

Abstract

This study attempts to raise awareness of the factors affecting the development of a love for reading in English among Thai secondary students. As Aebersold and Field (1997) point out, readers are influenced by a number of factors: family, community, school, culture, and individual characteristics of a reader. Hence, the study attempts to explore in further detail the extent to which these various groups in society support and encourage Thai secondary students to develop a love for reading, especially in English. The study is guided by three research questions in its investigation: 1) What are the aims and objectives of reading classes in English?, 2) What are the attitudes of various groups in society (students, teachers, parents, school librarians and friends) towards reading? and 3) How do various groups in society (teachers, parents, school librarians and friends) try to encourage Thai students to develop a love for reading in English?

The main data collecting instrument was a questionnaire survey conducted on 209 Mathayom Three students from Suranari Witthaya Secondary School in Nakornratchasima, a typical government secondary school. Interviews were also held with the students, teachers, parents and school librarians to collect supporting data. Besides the interviews, classroom observations were also conducted to observe the teaching and learning objectives of reading classes.

The main findings of the study indicated that in general:

- The main objectives for teaching reading in English were to develop basic comprehension skills such as identifying main points of the story and vocabulary teaching.
- Thai students, their parents and English language teachers were aware of the importance of reading. They seemed to understand that reading in quantity enabled one to enlarge his or her knowledge of the world. They acknowledged that reading also helped in language learning, especially with regard to vocabulary learning.
- Teachers, parents and school librarians did try to encourage students to read in English through methods like taking the students to the bookshop, recommending new books for them to read and organizing reading activities in school.

The study ends with a brief discussion of the limitations faced by the researcher while conducting the study and gives some suggestions for teachers regarding how they could encourage their students to develop a love for reading in English. Implications for future research that could benefit from the findings of the study are also discussed in brief.