

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale and Significance of the Problem.

Reading is very important for people to cope with the rapid change in science and technology of the world. The importance and necessity of reading will be likely to be increasing in years to come. However, the number of Thais who read sufficiently is depressingly low. The reading habit must be cultivated continuously but the current Thai society has few readers and more people with improper reading habit. Eiwseewong (2003) noticed that the culture of reading in Thai society is not so promising. The youths in Thai society are increasingly abandoning reading and spending more times for internet, mobile phones, TV and radio programs, cartoons, computer games, etc.

In addition, Eiwseewong (2003) further observed that reading was not an original part in the Thai traditional culture. This meant that in Thai traditional culture, reading to understand what writers wrote and literally meant on printed materials was not common. According to Wasee (1999 cited in Soithong, 2005), Thai people have read in a lesser quantity than they are required to do because they are not part of a reading society but more of a speaking society. The most commonly used traditional methods of learning are oral methods (listening and speaking). Nevertheless, Thai people are actually required to read more than they believe they have to because the current society is growingly becoming more complex.

The shocking data regarding the amount of time Thai people spend on reading is revealed by the survey of the National Statistical Office (NSO). The survey finds that Thai people aged more than 10 year old spend only 2.99 minutes per day for reading and those at the ages of 10 to 14 years spend only 1.28 to 4.43 minutes per day for reading (The Office of the National Education Commission of Thailand, 2004). A later survey also finds that only 4.4 percent of Thais aged 10 years and above read books in their spare time on a regular basis, compared to about 30 percent in most industrial countries. The average time spent on reading

the books unrelated to school work is around three minutes per day, compared to 25 to 30 minutes in industrial countries (*The Nation*, 2006). These samples include the Thais who live in urban, rural areas, and both gender. The newer finding from National Statistics Office in May 2005, however, shows that 69.1 percent of Thais (6 year old up) spend their time for reading averagely 1 hour and 59 minutes per day, which is considered better than the previous reports.

In effect, this information implies that the product of the Thai education system is still lacking the sufficient ability to read although reading is very important. Tonsricharoen (2003) has summarized the causes for the lack of reading habit as the followings. First, Thai people lack motivation and encouragement to read since they were young. Second, Thai people suffer a misconception about reading when they have to read Thai alphabets without clear meanings. Reading is therefore not interesting and not fun among the younger generation. Third, Thai youth are usually assigned to read books that they do not really find interesting. Fourth, the Thai youth are taught to read without enough techniques to encourage them to read and they are usually punished when they read with mistakes. Fifth, parents and teachers are often forcing children to read when they are not ready. And sixth, children are accustomed to spend more time for TV, computer games, etc than for reading books.

In the current Thai society, reading is becoming more important in a highly literate society when both children and adults are required to acquire knowledge and information more through reading. The enrichment in knowledge gains through reading would, in turn, enable Thai people to present themselves more confidently. Thai education sector has begun a movement to develop better reading habits among the Thais to turn them into capable and efficient readers. The education sector promotes good reading habits among the youths as well as creates a learning society. Both government and private sectors have arranged activities to promote good reading habits since 1985. The activities are spread throughout the country. Nevertheless the Thai youth are still lacking good reading habits for some reasons such as economic condition, lack of books and appealing environment for reading, failure to perceive benefits of reading, and higher appeals from other media beside books.

Many developed countries, however, shared some problems related to the lack of good reading habits among their population. These countries all have tried to motivate their population to learn more through reading. The ASEAN nations had held conference in Bangkok Thailand on 20 to 28 August 1999. This Annual Conference of International Organization and Library Institution of ASEAN was attended by representatives of six ASEAN countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. There were three major factors stated in this annual conference as the barriers to the promotion of good reading habit.

First, ASEAN societies are not reading societies but oral societies with the popularity of learning through oral traditions. The cultural practices in these societies lead people to learn more through speaking and listening more than writing and reading. Second, there are still the crucial obstacles in the form of poor management of three M's, which are management of Man, Money and Management strategies. Third, the high appeals from electronic media have reached a certain degree that TV programs, for example, have affected children's reading performance. Educators have often cited TV and other electronic media as causes for the decline in reading when children spend more amount of time for TV "edu-tainments" than for printed materials.

