctly. (PST 2)

I think that I can really teach reading strategies based on stages of lesson plan. As a result, I think my strategic reading abilities actually develop. (PST 5)

These acquired knowledge and skills were reinforced by the observer who supported that the participants were highly engaged in learning how to construct reading strategy lessons and recognized the value of systematic lesson planning.

Application to future teaching profession

The second theme reveals the integration of reading strategy instruction with locally and globally cultural content helped the participants envision their future roles as in-service teachers. They expressed an interest in continuing to refine their material design skills and exploring additional resources to enhance their teaching. These thoughts are demonstrated by four participants:

There is much other information about reading principles and methodology that the teacher introduced us today too. It is important and I am very glad to know it because I can use it to manage the lesson for future teaching reading properly. (PST 1)

In order to instruct the students in both culture and English in the classroom, I believe I need the use of more reading materials, like books and online resources, where I can find interesting passages that promote cultural knowledge to my students. (Journal 5, PST 6)

It would be nice if I have more knowledge on various cultures because I can apply them to teach my students too. (Journal 5, PST 2)

To be successful in my teaching of English integrated with cultural contents, I believe I need be better knowledgeable about cultural and intercultural diversity. (Journal 5, PST 4)

PST 4 also reflected on the importance of cultural diversity and expressed a desire to further develop their knowledge in this area to become more effective educators. This point could be witnessed by the observer who noted in her two journals:

I saw that all of the students were paying close attention in this way, which seemed like killing two birds with one stone since the students' understanding of the reading instruction was well developed, and it also served as a great model for them to follow when teaching reading strategy. (Journal 2, Observer)

Some participants read the example lessons again in order to follow the instructor's advice on how to develop a query about the passage's cultural elements and how to use data to analyze the variety and similarity of the culture in the two passages. And I could see that they were more confident to write the questions or activity for cultural transferring after that. (Journal 8, Observer)

From the observer's perspective, the participants could develop the teaching competence and material design skills necessary to enhance their effectiveness as future in-service teachers. By refining these abilities, they can create more engaging and culturally responsive learning experiences for their students.

Teaching confidence and readiness

The participant's teaching confidence and readiness for actual practice is the third theme obtained from the data. Many participants expressed increased confidence in their ability to teach reading strategies as a result of constructing course materials that integrated locally and globally cultural content. They reported feeling prepared for their teaching practicum, as one participant noted, "I don't feel very worried to teach reading like this before. I can say that this knowledge of strategic reading instruction will be very useful for me and for my teaching next semester at school" (PST 2). The participants emphasized that developing course materials using a structured approach strengthened their ability to deliver reading instruction systematically. The observer's notes further confirmed that the participants exhibited confidence in discussing their materials and responding to teacher feedback.

Challenges and further development

The data also informed about challenges and further development as the final theme. Despite the benefits of the training, some participants expressed the need for further support in integrating cultural content into reading instruction. They sought additional courses on intercultural communication and instructional design to enhance their teaching effectiveness. One participant noted, "To understand cultural and ICC correctly in the English class, I believe I still need more understanding on stages of reading and kind of teaching" (PST 27). The observer corroborated this, "When it came to making the connection between Thai cultural aspects and other cultures, some students seemed unsure of what activity they should do at each stage of the lesson, even though they could see an example of how to design a lesson in the pre-while-post stages of a reading lesson" (Journal 6, Observer). These perspectives highlight the need for further research, training, and curriculum development to better equip pre-service teachers with diverse insights into intercultural communication and course design.

Overall, the findings from quantitative and qualitative data strongly indicate that locally and globally contextualized materials could enhance the participants' skills in reading strategy competencies and material design.

Research question 2

How does the use of locally and globally contextualized materials influence EFL pre-service teachers' reading strategy instruction, particularly in terms of cultural knowledge, identity reflection, and contextualized language learning?

The analysis revealed that locally and globally contextualized materials helped the participants in various ways. The data could be identified in five major themes: (1) contextualized language

learning, (2) local cultural knowledge for meaning-making, (3) cultural and identity reflection, (4) local/national identity in reading instruction, and (5) local-to-global cultural connections. These themes highlight the transformative role of culturally relevant materials in English reading instruction.

