CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale and Significance of the Study

With the development of global society, learning foreign language is very important and essential to daily life especially learning English. English is the third common native language in the world except for Mandarin and Spanish (Wikipedia, 2016). Nowadays, one third of the population in the world are speaking English. There are almost 60 countries regarding English as their official language. English is the official language of many international organizations such as the United Nations, the European Union and World Trade Organization. No matter in the field of economy, politics, cultures, society, education, medical science, internet industry, technology or international exchange and cooperation, English has been an essential communication tool. With the development of global economy in the 21st century, the role of English is becoming more important. Thailand as a part of the ASEAN community can't exclude from these significant trends in the world. In order to make Thailand keep up with the development of globalization, most Thais have realized the importance of learning English as a foreign language. According to the plan of ASEAN Socio-cultural Community blueprint, all the members of ASEAN are encouraged to use English as official language in communication and cooperation. English is a language for work and communication. It is high time for Thais to improve their English. Therefore, English has been defined as the entire basic education core curriculum in foreign language.

In 1891, English was added in the curriculum, which focused on English reading, writing and translation. The purposes were to help Thai officials to deal with foreign traders and diplomats and help Thai students to learn modern technologies in foreign countries. In 1996, English was made compulsory for the primary education, which focused on communication, academic studies, career advancement and cultural understanding (Darasawang, 2007). Later, English was taught as one of the foreign languagesubjects,

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which focused on communication, culture, other subject area content and community context (Wiriyachitra, 2002). But now the English teaching strands focus on using listening, speaking, reading and writing skills together to communicate effectively. The English learning area is aimed at enabling learners to acquire a favorable attitude towards English, the ability to use English for communicating in various situations, seeking knowledge, engaging in a livelihood and pursuing further education at higher levels. Learners will thus have knowledge and understanding of stories and cultural diversity of the world community, and will be able to creatively convey Thai concepts and culture to the global society.

As we all know that English learning includes listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are receptive skills, but speaking and writing are productive skills. In the past, reading and writing are generally considered as two separated skills. People pay attention to reading ability more than writing ability at the early schooling stage. Normally, writing ability is cultivated after reading ability. In fact, these four skills cannot be separated. The students should write about what they are reading and read about what they are writing. The structures and styles in the reading passage can be reflected by the writing from learners (Eckhoff, 1983). Instruction during reading process can influence both reading and writing (Taylor & Beach, 1984). What's more, better readers are better writers. When readers get deep understanding of the text, they can write better to reflect the information (McGinley, 1992).

Writers give information or opinions through the written work called "text". Readers receive the information or opinions through the text. Anyway, writers and readers meet at the text. Rubin and Hansen (1984) have claimed that there are four similar knowledge in reading and writing. First, information knowledge, which is the information a reader gets from his experience or prior knowledge of the text as well as the information that a writer conveys in the text. The information getting from reading provides writing materials and the information getting from writing helps to comprehend the reading text. Second, structural knowledge, which writers write the text with the structure and readers use the structure to understand the written text. Third, transactional knowledge, which means readers use it to find author's writing purpose and writers need to consider it for readers. Fourth, aesthetic knowledge, which implies certain alliterate styles, interjections, length of reading and writing. In general, reading

and writing are inseparable as a result of four similar knowledge between reading and writing. Petrosky (1982) found the quality of students' reading ability improved through asking students to write summaries about stories they had read. There was another study showed that high school students were required to write summaries to recall the information after reading different kinds of texts. The result showed that the writing styles or formats of students were influenced by reading texts (Tierney, 1984). In consequence of these studies, reading not only refers to the pronunciation and meaning of words, but also refers to the understanding of writers' ideas. However, writing is not just only using some words to express information or ideas simply but also knowing how to organize the ideas and how to use appropriate vocabulary and grammar correctly. Teaching reading and writing together is quite necessary for developing students' English proficiency or English further learning.

