

## A STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING THAI READING LITERACY BY APPLYING THE FRAMEWORK OF PISA

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### Article History

Received: 15/4/2020

Accepted: 20/5/2020

Published: 30/6/2020

### Keywords

reading literacy, Thai,  
strategy, PISA.

### ABSTRACT

Reading literacy was raised by PISA. Reading literacy was concerned as basic skills for learning, being part of society and future careers. This study aimed to propose the strategy for enhancing Thai reading literacy. The paper will begin significance of reading literacy for citizens and future careers. Then, the framework of PISA reading literacy measurement was provided in order to set background of Thai reading literacy. Finally, some ideas of strategy for enhancing Thai reading literacy in primary school will be presented based on the first author's Thai language teaching experiences. The paper may have implications of enhancing reading literacy in Thailand.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to provide citizens and future career, providing of crucial skills at primary and secondary levels of education is backed up by the PISA (The Programme for International Student Assessment) triennial international survey coordinated by OECD which aims to evaluate the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students and improve educational policy and results. For basic education, academic competence refers to a cluster of related abilities, skills, knowledge and dispositions of cognitive and non-cognitive nature that allow university students to perform the necessary activities as required, and thus to graduate and be successful in their career (Delgadova, 2015; Krajčáková & Vojtovip, 2014).

Reading literacy is key competence for future careers. It is the core competence for processing the information gained, innovating it and consequently creating new knowledge (Krajčáková & Vojtovip, 2014). The modern literary science offer readers, contrary to the established ways of the text reception schemes, more freedom in text interpretation. Reading is not only a basis of new knowledge about reality but also a matter of aesthetic satisfaction. The literature provided that reading literacy is a comprehensive set of reading skills and abilities that are needed to work with texts effectively. Reading literacy refers to being able to comprehend the contents properly, find both explicit and implicit meanings, analyze the content and the information obtained; and being able to interpret the content properly and pass it on. However, reading literacy does not refer to a mere speed reading of words, phrases or full texts (Barthes, 2005).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Conceptual framework of PISA reading literacy

The definition of reading literacy changes to reflect changes in society, the economy, culture and education. Therefore, it cannot be regarded as a simple skill of reading, interpreting and understanding. It seems that reading literacy relates understanding of both explicit and implicit meaning of reading text. This could be seen when the PISA provided the meaning of reading literacy for their international test. PISA is an international assessment coordinated by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It assesses the extent to which 15-year-old students nearing the completion of their compulsory education have acquired the knowledge and skills essential for meeting the challenges in society. Since 2000, the PISA has been administered every three years. The assessment covers reading, mathematical and scientific literacy which are alternated as major domains of the assessment. Reading was the major domain in 2000 and 2009.

The PISA 2000 provided reading literacy as understanding, using and reflecting on written texts in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society.

The PISA 2009 definition of reading, continued for 2012 and 2015, adds engagement in reading as an integral part of reading literacy: Reading literacy is understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and to participate in society. This definition

emphasizes the interactive nature of reading and the constructive nature of comprehension and is parallel with changes in society, economy, and culture. Thus, PISA (2009) defined reading literacy as the ability to comprehend a written text, think about it and use for achieving one's goals; to develop one's skills, knowledge and potential for active involvement in the society. Švrpková (2011) defines reading literacy as "a functional use of an acquired skill in a particular social context. Being literate means that one has to develop a broader set of skills, which activate functional use of an acquired skill (e. g. language) in everyday life. Hence, reading literacy refers not only to mastering the reading skill, but also the ability to work with texts, communicate in writing, acquire and process information contained in texts" (Švrpková, 2011).

According to the PISA 2009 assessment framework (OECD, 2009), the 'access and retrieve' subscale refers to the process of finding and selecting the required information. The 'integrate and interpret' subscale assesses the ability to form a broad understanding of the text and create meaning from something not stated in the text. The 'reflect and evaluate' subscale requires students to make reflections and evaluations based on knowledge, ideas, or attitudes beyond the text in order to relate the textual information to their own conceptual and experiential frames of reference (Kit-ling & Ho, 2016; Krajčáková & Vojtoviš, 2014).

