

Metacognitive Reading Strategies with Southern Thai University Students

กลวิธีการอ่านเชิงอภิปัญญาแก่นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีในภาคใต้

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ABSTRACT

This research was designed to account for metacognitive reading strategies employed by undergraduate students in southern Thai context. The study examined the reading strategy use from both successful and less successful readers: 371 university student who experienced reading courses at tertiary level, through a quantitative mean using a survey and a qualitative mean using a semi-structured interview. Descriptive statistics: percentages, means, standard deviation, were used in quantitative data analysis. Additionally, t-tests were used to prove if there were any statistically significant differences between successful and less successful readers in employing metacognitive reading strategies. The findings demonstrated that successful readers tended to utilize metacognitive reading strategies higher than less successful readers at 52.36% and 46.03%, respectively. In addition, it was found that there were statistically significant differences between the successful readers and the less successful readers regarding their metacognitive reading strategy use ($p < .05$). The main results revealed that the successful readers tended to plan before they read, monitor their comprehension and evaluate their used strategies. Meanwhile, the less successful readers, although, seemed to show some metacognition awareness, the deficiency use of metacognitive strategies could be a hindrance to their reading achievement. Consequently, this study urges that metacognitive reading strategies should be instructed in classes to raise the students' awareness towards the available strategies, and to make less successful readers become successful readers.

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อนำเสนอการใช้กลวิธีเชิงอภิปัญญาในการอ่าน (Metacognitive reading strategies) ของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีทั้งกลุ่มเก่งและกลุ่มอ่อนในบริบทภาคใต้ของประเทศไทย กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการวิจัยเป็นนักศึกษา จำนวน 371 คน ที่มีประสบการณ์การเรียนการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษในระดับมหาวิทยาลัย โดยใช้แบบสอบถามในการสำรวจและการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างในการเก็บข้อมูลและใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนา (Descriptive statistics) ได้แก่วัสดุ ค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐานในการอธิบายข้อมูล รวมทั้งการใช้การทดสอบที (t-test) เพื่อเปรียบเทียบความแตกต่างระหว่างกลุ่มเก่งและกลุ่มอ่อนในการใช้กลวิธีเชิงอภิปัญญา ผลการสำรวจพบว่า ผู้เรียนที่จัดอยู่ในกลุ่มเก่ง (successful readers) มีการใช้กลวิธีเชิงอภิปัญญาสูงกว่าผู้เรียนที่จัดอยู่ในกลุ่มอ่อน (less successful readers) อยู่ที่ 52.36% และ 46.03% ตามลำดับ ซึ่งผลการศึกษพบว่า ผู้เรียนกลุ่มเก่งและผู้เรียนกลุ่มอ่อนมีการใช้กลวิธีเชิงอภิปัญญาที่แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ($p < .05$) โดยผลการวิจัยหลัก ๆ ได้สะท้อนภาพของผู้เรียนกลุ่มเก่งว่ามีกระบวนการก่อนอ่าน มีการตรวจสอบความเข้าใจ และประเมินประสิทธิผลของกลวิธีที่ใช้ในการอ่านด้วย ในขณะที่ผู้เรียนกลุ่มอ่อนนั้น แม้ว่าจะมีความตระหนักรู้ทางความคิดอยู่บ้าง แต่การขาดความรู้ในการใช้กลวิธีอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพอาจเป็นสาเหตุหนึ่งที่ทำให้ผู้เรียนกลุ่มนี้ไม่ประสบความสำเร็จในการอ่าน การวิจัยครั้งนี้จึงเสนอแนะให้มีการจัดการเรียนการสอนกลวิธีเชิงอภิปัญญาในชั้นเรียน ทั้งนี้เพื่อเพิ่มความตระหนักรู้ด้านกลวิธีที่สามารถนำมาใช้ได้และเพื่อให้ผู้เรียนในกลุ่มอ่อนประสบความสำเร็จในการอ่านได้

Introduction

Reading is delineated as an interactive process between readers and the text. Readers are likely to deal with more complexities when it is reading in another language. As a teacher of English, a researcher has experienced that many university students encounter problems when they read in English. Many of them struggle to understand a reading passage due to unknown words and end up relying upon a dictionary. Needless to say, the students at this level are required to read a lot of English texts even though they are not in a reading class. This is simply because reading is the way to acquire knowledge in all areas while English plays an important role as it becomes an international language to disseminate new information. Thus, the ability to read and comprehend the message within a text particularly when it is in English is crucial to the students' academic achievement.