But many studies in Thailand have showed that Thai students have the difficulties about reading and writing. This problem exists not only in elementary school but also in secondary school even in higher education (Wiriyachitra, 2002). There are various reasons to explain why the phenomenon occurs. The first reason is the difference between English and their native language "Thai" affects their English acquisition (Darasawang, 2007). The second reason is Thai students don't spend much time to read. The information from The Nation newspaper in Thailand revealed that a lot of Thai people just spent 28 minutes reading each day, lower than the 2013 report by the National Statistics Office that found Thai people over 6 years old spent 37 minutes reading a day (National Statistics Office, 2015). They are interested in TV programs, computer games and Facebook. They don't have enough time to read Thai, not to mention English reading and writing. The third reason is that they don't have enough vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to read and write effectively. The fourth reason is lacking of background knowledge of reading and writing texts. It is very difficult for them to remember, understand, apply, analyze, and evaluate the content of English reading texts and organize the ideas in writing. The fifth reason is the influence of traditional teaching method like Grammar Translation Method (Wiriyachitra, 2002). The teaching goal is to help students to pass the examination about reading and writing. They learn how to get a higher score in practice rather than reading and writing skills. The teacher is still the center of learning and the process of learning is not so

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interesting. Students have no more chances to join activities actively in the classroom. In matter of reading, most of teachers ask students to read the text by themselves then they translate sentence by sentence for students. The students lack of the cultivation of reading strategies like skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading strategies. In addition, writing is also a big challenge for Thai students to integrate information and develop transition, unity and cohesion (Methitham, 2014). Writing is used to express information or ideas by written language. For traditional teaching method, teachers try to increase students' writing ability through a number of writing exercises. But they ignore to give a guideline about how to organize the written text, how to classify the main idea and supporting ideas and how to use appropriate words and grammar. Over time, smart students may be able to finish the tasks very well, but more students may have less motivation in reading and writing.

Based on the fact above, it is very necessary to solve those problems immediately. Teachers have responsibility to find some techniques to help students solve their problems in order to improve their English reading and writing abilities and make students be more active in teaching and learning process. Regarding the situation, Cooperative Language Learning is quite suitable for students to learn language for communication. It is developed from Cooperative Learning which is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others (Olsen & Kagan, 1992). The goals of Cooperative Language Learning are to provide opportunities for naturalistic second language acquisition through the use of interactive pair and group activities, enhance learners' motivation, reduce learners' stress and create a positive affective classroom atmosphere as well as to obtain learning achievement.

One of the effective models of Cooperative Language Learning that promotes reading ability is jigsaw reading activity, which is developed by Slavin in 1995. Jigsaw reading is believed to reduce conflict among students, improve students' motivation, promote students' learning quality and increase students' enjoyment in the learning process. Jigsaw reading activity allows students to work together in a group, and each student has the responsibility for his own particular task. The students not only work in

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the group, but also make a contribution for the group to achieve one goal together. In jigsaw reading activity, students are divided into several home groups that there are 4 or 5 students in each group. Each student in the home group serves as a piece of puzzle. They can create a complete jigsaw puzzle unless they cooperate together. During the process to complete jigsaw reading, each student in the home group gets one part of reading material. Students who get the same part form the expert groups. They work in their expert groups to comprehend their own reading materials, then return to the home group and share what they have learned in expert group so that other members can understand each part of reading material. Normally, jigsaw reading activity includes individual reading, expert group discussion, home group reporting, testing and group recognition. During the whole process, students not only complete the individual task but also cooperate with others. They share and discuss what they have learnt. It is a good way to improve their listening, speaking, reading and thinking skills. Prom-D (2012) illustrated that jigsaw reading was an effective technique to improve reading comprehension for Mathayom Suksa 1 students.