## **2.2. Measurement of PISA reading literacy**

According to PISA definition, reading literacy involves understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, develop one's knowledge and potential, and participate in society. PISA interpreted the definition as daily reading activities which requiring the diversity and complexity of the processes. The PISA measurement of reading literacy provided levels of competencies. The scale of 6 is the highest level. The baseline level is called proficiency level 2. The 1b is the lowest level where readers begin to demonstrate the competencies that will enable them to participate effectively and productively in life as continuing students, workers and citizens (OECD, 2014).

The tasks that make up the PISA reading assessment often require students to answer questions based on their comprehension of extended passages of text. In light of the OECD's analyses of reading scores in middle- and low-income countries, the conceptual framework for the reading assessment in PISA-D was designed to extend the PISA framework to lower levels of proficiency. PISA-D includes more items at Level 2 and below than the main PISA test, providing a wider and more fine-grained picture of what 15-year-olds know and can do at these lower levels of performance. While closely aligned with PISA, PISA-D provides better coverage of basic processes, such as sentence and passage comprehension. Maintaining the same dimensions and descriptors as the main PISA test, PISA-D outcomes will align with the PISA scale (OECD, 2014). The PISA reading assessment is built on three main task characteristics:

- Processes (aspects) - the cognitive strategies, approaches or purposes that readers use to negotiate their way into, around and among texts.
- Text - the range of material that is read.
- Situation - the range of broad contexts or purposes in which reading takes place.

The text and situation variables for PISA-D are the same as those used in the main PISA test, but PISA-D has enhanced the processes targeted in the reading test. Five processes were defined: retrieving information; forming a broad understanding; developing an interpretation; reflecting on and evaluating the content of a text; and reflecting on and evaluating the form of a text. PISA-D adds a process called "literal comprehension" that requires students to comprehend explicitly stated information that may be found in individual words, sentences or passages (OECD, 2016).

This approach enables PISA to identify and describe a wide range of proficiency levels. But proficiency below the baseline Level 2 is less clearly defined. The OECD analyses reported in PISA 2012 show that for many of the participating middle- and low-income countries, reading scores are concentrated below proficiency Level 2 (see figure 1). It revealed that percentage of students scoring at Levels 1a and 1b and below in reading in 18 low- and middle-income countries, PISA 2012 (OECD, 2016).

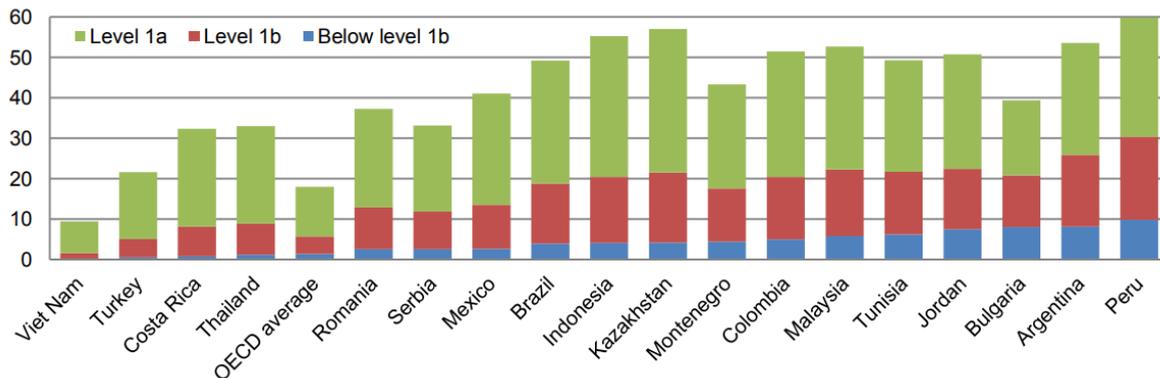


Figure 1. Percentage of students scoring at Levels 1a and 1b and below in reading in 18 low- and middle-income countries, PISA 2012 (OECD, 2014)

As middle-income country, Thai students' score was also below proficiency level 2. Therefore, reading in Thai education should not only focus on grammar and quantity of reading but also reading as explicit and implicit interpretation. The teaching strategy of reading needs to be considered.

### 3. ENHANCING THAI READING LITERACY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Primary school students need to be provided some basics skills for further inquiring knowledge in higher level of studying and future careers. Thai reading literacy is one of those skills. This paper presents some strategies for enhancing Thai reading literacy. On the basis of approximately twenty years of first author's Thai language teaching experience, the strategy of enhancing Thai reading literacy was shared in this paper.