L2 reading essentially entails interactions between two languages, so this involvement makes L2 reading undoubtedly more complex than L1 reading (Koda, 2007). This could possibly be one reason why English reading competence of many students in the context of this current research, though enrolling at the tertiary level, is still in need of improvement due to their low scores in reading courses based on the researcher's experience as a teacher and the information shared among her colleagues. In addition to linguistic knowledge, research also postulated that reading achievement comprises the effective use of strategies to tackle with the difficulties during reading (Hsu, Cheng and Chern, 2012). This insight describes that reading achievement does not only mean possessing strategies but it also implies that the effective use of reading strategies should be taken into account.

Reading strategy use and reading comprehension ability were found to be correlated (Park, 2010). In other words, it signified that students who are strategic readers tend to be more successful in comprehending what they read. Additionally, students who learn about reading strategies are believed to use the knowledge to become fluent and monitor their own reading, so strategic readers appear to be confident that they could monitor and improve their reading (Afflerbach, Pearson and Paris, 2008). Thus, strategy deployment has become another critical issue being explored in the field of reading in the light of the expectation for reading success. This is why reading strategies have been proposed to be part of reading instruction, as Lin and Yu (2015) affirmed that reading strategy instruction could help to improve less proficient readers' reading comprehension.

Essentially, reading strategies are divided into two groups: cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Cognitive groups are conceptualized as strategies that readers use to accomplish the reading task directly (Lawrence, 2007) such as looking for unknown words from a dictionary, using context clues to understand a reading passage, or even searching for more information about the reading text. Meanwhile, metacognitive ones are those regarding monitoring their thinking while reading, for example, a student is reading while also trying to check if he or she could understand the message of the reading. This monitoring process could ultimately lead readers to solutions for problems that occur during reading. Among these two groups of strategies, metacognition has been increasingly emphasized by many studies as a significant factor for readers to achieve success in reading (Anastasiou and Griva, 2009; Alsamadani, 2011; Al-Alwan, 2012; Ahmadi, Ismail and Abdullah, 2013).

Many scholars presented that metacognition could be classified into two dimensions: knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition (Iwai, 2011). The first dimension comprises of three factors: declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, and conditional knowledge. In the field of reading, declarative knowledge means students' understanding of reading strategies; they know what strategies are. Meanwhile, procedural knowledge refers to the students' understanding of how to use each strategy. The last factor is conditional knowledge which indicates the learners' ability to assess their strategy use and know which strategy is suitable for each task to achieve their reading goals. On the other hand, the second dimension in metacognition: regulation of cognition consists of planning, monitoring, testing, revising and evaluating strategies.

Specifically, metacognitive strategies in reading could be simply explained as thinking about one's own thinking, and the strategies in this group include planning before reading, monitoring during reading, and evaluating after reading (Iwai, 2011). These three groups clearly support a state of thinking all the time of readers: they start reading by thinking about the passage, then they continue

reading it by checking their own understanding during reading, and lastly they should think about what they have just read and evaluate if they could understand the passage or not. Reading strategies in these three groups: planning, monitoring, and evaluating include, for example, students predicting, making a plan on how to read, and examining a title before they read (planning), and then checking their own understanding or inferring the main idea of each paragraph during reading (monitoring), and lastly, summarizing what they have just read after reading (evaluating) (Al-Alwan, 2012).