Contextualized language learning

The first theme, contextualized language learning, establishes how culturally responsive materials support language acquisition. The data showed that cultural integration increased cultural awareness in language teaching. In this category, the participants acknowledged the benefits of incorporating their native culture into reading instruction with two-sub groups: meaningful learning, and deeper contextual understanding of language learning. Primarily, the participants emphasized that integrating locally relevant content into class materials made reading more accessible and meaningful for them. One pre-service teacher remarked,

I like the story about Thai local that integrates in a lesson plan very much because it is close to my real life and I feel confident to read and explain it to my friends. (PST 1)

PST 1 also expressed appreciation for learning about cultural integration:

I have learned a lot more than just reading English or reading strategy; it is about culture, especially Thai culture in English context. (PST 1)

This recognition supports the broader understanding that language and culture are inseparable, as noted by Kramsch (2001), who argues that cultural awareness should be an integral part of language education.

In addition to making reading instruction more engaging, the participants reflected on how cultural content provides a deeper contextual understanding of language learning. One participant observed,

After reading about Phrapathom Chedi, I was reminded of the legend of the Three Pagodas Border Pass in Kanchanaburi, my hometown, which I find very similar. I believe this experience allows me to learn more than just the language. I've come to understand that teaching English should go hand in hand with fostering cultural awareness. (Journal 1, PST 11)

The data reinforce the view that language education extends beyond linguistic competence to include cultural knowledge. Along the same line, the observer also noted that she witnessed the participants' enthusiasm in class discussions about cultural themes and their active participation in activities that required them to connect reading strategy instruction with cultural knowledge. This perspective is consistent with culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), which advocates for the inclusion of students' cultural backgrounds to enhance engagement and comprehension. By integrating cultural elements into reading instruction, educators foster a richer and more meaningful learning experience, equipping students with both language skills and cultural literacy.

Local cultural knowledge for meaning-making

The second theme, roles of the locally and globally contextualized materials in the participants' meaning-making, identifies how cultural familiarity facilitates comprehension. The data revealed that all of the participants used local knowledge for their meaning-making process. The use of locally contextualized materials facilitated meaning-making by enhancing the participants' vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. They reported that reading passages containing familiar cultural references enabled them to better understand English texts. This point could be illustrated by the following data:

I was able to learn a lot of English words related to Thai food today, such as fermented fish sauce, pestle, and crying tiger. (Journal 7, PST 12)

Although I am unfamiliar with some vocabulary in the locally set reading, I can still infer the story and feel confident continuing to read. (PST 5)

Since I am already familiar with my province, the passage about Don Chedi was not difficult for me to read. I felt less nervous about reading it and designing a lesson to teach reading strategies. Being fully familiar with the story allowed me to think creatively about questions and post-reading activities. (Journal 4, PST 24)

The data from these participants were supported by the observer's notes, which confirmed that culturally relevant readings contributed to lexical expansion: "I found that the lesson about local contexts could help the participants increase their English lexical knowledge, particularly on Thai culture." (Journal 1, Observer)

This finding is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs more effectively when new knowledge is scaffolded within familiar contexts. Additionally, Halliday (1994) highlights the importance of schema activation in language learning, supporting the idea that prior knowledge aids comprehension.

Cultural and identity reflection

Third, cultural and identity reflection, highlights personal and pedagogical reflections on identity. The data revealed the participants' reflection of their own culture and identity. It was surprising when they expressed newfound awareness of their own cultural heritage after engaging with locally contextualized reading materials. As a participant expressed:

I'm Thai, yet I've never heard of the legend about Phrapathom Chedi. But learning about it made me appreciate my own culture more. (Journal 5, PST 18)

This reminds us with Hall's (1973) perspective on cultural identity,

Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own. (Hall, 1973, p. 30)

In PST 18's reflection, she recognized the importance of historical knowledge about the place being studied, something she had rarely considered before. The lesson helped her become more aware of her own culture. This is a positive sign for a country where citizens understand fundamental aspects of their culture before exploring its deeper complexities.

Building on Hall's (1997) work, individuals often remain unaware of their cultural background until they actively engage with it in meaningful ways. This perspective is further reinforced by Norton (2000), who argues that language learning is deeply intertwined with identity construction. Norton emphasizes that learners' cultural knowledge and socio-geographical backgrounds play a crucial role in shaping their learning experiences and cultural identity when acquiring a new language.