The Ministry of Education of Thailand had launched a "Reading Activity Promotion" in 2003 as a part of a policy to increase the quality of reading among the youth. The year 2003 was proclaimed as the "Year of Reading and Learning" in Thailand because it was the joyous occasion of forty-eighth Birthday Anniversary of HRH Princess Sirindhorn, one of the proper models for benefits of reading. The campaign was aimed at stimulating students, teachers, education administrators, parents and the general public to be conscious of the importance of reading and learning as well as the values of teaching and learning. The program was focused on the integration of reading and learning in five subject groups in schools, namely, Social Studies in religion and culture, Thai language, English, Mathematics, and Science. The methods used for this activity are set as follows.

First, a creation of reading campaign named "Drop Everything and Read" was launched. This campaign prepares venues and various interesting books or copies of printed

materials for education administrators, teachers, students, and other personnel to select and read. It also creates an atmosphere of reading for every student at least 15 minutes before school begins. Their teachers are also encouraged to read books or printed materials within their interests at least 15 minutes per day. Second, the activity managed several continuous promotions of effective reading habit inside and outside of classroom to cope with reading, listening, thinking, speaking and writing.

Third, the campaign supported students to realize that reading was very important and thus got involved with reading activities with a sense of ownership of the project for reading. Fourth, the activities motivated and guided parents to cultivate the feeling of love to read among children.

Fifth, the campaign launched a literacy development where the rates of reading for people at certain literacy levels and the frequencies of reading were encouraged to reach certain levels that these factors would become parts of the children's good reading habit. This included the methods of continuous evaluation of the progress of development for good reading habit.

In addition, the private sector (the publishing houses of Thailand) started a project entitled "The Power of Love to Read" in 2004. In the same year, the reading project named "Bookstart Thailand" was set to reach 1,200 babies aged 4 to 9 months and to lead them to read at very early age. The success of the Bookstart Thailand scheme has been recognized by Thai government and as a result the publishing houses in Thailand planned to deliver "Gift Bags" to every newborn starting from 28 July 2005. Because Thailand has approximately 800,000 newborns a year, this will be a big project. The program was managed by the newly established National Institution for Brain-Based Learning (The Office of the National Education Commission of Thailand, 2007).

In addition to these attempts, there have been many reading habit promotion campaigns flourishing everywhere. Mostly done in primary school and secondary school, many promotions of active reading are set for young children to motivate good reading habit. Achievements for these attempts can only be reached through collaborative efforts of families,

schools, communities, organizations, private sectors, government sectors, as well as those who would like to take part in promoting and supporting programs for good reading habits.

Therefore, the tasks of encouraging the positive attitudes to foster a love for reading, which will lead to a reading culture and society, are not easy. All parties concerned, including state-based national institutes or private sectors, should work together to coordinate actions to achieve the goals. Chaowalit (2001) has suggested that the effective reading program should be based on the concepts, theories and principles to better motivate enthusiasm toward reading and to improve students' attitude and behavior. Thus, the researcher of the present work is interested in developing a good reading habit based on the concepts of development of "positive attitudes" towards reading. The development of the positive attitudes towards reading is unfortunately often underestimated. The facts have shown that children with positive reading attitudes tend to be more willing to read and enjoy reading than ordinary children. These children with positive attitude can easily become efficient readers and become lifelong readers. On the contrary, children with poor attitudes towards reading tend to read only when they have to read, tend to avoid reading, and may even refuse to read altogether. Children's attitudes towards reading may have a profound impact upon their overall academic progress (Laurice, 2004).

Krathwohl et al. (cited in Tonjes, Marian J. & Zintz, V.Miles, 1981) had identified five levels of the affective domain (Krathwohl affective theory) to represent students' levels of commitments. These five levels were known as receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and retaining complex values. At the level of receiving, students were willing to attend certain phenomena, participating in classrooms, and reading texts. These students, however, were attending to a fact that something does exist. The level of responding referred to active participation of students who reacted positively to reading texts for pleasure, or to coming to class. They were interested and enjoying the activities. At the third level of affective domain, valuing, the students attached a worth or value to the phenomena under study. This was the level where the students valued the information and this value materialized in their behaviors. They willingly improved and assumed additional responsibilities. At the next level, organizing, the students could bring together different values and resolve conflicts between

these values in order to develop a personal philosophy about the information at hand. Matthewson (1985) suggested the concepts of relationship between reading and the attainment of value complex such as attitudes, motivation, interests, beliefs, and values. These values affect the development of reading among the readers. Lapp (1983) claimed that this information can be used to develop a program-based activity to promote reading. A more recent article about young children by Gambrell (1996) suggests that a warm and calm class climate influences children's willingness to learn through reading.