Skilled reading was proposed to comprise awareness and monitoring of a readers' comprehension, and this is known as metacognition (Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002). It was found that successful readers are better in understanding a reading passage because they are more likely to utilize metacognitive reading strategy, while less successful readers are found not to use metacognitive reading strategy in their reading (Ahmadi et al., 2013). Meanwhile, various studies attempted to address issues of using strategies in reading between good and poor readers, and many of them repeatedly found that the former tend to utilize more strategies and at the same time, they show more awareness of ongoing processes in reading when compared to the latter. In other words, good readers seem to know what and why they are reading, and how to deal with difficulties that occur in the reading task and this capability is recognized as metalinguistic awareness (Koda, 2007).

Simultaneously, it was proved that systematic instruction of metacognitive language learning strategies could enhance students' reading comprehension (Cubukcu, 2008). This is because metacognitive reading strategies have an important role in improving students' reading comprehension due to the students' mental involvement with the reading passage (Al-Alwan, 2012). In other words, this type of strategies requires students to analyze, evaluate, and monitor their own reading comprehension. It was clearly evident that students tend to increase the use of reading strategies, particularly metacognitive strategies, for manipulating problems in reading, and their comprehension appears explicitly better after strategy instruction (Shang, 2010).

Thus, it is recommended that teachers and curricula should consider incorporating metacognitive strategies into reading classes to equip students with the deployment of strategies and turn them into independent learners (Al-Alwan, 2012). Metacognitive reading strategies could benefit students' reading comprehension because readers who employ metacognitive strategies are likely to monitor their own understanding during their reading, and this is essential to keep thinking while reading as Oster (2001) stated that readers should be thinking all the time. Therefore, it has been suggested that metacognitive strategies be integrated in reading lessons to help improve students' comprehension (Cubukcu, 2008; Kraayenoord, 2010; Zhang and Seepho, 2013).

Consequently, as it clearly postulated throughout many research studies above that metacognitive reading strategies have an important role in improving the students' reading comprehension. It is therefore important that students' metacognitive reading strategy use is studied so that teachers understand their students as readers more clearly due to their different levels of reading proficiency: successful readers and less successful readers. This research study on metacognitive reading strategy use between the two groups of readers would also provide better understanding of the learners as readers of English and may stimulate ideas about how to tackle with the learners' reading problems by promoting reading strategies use in classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The present study aimed at exploring metacognitive reading strategy use among L2 readers: successful and less successful readers who were the undergraduate students in the south of Thailand. It attempted to account for the readers' perspectives regarding their metacognitive strategy use and determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between successful and less successful readers. Ultimately, the result was expected to reflect a current situation regarding strategies used by L2 readers in EFL context and provide practical insights on pedagogical implications for teachers of reading.

Research methodology

Participants

The participants were four hundred non-English majors from two government universities in the south of Thailand where English is considered as a foreign language, which means the students have limited exposure to English. All of the students who participated in this study were those who had already taken some English reading courses at the university level. Accordingly, the first year students were intentionally excluded due to their lack of experience in studying English reading at this level. Then, 20 students, 10 successful readers (the students who obtained A, B+ and B from their recent English reading course) and 10 less successful readers (those who got lower than B), were purposively selected based on their recent grades from English reading courses for the interview sessions.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study consisted of questionnaires regarding metacognitive reading strategy use and semi-structured interviews. First, a Likert-scale questionnaire was employed to

collect the data. The questionnaire was adapted from Phakiti's preliminary cognitive and metacognitive strategy taxonomy (2003) by the researcher. Then, it was piloted with 50 students who had similar characteristics with the proposed participants at another university in December 2014 before starting actual data collection. To investigate the reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha was used and a score of .95 indicated a high level of internal consistency of items in a questionnaire. In addition to the questionnaire, the semi-structured interviews were conducted later at the two universities to explore reading strategy use in more details.