Local/national identity in reading instruction

Local/national identity in reading instruction, the fourth theme, addresses how identity shapes teaching approaches. The participants reflected on how English language education could contribute to their national identity formation. Some viewed their future roles as English educators as a means to preserve Thai heritage while fostering intercultural understanding. One participant remarked:

I think it is important for Thai students to learn how to study English to explain our historical sites. ...I feel very glad to make a reading lesson that integrates both teaching reading strategy and reading about our cultural heritage event from our country. I think it is important for Thai students to learn English to explain about our historical country. (Journal 4, PST 2)

The findings indicate that the participants could develop an awareness of the role of cultural heritage in English reading instruction. PST 2 expressed enthusiasm for designing lessons that combined reading strategies with content related to Thai cultural heritage, highlighting the importance of enabling students to articulate their cultural identity in English.

Along the same line, PST 8 emphasized her responsibility as a Thai teacher of English to foster national pride while preparing students to engage with global cultures. These reflections suggest that incorporating locally contextualized materials in reading strategy instruction enhances both pedagogical awareness and cultural consciousness.

As a Thai teacher of English, I should be able to guide my students in having pride in our nation and be able to express themselves properly in English. I believe that Thai children will be able to retain Thai culture while also learning to adopt the cultures from other nations if we teach them in this way. (Journal 4, PST 8)

The observer supported this view, *"I noticed that the participants could do well in presenting their knowledge to teach reading strategy by explaining local context information to students. Also, they might employ a variety of motivational strategies to bring cultural concerns in their class, which should be very interesting for students."* (Journal 7, Observer)

The findings indicate that the participants became increasingly aware of the role of cultural heritage in EFL reading instruction. PST 2 highlighted the importance of teaching English as a means of explaining Thai historical sites and cultural events, suggesting that integrating local and global content in reading lessons can enhance students' ability to communicate their cultural identity in English. This reflects an understanding that reading strategy instruction should be contextually relevant and culturally meaningful to learners.

Similarly, PST 8 emphasized their responsibility as a Thai teacher of English to help students develop national pride while also preparing them for intercultural interactions. This statement suggests that the participants see language learning as a tool for both cultural preservation and global engagement. This certainly reinforces the idea that English education should not only develop linguistic competence but also support identity formation and cultural awareness.

The observer's reflections further support these findings, noting that the participants demonstrated a strong ability to integrate local cultural content into reading strategy instruction. She also observed that the participants used various motivational strategies to encourage student engagement with cultural topics. The findings suggest that culturally responsive teaching materials enhance both pedagogical effectiveness and student interest.

Local-to-global cultural connections

Related to the participants' cultural identity as a result of the culturally responsive materials is how the participants extended their local culture to a broader, global dimension, the final theme the data informed. This category expands the impact from local contexts to a global perspective. As the data revealed, the use of culturally contextualized materials influenced the participants' awareness of cultural knowledge in reading strategy instruction. They revealed that integrating local cultural content into their reading lessons encouraged them to draw on comparisons between Thai culture and global cultures, which then enhances their understanding of intercultural communication and strategic reading.

Learning about Thai cuisine made me understand that other nations also offer a variety of food choices. I can relate this to the meatball story from the United States. (Journal 3, PST 1)

I've learned that the teacher's explanation of how to link ideas or key concepts to compare between Thai culture and foreign culture was highly necessary for me to do the same in my lessons after learning how to create a final work regarding a lesson to teach reading and knowledge of intercultural communication. (Journal 5, PST 19)

The data from PST 1 highlighted the connection between local and global contexts by reflecting on how learning about Thai cuisine broadened their perspective on the diversity of food choices across the world. This connection between local and global perspectives exemplifies the importance of contextualizing instructional materials to foster broader cultural awareness in reading strategy instruction. The data suggest that the use of culturally contextualized materials helps bridge the gap between local and global perspectives, consequently promoting critical thinking and intercultural competence.

Additionally, PST 19 shared how the teacher's approach of linking Thai culture with foreign cultures helped her develop reading strategies that could address cultural differences in teaching and materials design. This connection helped the participants, including PST 19, integrate cultural knowledge more effectively into their teaching practices. By comparing and contrasting local and global cultures, the participants gained a deeper understanding of how to meaningfully incorporate intercultural awareness into reading strategies and classroom materials.

