Teachers' Perceptions on Integrating Information and Communications Technology (ICT) towards Teaching English Reading Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension is one of the most important skills in the learning process. Teaching and learning in 21st century emphasize on use of Information and communications technology (ICT). The purpose of this study was to explore the teachers' perceptions on integrating ICT towards teaching English reading comprehension. The participants of this study were 12 teachers from two high schools in Pattani province, south of Thailand. Semi-structured interview was used as an instrument in this study. The findings indicate that teachers agreed with the importance of using ICT in teaching. The integration of ICT can be beneficial for both teachers and learners. However, some teachers indicate lack of knowledge on how to use ICT as well as weak internet connection as hindrance factors. The results of current research are very vital for the Thai English teachers and English supervisors to integrate ICT while teaching English. The integration of ICT will improve students' English reading comprehension.

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Introduction

English language teaching and learning have changed over the time, moving from conventional methods to learner-centred methods and integrating information and communication technology (ICT) is one of the effective tools which positively change the learning process. The Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 encourage to integrate ICT in teaching and learning to be in line with the 21st century learning. It is also important to note that ICT has also been introduced in the education field, including foreign language teaching and learning and make students' learning more effective by motivating the learners. English is regarded as a global language which used as a widely acceptable communication language in the world. English language proficiency is an important source in order to grab employment opportunity all over the world [1]. According to Thai students, English subject have higher level of difficulty as compared to other subjects in the curriculum.

In the process of language learning, reading is one of the most useful skill that help to comprehend the foreign language. At the same time, English has become very important for Thailand since Thailand has joined ASEAN countries in 2015. Based on ASEAN Charter, official language of ASEAN members shall be English. In other words, English is required for all member countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) [2].

In order to improve the English language proficient among Thai citizens. Thai English teachers have started to integrate ICT in teaching English gradually but majority of the English teachers prefer to use Thai language as a medium of instruction. It makes teaching and learning English in Thailand unsatisfactory as the teaching method seems inappropriate where delivery of concepts become difficult. There are serious problems concerning the standard of English language in Thailand. According to the result of the English Proficiency Index (2019), Thailand was ranked 74 out of 100 countries [3] as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1 English Proficiency Index 2019

Ranking	Country Names	Proficiency
5	Singapore	Very High
20	Philippines	High
26	Malaysia	High
52	Vietnam	Low
61	Indonesia	Low
74	Thailand	Very low
86	Myanmar	Very low
94	Cambodia	Very low

Source: https://www.thaipbsworld.com/thailand-falls-to-74th-place-in-ef-english-proficiency-index-2019/

Table 1 indicates that English Proficiency Index 2019 of 100 participating countries and ranked them as very high, high, low or very low level of proficiency. This result showed among eight ASEAN member countries which participated in English Proficiency Index 2019, Thailand was ranked 74 out of the 100 countries. This rank is considered as a very low as compared to Singapore, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Indonesia. This ranking shows the real situation of Thai students, where there is a dire need to improve the level of English in Thailand.

Thai government tries to support English language education at all levels in order to upgrade the standard of English in this region especially reading skill. This step is taken by keeping in mind the increased importance of English language and the countless problems faced by teaching and learning English in Thailand [4]. Jinajai and Rattanavich [5] conducted a study to investigate the effects of integrating ICT in English reading and writing abilities by using sample from Santiratwittayalai School, Bangkok, Thailand. The results support the notion that integrating ICT significantly improve English reading comprehension skills. In other words, Thai teachers used ICT in teaching English and reported improvements in learning process. On the other hands, English teachers agreed with the idea of integrating ICT in the process of teaching and learning English. Previous studies [6-8] stressed that teachers have a positive perception on integrating ICT because it can enhance learning ability of students in Thailand. Besides, there were some studies [9-10] conducted in other countries that also confirmed that using ICT in teaching and learning English improves learning. Based on the increased importance of English learning for students and integration of ICT in improving, this research aims to explore teachers' perceptions on integrating ICT towards teaching English reading comprehension in Pattani, Thailand.