Krathwohl et al. (1981) suggested that the highest form of learning in the affect domain is characterization by a value or value complex. This meant that the new values had become parts of the learners' philosophy and could be seen through behaviors for a long period of time. The behavior was to be consistent, persistent, and predictable. When learning occurred in this deep level, a learner was transformed. The learning became a new valued belief that the student lived on. In addition, teachers and classrooms' environment are important factors that influence students' attitudes toward reading. Together they may encourage students to read or listen to interesting books that spark excitement. This excitement can further be fanned into fires of warm enthusiasm towards reading as a lifelong habit (Sommer and Werthington, 1979).

There are many potentially effective ways for managing the promotion of good reading habit. Krashen (1993), for example, suggested that "Reading for Pleasure" program required students to read both at homes and in schools. The school component is consisted of regular sustained silent reading periods at least once a week. Reading sessions should be running about 20 minutes. The students are focused on learning the strategies for reading in both activities of classroom and practices at homes. It would be even better ways to develop reading habits as Baker and Scher (2002) had suggested when they showed that children were more likely to read at homes where books and reading were highly valued.

The importance of home environment and parental involvement to development of good reading habit has also been shown by the Commission on Reading (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985).

Involvement with reading activities at home has significant positive effects not only on students' reading achievement, language comprehension, and expressive language skills (Gest et al., 2004), but also on students' interests in reading, attitudes towards reading, and attentiveness in classrooms (Rowe, 1991). This study is interested in the concept of "reading for pleasure." This concept is based on a cornerstone idea that repertoires of strategies can be taught to children to encourage their good reading habits.

There seems to be a consensus in the field of reading that lessons should be viewed as activities that occur in three phases (Herbert and Nelson-Herber, 1987). This study thus plans to develop a series of activities divided into the following phases. The first phase is the pre-reading phase where the learners are instructed about the activities to come, the background knowledge needed, the critical vocabulary needed, and the purposes of reading activities. This phase is then launched in two kinds of activities which are "creation of experiences" and "book-talk."

The second phase, or while-reading phase, is limited to the actual reading of texts. This time, students with mild disabilities are provided with enough assistance especially during the reading of content materials. This phase is divided into two activities: literature circle activity and independent reading activity.

The third phase or the post-reading phase takes place to instruct and assist the learners to integrated information gathered during the previous two phases. Among the instruction of this phase is the discussion about the purposes of reading and the assistance to students' evaluation and reflection on what they have learned. This phase has two activities: storytelling activity and reflective thinking activity.

In this proposed plan, the main activities are designed to encourage students to practice strategies of reading skills outside the classroom, focusing on entertainment within a range of perspectives and on acquiring knowledge from the reading. This is the way to train learners to use stories as media to think and analyze reading materials. This proposed activity has been discussed with by the participating families of this study's samples. The researcher called this activity "Home-to-School Link for Love to Read."

In developing the programs to develop good reading habit, the researcher invited participation of the teachers and students in Koropo Klang Uppatum School in Doiloh subdistrict, Chiang Mai province where the crucial lack of management of reading activities is acknowledged. Although this school has tried to manage some activities for development of good reading habit according to the policy of the Ministry of Education, the activities have not been successful and poor reading habits still abound. This is due to the fact that the majority of students are coming from rural areas where the average income of parents is still considered as very low. In order to improve the students' reading habit, the researcher of this study has been working in the school management and participating in the reading awareness project. The main problems the students still have to face are improving their rather poor reading habits. The school has tried to solve these problems in vain and thus this study is interested to use a kind of action research to improve the school's promotion of good reading habits.

The researcher has modeled the plans to promote good reading habit in the forms of activity plans. These plans are aimed to develop classroom-based action research to improve the quality of reading activity management. Classroom-based action research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry by participants in schools to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices. There are also attempts to understand these practices as well as the situation within which these practices are carried out (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Punyapinyophol (1998) suggests that action research is an approach to solve known problems in learning activity management. Like a figure-reflecting mirror, action research can reflect the classroom facts to increase teachers' understanding about the real situation, focusing on the improvements on teaching methods.

