

Enhancing English Reading Comprehension through Active Learning: An Analysis of Student Outcomes and Satisfaction

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Abstract

This research aimed to compare students' English reading comprehension before and after an intervention involving active learning activities and to investigate students' satisfaction with these activities. The participants were twenty-five ninth-grade students, purposely selected based on prior academic performance and behavior indicating desirable characteristics. The research tools included detailed lesson plans with innovative active learning activities, a reading comprehension test, and a satisfaction questionnaire. The findings showed that students' English reading comprehension significantly improved after participating in the active learning activities, with higher scores compared to their pre-intervention results. Additionally, students' satisfaction with the active learning activities was high. Students expressed positive feedback, noting that the activities increased engagement and effectively developed their reading skills. These results indicate that proactive learning approaches not only improve academic performance but also foster active participation and skill development.

Keywords: Active learning, reading comprehension skills

1. Introduction

According to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (Ministry of Education, 2008), reading comprehension is identified as one of the essential fundamental skills for secondary school students. This is because reading comprehension plays a pivotal role in developing critical thinking and fostering effective learning. Developing these skills is particularly crucial for English language learning, as proficiency in reading directly influences the ability to understand and interpret English content, which, in turn, impacts the development of English communication skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2019).

Despite the curriculum's emphasis on reading comprehension, the researcher's teaching experience in a Thai secondary school context revealed that Grade 9 students face significant challenges in this area. Many students lack basic reading skills, such as accurately understanding or interpreting short texts and sentences. Furthermore, they often lack confidence in reading and discussing the material they have read. This lack of confidence creates a barrier to improving their reading proficiency, adversely affecting their academic performance and

their ability to communicate effectively in more advanced contexts. Addressing these issues is essential to enhance students' reading potential and lay a solid foundation for future learning.

Given the importance of reading comprehension and the challenges observed, the researcher explored potential solutions and identified active learning as a promising approach. Active learning, as defined by Bonwell and Eison (1991), involves students actively participating in and reflecting on their learning experiences. Felder and Brent (2009) further explain that in active learning, students shift from being passive recipients of knowledge to active participants in co-creating it. Rooted in constructivist principles, active learning emphasizes the learning process over content, enabling students to link and construct their own knowledge through practical, real-life activities guided by the teacher.

This approach encourages higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information, making learning more meaningful and applicable across various contexts. Considering these benefits, the researcher is interested in employing active learning strategies as a tool to address the challenges of reading comprehension among Grade 9 students. By fostering engagement and critical thinking, active learning has the potential to help students overcome their difficulties and improve their reading skills, thereby enhancing their overall academic performance and communication abilities.

Research Objective

This research aims to:

1. compare students' English reading comprehension before and after an intervention involving active learning activities.
2. investigate students' satisfaction with these activities.

2. Methodology

In this study, a qualitative approach was employed to investigate the effectiveness of active learning activities in enhancing students' English reading comprehension in the Thai context. The research design involved quantitative data collection methods through lesson plans with active learning activities, a reading test which was adopted as the pre- and post- test, and a student satisfaction questionnaire.

Lesson plans employing active learning strategies were designed to enhance reading comprehension for ninth-grade students. The research was conducted over a period of 6 weeks, with one session per week, totaling 6 hours, excluding testing time. In this study, the researcher incorporated a variety of active learning strategies that encourage students to actively engage with reading texts, think critically, and build reading comprehension skills. For instance, Think-Pair-Share was adopted to encourage students to reflect on reading questions individually, discuss with peers, and share insights with the class, promoting critical thinking and collaborative interpretation. Group discussion was also used to deepen understanding of themes and characters, while interactive quizzes were employed to reinforce comprehension in an enjoyable way. Moreover, the lesson plan also provided students with case studies and problem-based learning activities with readings that present real-life scenarios for helping students to connect text content to broader contexts. Peer teaching and reflection activities were used to

engage students in presenting sections of the text and to encourage students to evaluate their understanding and progress.

The research participants consisted of ninth-grade students from a secondary school in Thailand. The participants were purposively selected based on their reading comprehension test results, which showed achievement below 60%.

Data analysis involved statistical techniques namely mean, standard deviation, relative gain scores, and paired t-tests to compare pre- and post-intervention results.

3. Results

Students' Reading Comprehension

The findings indicated that students' post-test scores, out of a total of 20 points, were higher than their pre-test scores following participation in the active learning activities (see Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of Pre- and Post-test Results

Item Description	Mean Pre-test (\bar{x}_1)	S.D. Pre-test	Mean (\bar{x}_2)	S.D. Post-test	Mean Difference ($\bar{x}_2 - \bar{x}_1$)	t-value	p-value
1. Understanding of reading materials	12.60	2.50	18.80	3.10	6.20	6.50	0.001
2. Engagement during lessons	13.00	2.70	19.00	3.20	6.00	6.30	0.001
3. Ability to analyze texts	12.40	2.60	18.60	3.00	6.20	6.45	0.001
4. Motivation in reading activities	12.80	2.50	19.20	3.10	6.40	6.55	0.001
5. Answering comprehension questions	12.72	2.60	19.40	3.15	6.68	6.70	0.001
Total/Average	12.72	2.62	19.00	3.11	6.28	6.50	0.001

The study demonstrated that active learning activities significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension, with substantial improvements observed across all assessed areas. Mean scores increased notably, with understanding of reading materials rising from 12.60 to 18.80, engagement during lessons from 13.00 to 19.00, and the ability to analyze texts from

12.40 to 18.60. Similarly, motivation in reading activities improved from 12.80 to 19.20, and the ability to answer comprehension questions increased from 12.72 to 19.40. All changes were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming the effectiveness of active learning strategies in fostering critical engagement, motivation, and analytical thinking, thereby improving overall reading comprehension.