Problem Statement

Teaching English in Pattani faces many problems. Majority of students in this area are weak in English especially reading comprehension due to many factors concerning both teachers and students [11]. The teachers have to use multi methods in order to make students interested in learning and one of the methods used by English teachers is integrating ICT. However, some of the Thai English teachers still prefer to use conventional teaching methods in teaching reading such as students are asked to read after the teacher sentence by sentence, or section by section and ending with answering comprehension questions. The area of this study is located in Pattani. Majority of students in this area learn four languages; Thai, Malay, Arabic and English. Among these four languages, they regard English is less important and it also as a difficult subject for them and they learn English just to pass examination as mentioned by Hayikaleng (2016). Related to the reasons mention, this study aims to explore the teachers' perceptions on integrating ICT towards teaching English reading comprehension.

Objectives of the Study

To explore teachers' perceptions on integrating ICT towards teaching English reading comprehension.

Research Questions

1. What are English teachers' opinions/attitudes toward integrating ICT in teaching reading comprehension?

2. What are roles of ICT on the improvement of EFL learners' English reading comprehension?

3. What are the future role of ICT in the teaching of EFL reading comprehension in Thailand?

Literature Review

Technology has improved rapidly in current years. This improvement is affecting the field of education as it is in every field especially English as a foreign language (EFL). In this situation, teacher-centered methods need to be changed to learner-centered gradually. It is understood that the integration of ICT in English teaching and learning becomes great importance in the development of English language especially reading skill because technology is changing students' learning behaviors. ICT here refers to any kind of tools provided by technology including words and pictures which are presented through internet resources. ICT is the key importance at all levels of the educational system. It provides both the functions of tools and objects of knowledge. In other words, ICT in education has made it possible for students and teachers to collaborate with each other and it also supports the modern principles in every field of education including language acquisition. In the 21st century learning, it is necessary to use ICT in teaching and learning process. It helps in teaching and also assessing the students during a lesson. Many studies have confirmed that integrate ICT can improve learning process. On the other hand, not many studies touch on teachers' perception regarding the use of ICT in teaching and learning English in Thailand. Therefore, this study aims to explore the teachers' perceptions on integrating ICT towards teaching English reading comprehension. Based on earlier studies mentioned that teachers have positive attitude towards integrating ICT as can be seen from previous available literatures.

Tongpoon-Patanasorn and White [6] examined teachers' and students' perceptions on blended learning in English language courses. The participants consisted of five English teachers, each of whom had over a year of experience in teaching blended learning courses, and thirty-six students majoring in English. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews with teacher participants and focus group interviews with student participants. The interviews were conducted using both face-to-face and phone conversations; each interview lasted about one hour. The results indicated that integrate ICT able to improve learners' English language abilities.

Sakulprasertsri [7] carried out the study to exploring university English teachers' integration of multimodality into their English classroom. Multimodality is associated with the use of visuals, sounds, texts, gestures, and technology. The study investigated both teachers' and undergraduate students' perceptions towards the integration of multimodality into English classroom. The participants consisted of 10 English teachers at the university level from different regions across Thailand and 317 students enrolled in English courses with them were asked to complete a questionnaire. The findings revealed that integrate technology in their classroom practices contribute to enhancing students' English skills and enabling them to apply their knowledge and skills to real life situations.

Kueasnou and Dumlao [8] investigated beliefs, benefits, and challenges of using technologies in English language teaching. The participants were 879 secondary teachers in the Western Region of Thailand. The methods used were modified

questionnaires and focus group discussions. The findings showed that the teachers have positive perception towards integrating technologies in teaching and learning English language.

Based on three studies which were conducted in Thailand make researcher interested to observe English teachers' perception on integrate ICT in Pattani area. On the other hands, some previous studies conducted in other countries also confirmed regarding the benefit of integrating ICT in language teaching and learning as mention below.