Research Questions

This study is designed to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the current status and problems in samples' reading habits?
2. What are the peculiar characteristics of the implementation of the arranged activities to promote good reading habits in the study site? Which components work and which ones fail to reach their objectives?

3. Do these activities or a management model to promote reading habit of second grade level students really affect the students' reading habits? What are the levels of the satisfaction of their teachers, parents, and students who participate on this reading activity? What are the problems related with usage of this model?

Purposes of the Study

This research aims to achieve the following three objectives.

1. To study the current status and problems related to the reading habit for the second grade level students at Koropo Klang Uppatum School, Doiloh Subdistrict, Chiang Mai province.
 - 1.1 To study the level of students' reading habits.
 - 1.2 To study the factors that may affect development of reading habits.
 - 1.3 To test the known methods of measurement or assessment of students' reading habits.
 - 1.4 To study problems of students' in their attempts to develop good reading habits.
2. To develop the model for arranged activities to promote reading habits for the second grade level students.
3. To study the results of a model for activity management to promote good reading habit of second grade students:
 - 3.1 To study the results after trials of the model for activity management.
 - 3.2 To measure students' satisfaction on reading activities, as well as those of the teachers and parents who participate in this model.

To study some problems related with the usage of this model for activity management.

Scopes of the Study

The study has been narrowed of its scopes into the followings.

Target groups

The target group is a class of 46 second grade level students (grade 4 to 6) who enrolled in the academic year of 2006 at Koropo Klang Uppatum School, Chiang Mai

province, Thailand. (2) 15 active teachers, and (3) 40 parents of the samples at Koropo Klang Uppatum School, Doiloh subdistrict.

Contents

The contents of instructions are focused on the reading materials whose themes are selected according to the students' interests. The concept of "reading for pleasure" is the basis of the activities and it is related closely to the students' subjects of studies.

Assumption of the Study

The assumptions of the study are set as the followings.

1. This proposed management model of planned activities to promote good reading habits among the second grade students is a method used to guideline the management of activities in a system to solve the problem of improper reading habit among students. The model is implemented by the teachers who wish to provide students with larger choices in reading selections. The teachers can improve the process of teaching, develop students' good reading habits, solve students' problematic behavior in class, and enforce discipline. Some of the unwanted characteristics and dissatisfying behaviors are parts that this model and the researcher try to improve them.
2. The method is set to empower the teachers and allow them the opportunity to adopt the method framework to solve unique needs of the students.

Definition of Important Terms

The definitions of important terms are given as the followings.

The model for reading habits promotion refers to the activities to promote good reading habit for the second grade students focusing on voluntary reading to develop reading habits. This model comprises two main activities, both of which are connected so the students can adopt the reading strategies inside classroom into the practice out of classroom through collaboration with their parents, siblings, or friends.

Activities inside classroom refer to the activities to promote good reading habit that teachers manage inside classroom for students who can use comprehension strategies

effectively. The students are motivated to read at the same time to enhance students' use of reading strategies. The teachers then distribute printed survey to gather the students' interests and problems in reading after the activities have been done. This model is consisted of three phases of reading, i.e. pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading phases.

Activities outside classroom refer to the activities to promote good reading habits that teachers manage outside the classroom. Students' motivation for learning through reading is further reinforced when these activities are connected to the students' home activities. People both from homes and schools are working together as a team. The students are also allowed to read books of their own choices.

Reading habits refer to the interests and behaviors, which are the expressions of the tendency of individual that occur regularly in the individual's approach to reading approach.

Current status of reading habits refer to the interests and behaviors of the second grade students as measured by the surveys delivered among the second grade student.

Problems of reading refer to the problems that affect the achievement of learning through reading as gathered by the surveys on problems of reading as well as the focused group discussion. The focused group discussion would identify around four likely problems of reading, i.e. social economic situation, environment, availability of reading materials, and the students' background.

Advantages of the Study

The advantages of this study are conceived as the followings.

1. The research results can encourage further research to develop activities to promote good reading habits among Thai students.
2. The results can provide guidelines for interested persons for further research oriented to develop activities to promote good reading habit through the concept of "reading for pleasure."
3. This study can provide guidelines for teachers as to how to set up a set of activities by using "reading for pleasure" for students in general.