Data collection

The research was designed as a mixed-method study that quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in data collection. The researcher selected two government universities in the south of Thailand based on her experience as an insider who had the information regarding the students' English reading ability quite well. At these two universities, 400 questionnaires were distributed in March, 2015 to the second, third, and fourth year students and 377 of them were returned (94.25%). Nevertheless, there were six students who did not specify their English reading grade in the questionnaire so they were not included in data analysis. Completely, the results were computed from 157 successful readers (the students who obtained A, B+ and B from their recent English reading course) and 214 less successful readers (any who got lower than B). Meanwhile, the semi-structured interview was conducted with 20 students, 10 successful readers and 10 less successful readers, at places where the informants felt most comfortable. The interview was all in Thai and was later translated into English by the researcher.

Data analysis

The data both quantitative and qualitative were later analyzed. For the survey, descriptive statistics: percentages, means, and standard deviation were used in quantitative data analysis. Additionally, *t*-tests were used to prove if there were any statistically significant differences between successful and less successful readers in employing metacognitive reading strategies. As the statements in the survey were a Likert-type scale rating from four (strongly agree) to one (strongly disagree), the mean evaluation was based on the following criteria.

The mean values from 3.28 to 4.00 were interpreted as strongly agree.

The mean values from 2.52 to 3.27 were interpreted as agree.

The mean values from 1.76 to 2.51 were interpreted as disagree.

The mean values from 1.00 to 1.75 were interpreted as strongly disagree.

Meanwhile, the interview data were analyzed by coding, categorizing and presenting it into meaningful categories. The qualitative data were used to supplement the quantitative data to display similarity or contrast between the two sources of data. Both questionnaires and retrospective interviews although have limitations, each of them was believed to provide significant insights into unobservable mental learning strategies (Chamot, 2004).

Findings

The study aimed to explore the participants' perspectives regarding metacognitive reading strategies between both successful and less successful readers. Descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviation) for each strategy are presented in Table 1. Accordingly, t-tests were used to identify if there are any statistically significant differences between the two groups of the readers in employing metacognitive reading strategies.

Table 1. Metacognitive reading strategies between successful readers (SRs) and less successful readers (LRs)

Statements	Groups of readers	N	Frequency and Percentages				Mean	SD	t	Sig.
			Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree				
1. I previously make a plan on how to read and understand the text.	SRs	157	18 (11.46%)	71 (45.22%)	56 (35.67%)	12 (7.64%)	2.61	.791	2.44	.015
	LRs	214	8 (3.74%)	85 (39.72%)	109 (50.93%)	12 (5.61%)	2.42	.657		
2. I try finding out problems during reading and think of ways to solve them.	SRs	157	21 (13.38%)	81 (51.59%)	45 (28.66%)	10 (6.37%)	2.72	.775	3.93	.000
	LRs	214	7 (3.27%)	89 (41.59%)	107 (50%)	11 (5.14%)	2.43	.644		
3. I make a decision in advance on what details can help me understand the reading passage and ignore irrelevant information.	SRs	157	17 (10.83%)	72 (45.86%)	60 (38.22%)	8 (5.1%)	2.62	.746	2.73	.007
	LRs	214	6 (2.8%)	92 (42.99%)	103 (48.13%)	13 (6.07%)	2.43	.651		
4. I find out conditions that help me successful and use them to help me.	SRs	157	22 (14.01%)	86 (54.78%)	42 (26.75%)	7 (4.46%)	2.78	.737	3.18	.022
	LRs	214	12 (5.61%)	102 (47.66%)	92 (42.99%)	8 (3.74%)	2.55	.661		
5. During reading I know what goals I need to complete and know which one is more important.	SRs	157	19 (12.1%)	83 (52.87%)	50 (31.85%)	5 (3.18%)	2.74	.708	3.66	.000
	LRs	214	4 (1.87%)	104 (48.6%)	99 (46.26%)	7 (3.27%)	2.49	.595		
6. I check my understanding of the reading text and correct it if it is wrong.	SRs	157	23 (14.65%)	87 (55.41%)	40 (25.48%)	7 (4.46%)	2.80	.738	4.63	.000
	LRs	214	7 (3.27%)	96 (44.86%)	102 (47.66%)	9 (4.21%)	2.47	.633		
7. I double-check my understanding for a second or more time.	SRs	157	23 (14.65%)	88 (56.05%)	41 (26.11%)	5 (3.18%)	2.82	.712	3.55	.000
	LRs	214	12 (5.61%)	104 (48.6%)	92 (42.99%)	6 (2.8%)	2.57	.644		
8. I evaluate my performance whether set goals are reached.	SRs	157	22 (14.01%)	91 (57.96%)	35 (22.29%)	9 (5.73%)	2.80	.746	3.84	.000
	LRs	214	8 (3.74%)	106 (49.53%)	90 (42.06%)	10 (4.67%)	2.52	.648		
9. I evaluate currently used strategies if they work or not.	SRs	157	15 (9.55%)	78 (49.68%)	54 (34.39%)	10 (6.37%)	2.62	.746	2.28	.023
	LRs	214	2 (0.93%)	100 (46.73%)	107 (50%)	5 (2.34%)	2.46	.562		
10. I check what problems make successful reading impossible.	SRs	157	22 (14.01%)	85 (54.14%)	42 (26.75%)	8 (5.1%)	2.77	.750	3.05	.002
	LRs	214	9 (4.21%)	107 (50%)	91 (42.52%)	7 (3.27%)	2.55	.631		
Sum of the averages							SRs		2.73	
							LRs		2.49	