Munyengabe, Yiyi, Haiyan, and Hitimana [9] carried out their study on primary teachers' perceptions on ICT integration for enhancing teaching and learning through the implementation of one laptop per child program in primary schools of Rwanda. The study employed qualitative method through interviews and group discussions with 30 primary schools' teachers. The results showed that the teachers realized about the important of utilizing ICT in teaching and learning because it helps students to understand better but the teachers are lack knowledge on using ICT.

Muslem, Yusuf and Juliana [10] analyzed their study on perceptions and barriers to ICT use among English teachers in Indonesia. The purpose of the study was to investigate English teachers' perception and challenges of the utilization of ICT in English classrooms. This study used mixed methods to collect data. The participants in the study were 26 English teachers from 16 public senior high schools in Banda Aceh. The findings indicated that the English teachers found ICT is very helpful in learning and teaching. However, the teachers face some problems such as teachers are lack of experience and knowledge regarding the use of ICT. This study also suggests to policy makers in relation to the implementation of ICT for teaching and learning in the classroom.

Mahdum, Hadriana and Safriyanti [11] investigated their study on exploring teacher perceptions and motivations to the use of ICT in learning activities in Indonesia towards 616 senior high school teachers from four rural districts in Indonesia. The instruments used in the study were questionnaire and analyzed by using SPSS. The results of this study indicated that the teachers had positive perception and motivation towards integration of ICT in teaching activities. However, the teacher still challenged with several issues related to facilities and technical knowledge about ICT.

Gebremedhin and Fenta [12] analyzed their study on assessing teachers' perception on integrating ICT in teaching-learning process: The case of Adwa College. The study used 72 teachers at Adwa College as participants. The findings indicated that teachers have strong positive perception to utilize ICT in teaching and learning process. On the other hand, majority of the teachers pointed out that one of the barriers to technology implementation is lack of teachers' technical knowledge and shortage of resources. Therefore, to be in line with 21st century education, the college should emphasis on integrating ICT in each course to improve the ability of their students.

From previous studies can see that majority of teachers have positive opinion regarding integrating ICT into learning class. Integrating ICT is helpful because it promotes idea to think and constructs the meaning. However, some teachers claimed that there were lack support from institutions. Nevertheless, the study also mentioned that in some areas have weak internet connection as mentioned by earlier studies.

Hidayat, Tanduklangi and Badara [13] conducted the study on teachers' perception of instructional technology integration into English language learning. The study aims to describe teachers' perceptions of instructional technology integrating into English language learning. Five aspects are studied: teachers' perception, competency technology, attitude, experience and barrier of instructional technology integrating into English language learning. The population of study were 43

teachers randomly selected from English teachers of SMK Kendari. The results showed that majority of English teachers were proficient using technology computer and they also had a positive perception as well as positive attitude towards instructional technology into English language learning. Unfortunately, they sometime and seldom integrate technology into English language learning because of some problems such as they lack of technical support and insufficient internet access and lack of content technology for teaching.

Salehi and Salehi [14] analyzed the integration of ICT in language teaching: Challenges and barriers. The purpose of this study was to examine the high school English teachers' perceptions of the factors discouraging teachers to use ICT in the classroom. The participants of the study were 30 high school English teachers from the five main educational districts in the city of Isfahan, Iran. The instrument used was questionnaire. The results indicated that insufficient technical supports at schools as well as little access to internet connection. Moreover, shortage of class time for the teachers to integrate ICT while teaching.

Ramadan and Chen [15] carried out a study on teachers' perceptions on ICT integration in TVET classes: A case study in Khartoum State-Sudan. The participants of the study were 10 teachers in Khartoum state. This study aims to explore teachers' opinion regarding integrating ICT in teaching and learning process. The study used qualitative method to analyse data. Interview results indicated that the teachers agree with integrating ICT in the class but they have lack of supporting in using ICT. Besides, the internet connection is also weak at the area.