Our interpretation is now strengthened by the observer's perspective that highlighted the importance of the participants' learning process. As she pointed out, the participants revealed a strong understanding of cultural aspects by effectively applying local cultural content to global contexts in their reading strategy instruction. As noted in her journal, "The participants presented such a thorough analysis of the similarities and differences between cultural learning. It highly assessed their comprehension on using the knowledge of strategic reading instruction and locally connected to the global world effectively." The data from the participants and the observer clearly indicate that the integration of culturally relevant materials not only enhanced the participants' comprehension of reading strategies but also encouraged them to think critically about the cultural aspects involved in reading and teaching.

Overall, the findings of this research question indicate that locally and globally contextualized materials could enhance the participants' comprehensive aspects of cultural awareness and pedagogical confidence. These findings contribute to existing literature on culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994) and support the view that culturally relevant instruction fosters meaningful engagement in language learning (Kramsch, 2001).

DISCUSSIONS

Discussions of main findings

Impact of the culturally relevant materials training

The findings indicate the direct impact of training on the participants' ability to construct teaching materials for reading strategy instruction. They showed strong competencies in constructing culturally relevant materials, which enhanced their material development skills, and knowledge and abilities in teaching reading strategies. We called these the 'dual development,' which indicated that the skills in acquiring material design simultaneously reinforces foundational teaching competencies and more advanced instructional techniques.

This dual development of the pre-service teachers of this study conforms to previous studies that emphasize the role of explicit and contextualized instruction in fostering metacognitive awareness (e.g., Grabe, 2009; Pressley, 2002). The participants' engagement in material development also supports what Tomlinson (2013) emphasizes—the idea that hands-on experience empowers teachers to be more adaptive and creative in their instructional approaches. These findings suggest the necessity of practical, experience-based learning for pre-service teachers to develop essential skills in both pedagogy and material design.

Role of culturally relevant content in teaching reading and developing reading strategy materials

We found that the participants emphasized the crucial role of culturally relevant content in reading instruction and materials development. As most pre-service teachers expressed, constructing locally contextualized materials could enhance their competencies in reading strategies, materials design skills, and awareness of cultural identity in education. The findings are consistent with research on culturally responsive pedagogy, which highlights the importance of integrating students' cultural elements into teaching, and this could foster learning engagement, critical thinking, and cultural pride (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

As the participants noted, integrating Thai cultural elements in reading lessons helped them connect theoretical reading strategies to practical applications, and this made instruction more meaningful. This finding reflects Cummins' (2001) view. That is, drawing on students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds could enhance their learning outcomes. Furthermore, as the pre-service teachers developed instructional materials, they became more exposed to the intersection of language, identity, and national heritage, which reflects the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2010).

Surprisingly, some pre-service teachers revealed their awareness of national ideology and identity influenced their approach to teaching reading strategies. By designing and using culturally relevant materials, they observed their own sense of national identity, and this could probably foster similar awareness in their students. This finding reflects the goals of intercultural communicative competence in language education, which encourages learners to appreciate both their own cultural identities and those of others (Byram, 1997; Hinkel, 2011). What even amazed us is the participants expressed that fostering cultural pride while embracing diverse perspectives helps them, and, perhaps, their students, too, become more effective and empathetic communicators in a globalized world.

Bridging local and global perspectives in reading instruction and materials design

The findings from some participants and the observer also indicate a need for further training in cultural differences and instructional design, where the pre-service teachers expressed the need for ongoing professional development to effectively integrate cultural content into reading instruction. This supports Freeman and Johnson's (1998) argument that teacher education programs should provide continuous opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective practice and deepen their pedagogical knowledge.

The data convinced us that the use of local context materials could enhance the pre-service teachers' ability to recognize the socio-cultural backgrounds and personal experiences of their students. These are very important for culturally responsive teaching (Nieto, 2010). By grounding their instruction in local realities, these pre-service teachers should be better equipped to address diverse student needs and make their reading strategy instruction more relevant and meaningful. The experiences they have gained could be applied in real classroom settings when they transition into in-service teaching roles in the future.

As we can see, the pre-service teachers' reflections conform to Byram's (1997) concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence, which emphasizes the need for language learners to communicate effectively across cultures while maintaining their cultural roots. The observers' on-going comments further reinforce that integrating cultural content into reading lessons could enhance pedagogical content knowledge. The data suggests that locally contextualized materials help bridge language learning and cultural understanding, leading to more engaging and meaningful instruction (Hinkel, 2011).