Metacognitive reading strategies use: successful and less successful readers

From Table 1, it demonstrated that the agreement among successful readers was considered higher than that among the less successful readers. Concurrently, the percentages of disagreement of less successful readers were validated higher than successful readers. The means of metacognitive reading strategy use among successful readers ranged from 2.82 to 2.61, which clearly showed that all of the strategies were agreed by the participants in this group. Meanwhile, the means ranged from 2.57 to 2.42 among a group of less successful readers.

Specifically, the results clearly showed that successful readers were more likely to employ metacognitive reading strategies than less successful readers. In other words, the successful readers were reported to use all of ten metacognitive strategies which had means between 2.82 to 2.61, indicating their agreement to all of the ten metacognitive strategies: making a plan before reading, identifying problems and finding solutions to those problems, making a decision in advance on what could be helpful and what could be ignored, finding out conditions to help them successful, realizing what goals they need to complete during reading, checking their understanding about the text and correcting it if it is wrong, checking their understanding for a second time or more, evaluating their reading performance, evaluating strategies that they currently use if they work, and checking what problems could make their reading unsuccessful.

To cite an example of a successful reader from the interview who mentioned metacognitive reading strategies, Jay, a fourth-year student from Business Development Program, said that he would previously try to find out known words to give him an idea of what a reading communicated. Later, he would also check if he could understand the reading or not. If he found that there were any problems, he would try adopting another strategy in his reading, such as using known words and guessing the meaning from the context.

Concurrently, there were other two successful readers who mentioned checking their understanding during reading. The two excerpts of the interviews were displayed below:

“I would try to read and understand the text by skimming for main ideas first; however, during reading, if I found that it didn’t work or I didn’t understand it, I would consult a dictionary or a Google Translation program.”

Green, a third-year student from a medical school

Green, a third-year student from a medical school and a successful reader, mentioned checking her comprehension when she read. She stated that she would initially attempt to read on her own in order to find the main idea of each reading. During her reading, she would check whether she could

comprehend the reading, and if there was trouble understanding the passage, she would adopt another strategy, for example, looking up words in a dictionary to help her understand the reading.

*“I would start by browsing through the reading passage first and if I can’t understand it,
I would get to words that I don’t know.”*

Aon, a fourth-year student from Human Resources Administration

The second excerpt indicated that the informant began reading by scanning the whole text for comprehension. She then monitored her own understanding during reading. When she had difficulty and found that she had trouble with unknown words, she would turn to another strategy to help her achieve success in reading.