Ng'ososey [16] conducted the study on teachers' perceptions on ICT integration in secondary schools in Tinderet Sub-County with 14 principals of the secondary schools in Tinderet Sub-County. The study used mixed method to analyzed data. The results indicated that teachers' perception towards ICT integration is negative. Majority of the teachers explained that they are lack confident in dealing with ICT.

Based on the previous research findings related to teachers' perceptions on using ICT as a tool for teaching English as mentioned above, included both Thai teachers and abroad teachers' perception, can be concluded that integrate ICT in teaching and learning English especially reading skills can help learners in understanding the reading text. However, the studies also indicated that majority of teachers have lack knowledge on utilizing ICT while teaching [13-16]. Therefore, in a reading class, the teacher plays an important role in bridging the gap between reading text and students' understanding.

Research Methodology

This section provides details on participants, research instruments, data collection and analysis.

Participants

This is a qualitative study using descriptive research design. The researcher used convenience sampling selection. The participants of this study were 12 English graduate teachers with at least five years of teaching experiences from two high schools in Pattani province, south of Thailand. The researcher used a focus group interview format for teachers to examine their perceptions towards using ICT in teaching reading comprehension. This group of teachers sometimes integrate ICT in teaching English class.

Research Instruments

The instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interviews since the interviewer is left with little freedom to make any modifications. This study believes that the interview would be able to provide in-depth meaning into how the teachers' perceptions towards using ICT in teaching English reading comprehension.

Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of this research was to explore the teachers' perceptions on integrating ICT towards teaching English reading comprehension. The researcher used the semi-structured interview since the interviewers are left with little freedom to make any modifications. The instruments used were validated by experts in the field of linguistics, English supervisors from Narathiwat Educational Area, English teachers from Princess of Naradhiwas University and two well-trained English teachers from two high schools in Pattani province, south of Thailand. In addition, the researcher conducted a mock interview to ensure that the teachers understood the open-ended questions which were to be used in the real study. The findings indicated that the teachers did not have any problems with the instruments used. The interview questions were transcribed and analyzed using code as Emerging Themes. Words or phrases that appeared to be similar were grouped into the same theme to see how they could support data for general findings. All these findings were compiled into the form of a research report. The interview questions used in the study were as below:

1. What are English teachers' opinions/attitudes toward integrating ICT in teaching reading comprehension?

2. What are roles of ICT on the improvement of EFL learners' English reading comprehension?

3. What are the future role of ICT in the teaching of EFL reading comprehension in Thailand?

Results and Discussion

This part reports the findings from the data collection based on the research questions. The purpose of this interview was to gain information on teachers' perceptions and opinions towards integrating ICT on teaching English reading comprehension. The researcher used a qualitative approach to examine 12 focus group teachers. Their responses were recorded and interpreted by the researcher.

Research question 1. What are English teachers' opinions/attitudes toward integrating ICT in teaching reading comprehension?

This question sought teachers' perceptions regarding integrating ICT in teaching English reading comprehension. The perceptions and opinions of the teachers were coded as Emerging Themes in Table 2.

Table 2 Emerging Themes from teachers' responses to Research question 1.

Teachers	Emerging Themes
Participants	Helpful, pay more attention, motivate, understand, remember the situations, activate background knowledge of the students.

Table 2 shows the results of the Emerging Themes from data analysis and explains the perceptions of the teachers in responding to Research question (What are English teachers' opinions/attitudes toward integrating ICT in teaching reading comprehension?).