As mentioned before, jigsaw reading activity provides more chance for students to cooperate with others and improves reading ability efficiently. But many researches indicated semantic mapping activity also could increase students' cooperation and reading ability. Semantic mapping activity is a kind of graphic organizer to correlate the relationship between words or concepts in particular text to improve students' reading comprehension by drawing a map of information from the text (Heimlich & Pittleman, 1986). The structure between the main idea and supporting ideas can be showed clearly through the map. And it is effective to show classifications, analysis, attributes, examples and brainstorming. "Semantic mapping is a visual representation of knowledge, a picture of conceptual relationship. It means that semantic mapping can be as a visual representation of knowledge" (Antonnaci, 1991, p.174). "The students who use semantic mapping manifest considerable improvement reading comprehension, written expression and vocabulary development" (Zaid, 1995, p.6). Students understand the structure and ideas of reading texts better through drawing semantic map, which shows students' strengths and weaknesses of reading comprehension clearly. Semantic maps use short words or phrases, they are ideal for different learners including primary, intermediate and advanced level English readers. Meanwhile, when the students

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complete the semantic map, they can work in the group so that good readers can help poor readers. The implication of semantic mapping activity in classroom instruction requires various basic memory in terms of the understanding of the reading text to build connection by a visual semantic map. Once students are familiar with the nature of the semantic map, they can apply it during-reading and post-reading activities flexibly. It is an effective way to represent or recall the content of reading texts. Shiri (2012) referred that semantic mapping activity improved reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners.

After drawing the semantic map, students can practice writing to retell what they have read. Writing is a mental process to put some thoughts into words in a meaning form to express writer's ideas. Writers need to consider how to organize and express ideas into texts briefly and clearly. Fortunately, semantic mapping activity is a type of pre-writing activities that allows the students to explore many ideas as well as the relationship among them. Like brainstorming, the students can collect more information about writing topic with semantic map. Writers could make out the writing outline through semantic map (Lowman, 1984). Semantic map displayed the main idea, supporting ideas, links among certain objects through diagrams visually and clearly. It made writing be easier for students who wrote following the structure of the map (Fisher, 1995). Octaria (2012) claimed semantic map activity could improve students' achievement in writing summary of text. The semantic map provided a clear outline for the students to represent the main idea and supporting ideas of the text.

According to all the information above, jigsaw reading activity and semantic mapping activity are both beneficial to improving reading ability. And two activities increase students' cooperation and interaction in the group, increase communication, replace teacher-centered lessons for student-centered lessons, create a positive classroom atmosphere and reduce stress and anxiety. It's a good idea to combine them together. First, students apply jigsaw reading activity to explore the information of the reading text. Then, students represent and analyze the information of the reading text by a semantic map with key words or short sentences. As a result, students can get good reading comprehension. After getting the good understanding, students can write a summary clearly according to the outline of the semantic map, which is a good access to inspect students' reading comprehension. Because reading and writing are inseparable

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and interdependent. Students should read about what they have written and write about what they have read. On one hand, writers get more knowledge such as information, English vocabulary, linguistic knowledge and writing patterns through reading. On the other hand, readers can understand and analyze the reading text better through writing. In general, reading and writing abilities can be improved at the same time through jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities.

When combining jigsaw reading activity with semantic mapping activity together, the teaching procedures are divided into pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. During pre-reading process, the procedures are as follows: 1) Greet students; 2) Give the reading topic to students and guide them to make a brainstorm to activate the prior knowledge around the topic; 3) Teach the new vocabulary and phrases from the reading text through definitions, pictures and context sentences; 4) Students make a prediction about the content of the reading text. During while-reading process, the procedures are as follows: 1) Divide students into home group and expert group. The students are divided into 4 or 5 home groups based on the length of reading text. If the students get the same segment of the reading text, they will form the expert group; 2) Students read and understand their passage by themselves in expert groups; 3) Make a discussion in each expert group in terms of reading passage; 4) Students go back to own home group to share what they have learnt in expert group; 5) Students make a conclusion about the whole reading text in home group. During post-reading process, the procedures are as follows: 1) Students complete the reading comprehension test of the reading text by themselves; 2) Teacher announces the scores of the students and gives prizes or bonus points to the students; 3) Complete the semantic map in home group according to the main idea and supporting ideas from the reading text; 4) Present their semantic maps in front of the class; 5) Each student writes a summary of the reading text individually based on the information from the semantic map.