Simultaneously, the less successful readers were found to disagree with 6 metacognitive reading strategies: making a plan, finding solutions to problems, making a decision in advance on what is important and what is irrelevant, realizing goals to be completed during reading, correcting their understanding if it is wrong, and evaluating their used strategies if they work or not, with the mean values below 2.51. Nonetheless, this group of readers was reported to agree with the remaining four strategies: attempting to find out conditions that could help them successful in their reading, checking their understanding for a second time, evaluating their reading if the goals are reached, and checking what problems could be a hindrance to their reading.

As presented in Table 1, the frequency of successful readers who utilized metacognitive reading strategies appeared to be higher than those who were less successful readers. On the other hand, based on the independent sample t-test, it clearly proved that there were statistically significant differences between successful readers and less successful readers in using every metacognitive reading strategy listed in Table 1 ($p < .05$). This indicated that the use of metacognitive reading strategies was different based on their reading proficiency. This concurs with the interview data which clearly proved that only the successful readers mentioned metacognitive reading strategies.

Despite the fact that the successful readers and the less successful readers were quantitatively different regarding their use of metacognitive strategies, the retrospective interview yielded another aspect of information. On one hand, the qualitative data found that no one, who was regarded as less successful readers, mentioned metacognitive reading strategies in his or her reading experience. This was in alignment with the survey results for successful readers who seem to use metacognitive reading strategies more than less successful readers. On the other hand, remarkably, there were only three out of ten successful readers who included metacognitive reading strategies in their interview.

In this part, the results from both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that there was higher agreement among the successful readers towards metacognitive reading strategies use when being compared to the less successful readers ($M = 2.73$ and 2.49 , respectively). This difference was also supported by the qualitative data which demonstrated that the participants who were grouped as successful readers mentioned using metacognitive strategies in their reading while those who were less successful readers referred to cognitive strategy use only. These results will be discussed in the next section.

Discussion

This study was designed to examine metacognitive reading strategies used among successful and less successful EFL readers. The findings of the study indicated a clear distinction between successful and less successful readers in using metacognitive reading strategies. Due to both quantitative and qualitative data, there was a very strong tendency of metacognitive strategy use among the successful readers. Accordingly, the results yielded significant differences between these two groups of the readers in using metacognitive strategies. This distinction would be presented in three main phases of reading.

First, before the reading takes place, it was supported by the survey results that successful readers tended to plan before they read. They knew which part of the reading would be helpful for their understanding and at the same time, they were able to identify the irrelevant information and ignore it in the reading. On the other hand, the less successful readers were found not to make a plan before reading. Meanwhile, they were incapable of making a decision on which part of the reading was important for their comprehension process or which one they could ignore and read on.

When it comes to the thinking process during reading, successful readers seemed to know the goals they needed to complete and realized which one was more important. Furthermore, they were proved to monitor their own understanding and if they encountered problems, they would adopt some strategies to help them going through the text. Specifically, one participant among the successful readers responded that she usually read by skimming for a main idea but after a while, if she could not figure out what the reading attempted to convey, the strategy for decoding meanings of unknown words would be utilized. On the contrary, it was evident that less successful readers appeared to be different: they did not know what goals to be completed, and even though they may attempt to check their understanding, they could not tell if it was right or wrong.

The above main findings yielded that the students as L2 readers, particularly the group of inefficient readers, need to be trained for utilizing planning and self-monitoring strategies effectively

as these two strategies are significant in reading comprehension performance and could delineate the characteristics of readers who are likely to be more successful in reading. The results clearly indicated that less successful readers seemed not to monitor their understanding. This concurs with a study of Zhang and Seepho (2013) which stated that differences between high and low proficiency students generally arise from poor monitoring skills during reading of low proficiency readers. Monitoring in reading is very important for reading achievement. Additionally, it was evidently proved that explicit instruction on how to plan and monitor the reading process contributed to the improvement of the students' reading comprehension (Takallou, 2011). As metacognitive strategies are explained to be employed for controlling cognitive activities and make certain that goals in reading are successfully achieved, so this metacognition could differentiate successful learners from less successful ones (Livingston, 2003).