These findings could also be viewed by McKay's (2002) argument that English should be used as an international language, which serves as a means of global communication, and as a tool for expressing local cultural identities. This allows the participants, as they expressed, to use English to explain Thai historical sites and cultural heritage. This, of course, reflects an understanding of glocalization (Robertson, 1995), where learners engage with global discourses while maintaining their own cultural identity. With the teaching approach that broadened their perspectives from local to global contexts, the participants were able to develop a more balanced approach to language instruction. This is closely related to the integration of cultural identity into EFL practices.

Needs for further training

As the data indicated, some participants expressed a need for further training in intercultural communication and instructional design as a result of the study participation. The data suggested that the participants would require ongoing professional development to integrate cultural content into reading instruction more effectively. This finding supports Freeman and Johnson's (1998) view that teacher education programs should provide continuous opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective practice and deepen their pedagogical knowledge.

It is also interesting to note that although the pre-service teachers showed strong competency in developing culturally relevant materials, their ability to adapt these materials to different global contexts remains an area for more growth. More targeted training in global perspectives, multimodal literacy, and digital resource development could enhance their readiness to teach in diverse classroom settings.

Research implications

The findings of this study shed light on two significant implications for EFL teacher education programs, particularly in enhancing pre-service teachers' abilities to integrate culturally relevant content into reading instruction. First, to expand their perspectives from local to global contexts, educator or researchers can foster pre-service teachers to have a balanced approach to language instruction and material construction, where they integrate cultural identity with EFL instruction. This approach helps enhance their teaching competencies, and prepare them to cultivate intercultural awareness among students.

Second, the study indicates the importance of practical, experience-based learning in teacher training programs, which highlights that hands-on material development should strengthen

both pedagogical knowledge and adaptability in materials design. Incorporating culturally and globally contextualized materials into teacher education curricula can enhance pre-service teachers' ability to engage students in meaningful discussions about identity, culture, and language. We now suggest that future research should examine how this approach influences students' intercultural competence and long-term engagement with reading strategy instruction. Additionally, the integration of digital and multimodal resources could be explored to further enhance pre-service teachers' instructional capacities.

Research limitations and recommendations for further studies

Despite the contributions of this study, we acknowledge certain limitations. First, the study was conducted within a specific EFL teacher education program in Thailand, which could limit the applications of our findings to other educational contexts. As such, future research could investigate the impact of locally and globally contextualized reading materials in diverse linguistic and cultural settings to validate the applicability of the findings. Second, although we explored pre-service teachers' development of reading strategy instruction, we did not assess the long-term impact on their teaching effectiveness or student learning outcomes. Longitudinal studies tracking pre-service teachers as they transition into professional teaching roles could provide deeper insights into the sustained effects of culturally relevant instruction. Third, although the participants revealed competency in designing culturally relevant materials, their ability to adapt these materials to different global contexts requires further development. Future studies should focus on targeted training programs that enhance pre-service teachers' skills in multimodal literacy, digital resource development, and global pedagogical approaches. Further inquiry into these areas would help refine our findings.

CONCLUSION

This study identifies the significance of locally and globally contextualized materials in enhancing pre-service teachers' competencies in reading strategy instruction. Our findings indicate that pre-service teachers who engage in material development could improve their instructional techniques and awareness of cultural identity and its impact on learning, teaching, and constructing class materials. When integrating Thai cultural elements into reading instruction and materials design, pre-service teachers made theoretical reading strategies more accessible and meaningful, consistent with the principles of culturally responsive pedagogy. Additionally, the finding suggests the importance of ongoing professional development in intercultural communication, instructional design, and global pedagogical perspectives. As English functions as both an international language and a medium for expressing local cultural identities, pre-service teachers should be equipped with the skills to navigate the intersection of language, culture, and education in diverse classrooms.

The findings of our study contribute to the growing body of research on culturally and globally contextualized materials in EFL teacher education, highlighting the need for further exploration of their impact on students' outcomes. This research underscores the profound responsibility educators have, not only in shaping students' academic growth but also in preparing them to

navigate and contribute to an increasingly interconnected and diverse world. The implications of this study extend beyond the classroom, emphasizing the lasting influence of thoughtfully designed, culturally relevant teaching materials on future generations and the societies they will help shape. As Ladson-Billings (2006) insightfully states, “Although we may have only a yearlong interaction with students, we ultimately have a lifelong impact on who they become and the kind of society in which we all will ultimately live” (p. 40).

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