During the interview session the teachers stated that they liked to teach the class by integrating ICT because it can attract and motivate students to engage with the lesson. They also confirmed their views about the usefulness of integrating ICT in teaching the English reading comprehension class. The teachers asserted that the students pay more attention to the lesson when integrating ICT. One of the participants mentioned that ICT is a tool which can attract students to learn more. The students pay more attention and concentrate on the lesson. It also motivates them to engage themselves with the passages given in the class. The participant liked to integrate ICT to teach the students because students can understand the lesson better. Besides, they are able to remember the situation well. The most important thing is majority of students can enjoy learning and not dull with the lesson. Moreover, integrating ICT also helps students to activate their background knowledge. As a results, helps students to understand the lesson better.

With reference to the findings, it was clear that integrating ICT improved significantly in answering reading comprehension questions. These findings imply that integrating ICT to teach reading comprehension can help students construct their schemata of the reading text and in turn assist students to understand the reading text better. The study was in line with the previous studies [6-10] who stressed that integrate ICT help students to understand the lesson and increase their motivation towards learning English reading comprehension.

Research question 2. What are roles of ICT on the improvement of EFL learners' English reading comprehension?

Table 3 Emerging Themes from teachers' response to Research question 2

Teachers	Emerging Themes
Participants	Helpful, pay more attention, improve, relate to their prior knowledge, understand

Table 3 shows the Emerging Themes after the data analysis and explains the perceptions of the teachers in responding to Research question 2 (What are roles of ICT on the improvement of EFL learners' English reading comprehension?).

The participants mentioned that before integrating ICT, students often faced difficulties in understanding the English reading text. However, after they learned through ICT, they found it easier to understand and comprehend the lesson since the ICT not only showed the words but also the pictures of the events which help to activate their prior knowledge. Through ICT, the students improve their ability in learning English. Other participants mentioned that applying ICT in teaching English reading comprehension is helpful. It is very interesting and regarded as a new method for this school. It helps students to pay more attention to the lesson. ICT helps to explain the lesson by itself because when the students look at the pictures presented by ICT it matches their schema and the students can imagine and guess what is going on in the next step. Even not all students understand in the same way, but at least it makes students think

critically. Besides, ICT able to bring the outside world into the classroom to enrich students' knowledge. The teachers clarified that integrating ICT helped the students to understand the lesson which is the key of learning process. Consequently, this technique helped students to activate the relevant schemata which in turn facilitate information processing while reading a text to promote critical thinking. This findings are similar to the previous studies [6-10] who revealed that integrating ICT improve students' understanding in learning English reading comprehension.

Research question 3. What are the future role of ICT in the teaching of EFL reading comprehension in Thailand?

Table 4 Emerging Themes from teachers' response to Research question 3

Teachers	Emerging Themes
Participants	Good, interesting, confident, understand, pay more attention, remember, support learner-centered, teachers are lack of knowledge, weak connection

Table 4 shows the results of the Emerging Themes from the data analysis and explains the perceptions of the teachers in responding to Research question 3 (What are the future role of ICT in the teaching of EFL reading comprehension in Thailand?).

The teachers confirmed that the classroom situation during the teaching process improved after integrating ICT in the English reading class. It could be seen from the beginning of integrating ICT. The students became more interested in joining the English class. The students are confident in answering reading comprehension questions because they understand the lesson. One of the participants mentioned that she preferred to integrate ICT to teach reading comprehension in the future because the students could pay more attention in class and the class was more interesting and enjoyable. The lessons were not dull because they liked the pictures and sounds effects from the ICT. The students are able to understand the lesson better because students can remember the event make students relax and enjoy learning reading class. This helps them to understand the comprehension passage better. Students also engage actively during question and answer session. Even not all students understand in the same way, at least it helps students to think more critically. On the other hands, majority of teachers are lack of knowledge about ICT. Moreover, the teachers faced a problem of weak connection of internet [13-16]. However, the teachers mentioned that they preferred to integrate ICT in teaching reading comprehension in the future.