Lastly, the finding proved that successful readers tended to evaluate their used strategies to see if they could solve a reading problem while less successful readers did not evaluate if the strategies undertaken were capable of helping them perform the given task successfully or not. Being proficient in L2 reading requires not only utilizing reading strategies but also possessing the ability to adjust strategies if needed (Auerbach and Paxton, 1997). This ground signified that successful readers tend to be aware of their used strategies and they should also be able to assess their strategies utilized in the reading. According to the survey result in the current study, it is apparent that the less successful readers lack the awareness of strategy assessment. This affirmed that this group of the readers should be trained for assessing the used strategies so that they would be aware of what is going on during reading.

It is also worth noting that the less successful readers in this study, at the same time, were found to seek conditions that were able to better their reading comprehension, attempt to check their comprehension, evaluate their reading performance, and check what problems cause reading failures just like successful readers did. Nevertheless, it is relatively possible that while successful readers possessed clear knowledge about conditions needed for successful meaning-construction in reading, less successful readers were different for they were more likely to focus on linguistic knowledge, particularly grammar and vocabulary (Zhang, 2010). The less successful readers possibly were oblivious of variety of reading strategies available for their reading task and unable to deploy them when encountering problems in reading. What is more, despite the fact that the less successful readers, to some degree, demonstrated awareness towards some metacognitive strategies, all the mean scores of this group were evidently lower than those of the successful readers.

Interestingly, another aspect of the qualitative data was somewhat opposite to the quantitative data. The qualitative data concurred with the survey results, which demonstrated that successful readers were more likely to utilize metacognitive reading strategies than less successful readers, for it found out that no one from the group of less successful readers mentioned employing metacognitive reading strategies in their experience of reading. In the interview sessions, they all talked about cognitive reading strategies, in this study, mainly referred to looking up unfamiliar words from dictionaries, while some of the successful readers were found to regulate their thinking while reading. On one hand, the survey boasted that metacognitive reading strategy use among successful readers was higher than less successful readers in every strategy; on the other hand, it was only a few of successful readers, in this study, who talked about their experience with metacognitive reading strategies. Mainly, the three successful readers discussed metacognitive reading strategies regarding the process of monitoring comprehension and the assessment of used strategies.

The point above corroborates the view that says good readers tend to utilize metacognitive reading strategies more than poor readers who were found to rely more on cognitive strategies (Zhang, 2012). Nonetheless, everyone regarded as the successful readers responded in the interview sessions that they also relied on decoding unknown words and translation, and their main obstacle was related to vocabulary, which was not different from the group of less successful readers. This point may reflect another aspect of L2 reading from current situations that many of the students in this context, regardless of their reading proficiency, still struggle to understand a reading in L2 due to the lack of sufficient vocabulary knowledge.

Conclusion and implications

The overall results have shed light on metacognitive reading strategies use between successful and less successful readers in the context of southern Thailand. The outcomes reflect and describe the clear distinction between the struggling readers and the capable readers regarding their metacognitive strategy use in their reading. Although L2 reading is believed to be akin to L1 reading, it might be less successful than L1 due to various factors such as readers' proficiency and complexity of the language in the text. The two groups of the readers: successful and less successful readers may utilize the same strategies but what important is the deployment of strategies when encountering difficulty in reading. To enhance students' reading comprehension, particularly those regarded as struggling readers, is to make them engage more actively with the reading, and one important way is to increase their awareness

while reading to make them strategic readers (Mokhtari and Reichard, 2002). Therefore, this research study urges for an integration of metacognitive reading strategies in reading instruction. Simultaneously, as readers derive their metacognitive awareness from learning and practice, teachers of reading may need some training on how to implement their instruction at best to achieve strategic objectives in reading classrooms. A traditional way of teaching reading which mainly focuses on having students working on reading a passage and answer the questions afterwards to assess the students' reading comprehension should be revisited and strengthened by integrating metacognitive strategies into the lesson to enhance the students' reading comprehension and make them read more strategically.

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