Regarding on definition of reading literacy, the teaching strategy should allow students to reflect their understanding about text. Their reflection needs to be written which showed their ideas related both something in text and something not stated in the text. And, teachers need to provide reading experiences which allow students to negotiate their way into, around and among texts. To meet this goal, the text should provide situation in the range of broad contexts.

To enhance students' reading reflection, teachers may provide different purposes of asking questions in order to enhance students to integrate and interpret their reading. The application of the reading, the learning activities may allow students to communicate their reading. For example, the first author provided some questions to support students' reading. The students' tasks could be seen as the figure 2. These questions included:

- 1) What should be the title of this reading? Please explain your reasons.
- 2) What are the main ideas of this reading? Why?
- 3) What did you learn from this reading?
- 4) If we did not have our King, what will be happened?

According to the Figure 2, it is an example of student answer. Regarding on the Figure 2, student answer for the first question was "The title is The abolish slavery of the King Rama V because he was the person who announced the abolish slavery in Thailand". The answer for the second question was "The king Rama V planned step by step for the abolish slavery. Therefore, his plan took time to be finished because many Thai elite did not agree to the abolish slavery." The answer of the third question was "To finish something, we must never give up to do. We never scared to go further". The answer of the fourth question was "The dilemmas of King Rama V working for the abolish slavery. The king Rama V never stop working even there were many issues around". The answer of the fifth question was "The abolish slaver may never happen. And, it's no civilization. The King always take care all people".

### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Reading literacy is the ability to comprehend a written text, think about it and use for achieving one's goals; to develop one's skills, knowledge and potential for active involvement in the society. Reading literacy is one of crucial skills for citizens. To provide reading literacy as skills for future careers, primary school students should be enhanced to develop their reading literacy. The framework of PISA reading literacy suggested us some ideas how to enhance Thai reading literacy.

Regarding on PISA test on reading literacy, this paper then presents a strategy of enhancing reading literacy that represents the explicit reading ability. Therefore, the teaching strategy should allow students to reflect their

understanding about text. Their reflection needs to be written which shows their ideas related both something in text and something not stated in the text. And, teachers need to provide reading experiences which allow students to negotiate their way into, around and among texts. To meet this goal, the text should provide situation in the range of broad contexts.

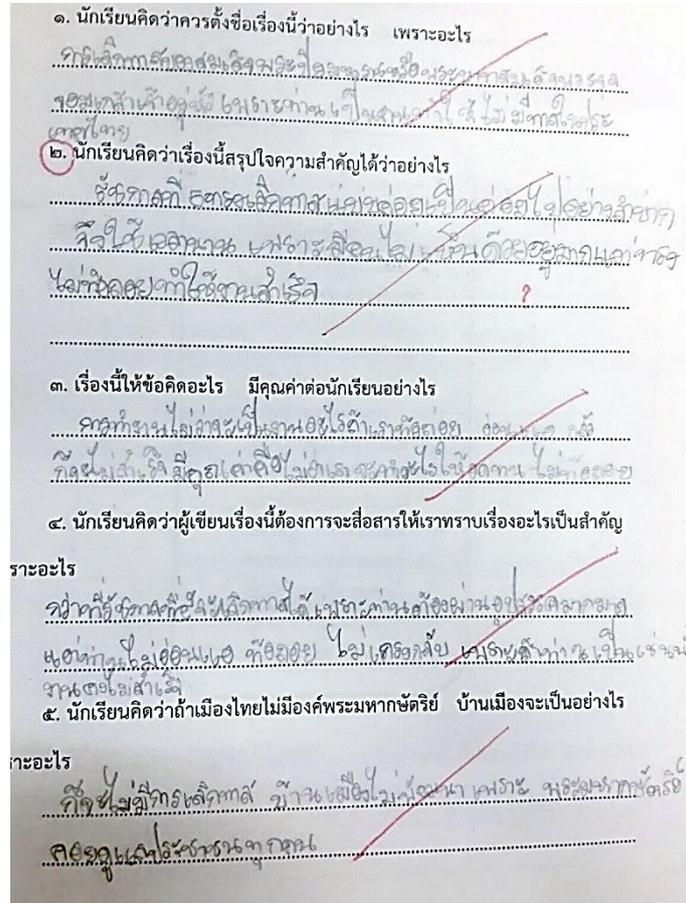


Figure 2. Students' tasks on Thai reading literacy

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