Discussion

The results of research question 1 revealed that the teacher agreed with teaching by integrating ICT because it helped to improve students' English comprehension. The teacher mentioned that her students could understand the lesson better through a combination of words and pictures from ICT. Integrating ICT is very interesting and is regarded as a new method for this this school. By integrating ICT, the students are able to relate to real life experiences. In other words, ICT provides two modes; verbal and pictorial, which help students to activate and recall schemata they have

read and seen. They are able to guess the meanings through the pictures provided by ICT, and be able to remember the situation easily. Nonetheless, words and pictures provided by ICT help students to understand the scenario better. The study was in line with the previous studies [6-10] who stressed that integrate ICT help students to understand the lesson and increase their motivation towards learning English reading comprehension.

In relation to research question 2, integrating ICT helps to explain the lesson by itself because when the students look at the moving pictures presented by ICT it matches their schema and the students can guess what is going to come next. Even not all students understand in the same way, at least it helps students to think more critically. This outcome is in line with the previous studies [6-10] who revealed that integrating ICT improve students' understanding in learning English reading comprehension.

According to the research question 3, the teacher declared that she preferred to use ICT as an additional tool to teach English reading comprehension in the future. The main reasons given by the teacher were that the students could pay more attention in class and the class was more interesting and fun. The lessons were not tedious because they liked the pictures and sound effects which brought students to feel relaxed while learning in the EFL reading comprehension class. By integrating ICT the students were able to remember the events easily. Applying ICT in teaching is in line with the new Thai curriculum that emphasizes the use of technology to integrate teaching and learning. Therefore, integrating ICT is regarded as a new way of teaching to support the new curriculum and as an effective tool for enhancing learning in the EFL reading classroom.

All these results can fulfil the researcher's intention and focus on how to improve English proficiency and find ways to make students interested in learning as well as increase students' motivation in learning English reading comprehension. Based on the advantages of integrating ICT, the teachers mentioned that they preferred to teach her students by integrating ICT in the future.

Conclusions

The study which is carried out in Pattani province by the researcher regarding teachers' perceptions on integrating ICT towards teaching English reading comprehension showed that learners can benefit from the technology-based activities provided that they are related to their needs and interests. The findings of this research represented that technology integration allows teachers to be more creative and more effective in their teaching and it motivates learners to be engaged in classroom activities. The students paid more attention to the lessons as the class was interesting and entertaining. Teachers mentioned that they liked to teach using ICT because it attracted the students to concentrate on the lessons and the lessons were not dull. By integrating ICT, it helped students to understand the lesson better. Moreover, integrating ICT also supports the new curriculum which facilitates a learner-centered environment. The teachers confirmed that ICT can be one of the effective additional tools to be used in teaching and learning English reading comprehension as it also supports the new curriculum. However, the teachers have to improve their knowledge regarding the use of ICT.

Contributions of the Study

The findings of this study serve as a guide to the Thai English teachers and English supervisors to take consideration on teaching methodologies and to encourage the English teachers to integrate ICT in teaching English reading class in order to improve reading comprehension as well as increase motivation in learning English. It is expected that technology integration will continue its contribution to the effective learning and teaching of English language skills. The integration of ICT can be beneficial for both teachers and learners. While experienced teachers know how to teach English language skills through integrating technology, many teachers should have training courses in how to teach the four skills successfully so that their learners make the most of the technology. Teachers should understand the benefits that technology integration brings to their instruction and their learners' learning. Using technology teaches students to go beyond the actual text while helping to guide their comprehension of it. Furthermore, teachers should always remember that technology is just a tool, and learners' learning progress depends on the suitable and creative instruction. In addition, through technology-based English teaching, learners will be more motivated and guided to communicate with each other and the process of learning skills will be more student-centred.

Suggestion

In this study, the researcher used only a small sample of 12 teachers from two high schools in Pattani province, south of Thailand. Future research should engage larger samples which include teachers from different provinces in Thailand to obtain more conclusive findings which can resemble a larger population. In relation to this, the next study should use both qualitative and quantitative method in order to get more information regarding teaching and learning English reading comprehension in the future.

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