In conclusion, during the whole process of jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities, students get the opportunity to cooperate with others. They join the learning activities in the group work actively especially for students who don't like to talk in large class. Although students have different background, ability, strength and weakness, they work in the group and they can help each other so that they can achieve the goal better. For example, when students who have lots of vocabulary cooperate with

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students who have a good grammar, they can get the meaning of reading text well. For the poor students, group work can reduce their anxiety because of the interaction from excellent students. Meanwhile, excellent students feel proud of helping their group members. In Jigsaw reading activity, the students not only apply their prior knowledge or experience about reading text but also increase their cooperation and interaction among them. It makes the whole reading process much easier and more interesting (Qiao & Jin, 2010). Good comprehension from jigsaw reading activity makes contribution to drawing a good semantic map. Clear semantic map helps students to consolidate understanding of reading text. Then the semantic map provides effective clues to help students organize a good summary of the reading text in order to improve their writing (Octaria, 2012). The researcher believes that jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities may be effective to solve the problems of reading and writing for Thai students.

1.2 Research Questions

    1) Does students' English reading ability increase after learning through jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities?

    2) Does students' English writing ability pass the pre-set criteria after learning through jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities?

1.3 Purposes of the Study

    The objectives in conducting this study are as follows:

    1. To compare students' English reading ability before and after learning through jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities.

    2. To study students' English writing ability after learning through jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

    The hypothesis is that students' English reading ability increases after learning through jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities.

1.5 Scope of the Study

    1. Target Group

    The target group was 20 students from Mathayom Suksa 4 at Chomthong School, Chiang Mai, Thailand. They enrolled in the English Reading and Writing Course (E30203) in the first semester of the academic year 2015.

    2. Variables

        1) The independent variables were jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities.

        2) The dependent variables were English reading and writing abilities.

    3. Contents of the study

    The reading texts used in this study derived from the reading textbooks which focused on English reading and writing skills. They corresponded with the learning strands of Mathayom Suksa 4 students at Chomthong School. Meanwhile, they were close to students' daily life and they were quite interesting topics. They could motivate students' interest during the learning process. In total, there were ten reading texts for the experimental instrument. They were as the following: *Laughter Really Is the Best Medicine, The Psychology of Color, Body Language, Spiders, Strange Foods, Cosmetic Surgery, The Sphinx, Speed Dating, White Sands* and *Left-Handedness.*

1.6 Definitions of Terms

    The terms defined in the study are:

    1. **Jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities** refer to the combination of jigsaw reading activity and semantic mapping activity, which encourage students to read English texts in the group, complete or draw the graphic organizers of the reading texts and write a summary individually. These teaching activities include pre-reading (students make a brainstorm to activate their prior knowledge, learn new vocabulary and phrases and make a prediction), while-reading (students read and discuss the text in expert group, retell and discuss the text in home group, make a conclusion in home group), post-reading (students complete the reading ability test, complete the semantic map and write a summary).

    2. **English reading ability** refers to the ability to read the English texts and answer four types of questions (remembering, understanding, applying and analyzing)

based on the revised version of Bloom's Taxonomy. The English reading ability was evaluated by 40 multiple-choice questions.

3. **English writing ability** refers to the ability to summarize the English reading texts. The English writing ability was evaluated by the criteria of summary writing (Gillam, 2004) including main idea, supporting details, using own words, grammar and mechanics.

1.7 Advantages of the Study

This study can encourage teachers to improve students' English reading and writing abilities through the use of jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities. The findings of the research may provide some new inspiration of jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities for other researchers who want to investigate the similar topic. The further research can aim to develop students' English listening and speaking abilities through the use of jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities. Teachers can apply jigsaw reading and semantic mapping activities into other grade levels like Mathayom Suksa 5 and Mathayom Suksa 6, and other subjects like Chinese reading and writing or Thai reading and writing.