Satisfaction with Active Learning Activities

The analysis showed that students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the active learning activities, with mean scores for all items ranging from 4.70 to 4.90. This consistently positive feedback resulted in an overall mean of 4.80 and a standard deviation of 0.40 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Student Satisfaction with Active Learning Activities

Items	\bar{x} (Mean)	S.D	Interpretation
1. The active learning activities have helped me improve my reading comprehension skills.	4.80	0.40	Highest
2. The activities have helped me engage more actively during lessons.	4.75	0.45	Highest
3. The materials used in class are relevant and adequate for my learning level.	4.78	0.38	Highest
4. The teaching method fosters a positive learning environment.	4.85	0.36	Highest
5. The teacher provides clear and easy-to-follow instructions.	4.77	0.42	Highest
6. The duration of the lesson is sufficient for completing the activities.	4.82	0.41	Highest
7. The activities are interesting and keep my attention focused.	4.70	0.52	Highest
8. The activities encourage me to think critically and ask questions.	4.73	0.48	Highest
9. The teacher’s interaction motivates me to participate.	4.90	0.30	Highest
10. Overall, I am satisfied with the active learning activities provided.	4.88	0.33	Highest
Total	4.80	0.40	Highest

These findings suggest that the active learning approach effectively engages students, fosters a conducive learning environment, and supports skill development. Students particularly appreciated the teacher's clear guidance, the relevance of the materials, and the motivation provided through teacher-student interaction. The high scores across various items imply that incorporating active learning strategies into the classroom can significantly enhance both participation and comprehension in students.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings underscore the transformative impact of active learning strategies on students' reading comprehension and related skills. The significant improvement in post-test scores across multiple dimensions—comprehension, engagement, text analysis, motivation, and response accuracy—demonstrates the multifaceted benefits of active learning. For instance, comprehension scores rose from 12.60 to 18.80, while motivation improved from 12.80 to 19.20. This suggests that active learning not only enhances cognitive abilities, such as understanding and analysis, but also fosters an intrinsic desire to engage with reading tasks.

These results are consistent with prior studies (e.g., Abenojar, 2024; Arsairach, Puengkaew, & Suksumek, 202; Lian & Azlina, 2020), which emphasize the importance of active engagement in fostering deeper learning. The notable gains in analytical skills highlight the potential of active learning to develop higher-order thinking, as students learn to critically evaluate texts and articulate responses effectively. Furthermore, the emphasis on student-centered activities likely encouraged greater participation and ownership of the learning process, which are key drivers of both comprehension and motivation.

The high satisfaction levels reported by students, with feedback scores ranging from 4.70 to 4.90, provide additional evidence of the effectiveness of active learning methods. These findings align with the work of Lei (2020), Cao and Fang (2021), and Pakginnon, Phongploenpis, and Mahimuang (2020), who emphasize the role of clear teacher guidance and relevant materials in creating a positive and supportive classroom environment. Such satisfaction is crucial, as it not only reinforces the immediate learning outcomes but also contributes to a sustained interest in reading and learning over time.

A deeper analysis reveals that active learning strategies address multiple aspects of the learning experience. The integration of collaborative tasks, problem-solving activities, and interactive discussions likely enhanced social engagement, making learning more dynamic and relatable. Additionally, the use of contextually relevant materials may have played a role in bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and real-world applications, thereby improving comprehension and motivation. The results also prompt a discussion on the broader implications of active learning. The emphasis on participation and interaction can serve as a foundation for lifelong learning skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability. Furthermore, the strategies' ability to foster both cognitive and emotional engagement suggests their potential applicability beyond reading comprehension, extending to other subject areas and age groups.

Future research should explore specific active learning activities that yield the most significant improvements, as well as the long-term effects of these strategies on reading comprehension and other academic outcomes. Additionally, examining how factors such as class size, teacher expertise, and cultural context influence the effectiveness of active learning

could provide deeper insights. Integrating technology into active learning frameworks may also be an area worth investigating, as digital tools can offer innovative ways to engage students and enhance learning outcomes. In conclusion, the findings of this study strongly support the use of active learning strategies to improve reading comprehension, motivation, and analytical skills. By fostering a supportive, engaging, and student-centered environment, active learning not only enhances immediate academic performance but also lays the groundwork for lifelong learning. The results highlight the importance of continued investment in teacher training and resource development to maximize the benefits of active learning in diverse educational contexts.

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