



Chapter 1

Introduction

Reading is a highly complex skill that is a prerequisite to success in a society where so much information is communicated in written form, and that is pretty much taken for granted by those who can do it (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989). Beyond school, reading guarantees success in the workplace; in addition, it provides sources for pleasure and entertainment for readers (Glover, Ronning, & Bruning, 1990). While skilled readers who can do it fluently take it for granted, textual complexity poses problems for poor readers. In a school, we can see that many children find it difficult to learn to read (compared to learning to speak).

Poor readers, sometimes referred to as less-skilled readers, are those whose reading is below their grade levels (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1989). Poor readers usually need more attention, time and remedial work. Worse still, they face a high risk of not completing school. Bilingual students like less-skilled readers, have difficulty in reading in a second language because they laboriously translate the printed words (Singer & Donlan, 1989).

The present study dealt with the third-grade hilltribe children in a welfare school in Chiang Mai. Most students were binlingual, and they came to school with a variety of their native languages. In school, all hilltribe students have to study official Thai as an important tool for studying other areas and for communicating with other people. Thus, the official Thai is the second language that each student has to master. Reading is a language-dependent skill (Fillmore & Valadez, 1986). The students

who learn to read in a second language may have problems in learning a new language other than their native language. It is found that only 18.7 percent of the hilltribe population throughout Thailand who are 5 years of age and above can read Thai (National Statistical Office, 1989). The hilltribe students, especially in the primary level, have critical problems in reading Thai (Prasong Rainasuk, 1989). Consequently, there appears to be a number of hilltribe students who could not complete school because they have failed to learn to read Thai efficiently. Thus how to teach the students who have problems in reading a second language has been a specially challenging task for all educators; and it is the great concern in this study.

In the history of instruction, there may be a variety of methods that seem to be useful for improving the students' reading skills. However, one method called repeated reading has impressed many researchers. Dowhower (1989) pointed out that, in the last few years, researchers have published a list of studies investigating repeated reading as a technique to gain reading skills (e.g. reading speed, word recognition). According to Dowhower, repeated reading is a useful instructional tool not only for disabled or remedial readers in special classrooms, or very young children but also mature adults. The method of repeated reading arises largely from the automaticity theory (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). According to the theory, a fluent reader decodes text automatically (without attention), thus leaving attention free for comprehension. A beginning reader, on the other hand, is not automatic in decoding since attention is required. Because the reader's attention is on decoding, it is not immediately available for comprehension; thus she or he is poor in comprehension.

Repeated reading can be classified in two categories: unassisted repeated reading and assisted repeated reading. The unassisted repeated reading is emphasized in this study because it provides the readers responsibility to take charge of their

learning to read by themselves. This method frees teachers' time to teach individual students to read. Teachers can devote more time to prepare special tasks for the class or teaching individual students who need a special help. Repeated reading was developed by Samuels (1979); it is a method in which a student reads short passages thoroughly and independently several times until he or she reaches a set criterion without a model or an audio-tape to follow.

A number of studies have reported that repeated reading significantly increased reading speed, word recognition accuracy (Sindelar, Monda, & O'Shea, 1990; Rasinski, 1990), and comprehension (Yaden, 1988; Hannah, 1994). There are evidences that gains in reading speed and accuracy within practiced passages carry over to new unpracticed ones (Dowhower, 1989). However, several researchers are not sure that the method increases comprehension (Conte & Humphreys, 1989; Mathes, 1993). Further more, some researchers did not agree that comprehension gained from rereading the same passages can generalize to new passages (e.g. Boyer, 1993).

In the literature review, it has been shown that the method of repeated reading is beneficial to readers of different intellectual abilities. For example, good and poor readers (Conte & Humphreys, 1989; Levy, Nicholls, & Kohen, 1993), readers with learning disabilities (Selvey, 1990; Gayeski, 1991; Weinstein & Cooke, 1992), and physically disabled readers (Layton, 1994; Koller, 1992). However, almost all studies involved participants who learned to read in their first language, especially the English language. A few studies have been found beneficial to readers who learn to read in a second language or bilingual readers (Durgunoglu, 1993; Andrianantenaina, 1994). This group of subjects are still rare in investigation of the method. This study extended Samuels' concept of repetition into a specific group of bilingual students.

The experimenter believes that with rereading the same stories, the hilltribe students will become fluent readers as the automaticity has been predicted.

This study had integrated a well-known technique of self-modification or self-directed behavior, into the method of repeated reading According to Watson and Tharp (1985), self-directed behavior means the action in which people select and perform by themselves to achieve their own goals. Self-directed behavior involves these steps: (a) select a goal, and specify target behaviors that one needs to change in order to reach the goal; (b) make observations about the target behaviors; (c) work out a plan for change and; (d) readjust one's plan as one learns more about oneself.

There is a variety of techniques in self-directed behavior, such as, self-recording, self-evaluation, self-reinforcement. These techniques could be applied to almost all behaviors (Watson & Tharp, 1985). Even techniques of self-directed behavior have been used successfully in maladaptive behavioral adjustment (see Gross & Wojnilower, 1984; Watson & Tharp, 1985; Sompoch Iamsupasit, 1993), these techniques can be used to improve students' language learning. Oxford (1990) pointed out that self-directed behavior is the most important for language learning which learners always do by themselves (for example, students select an interesting book and read it independently). He also viewed that self-directed behavior is for developing fluency in a new language.

Samuels (1979) has implied this behavior in his study, "A mentally retarded elementary student asks for a stopwatch for his birthday so that he can keep track of his gains in reading speed..." (p, 403). The statement suggests that, even the retarded student can be taught to perform a quite simple self-directed behavior. Reading behavior as other behaviors has goals to be achieved (e.g. speed, comprehension), therefore, the technique of self-directed behavior should be helpful. The experimenter

has a great belief that this kind of behavior would take an important role in facilitating repeated reading to be the most effective tool in developing students' reading skills because it provides them systematically clearcut self-observation of reading performances.

In the present study, the experimenter assigned each student into one of four treatment groups, repeated reading with and without self-directed behavior, non-repeated reading with and without self-directed behavior. The students' reading skills (reading times, error detection, and comprehension scores) were recorded individually. The students read 4 versions of repeated or non-repeated stories, crossed out misspelled words, and answered comprehension questions either performing reading with self-directed or teacher-directed behavior. After the treatment, the students read three more new stories. Specifically, the present study mainly examined the effects of (a) repeated reading, (b) self-directed behavior, and (c) generalization of reading skills. The results of this study led to the answers of critical research problems concerning whether repeated reading and self-directed behavior improved the hilltribe students' reading skills; and whether these skills generalized to a new situation.

General Purpose

To study the effects of repeated reading and self-directed behavior on the third-grade hilltribe students' reading skills and generalization of the reading skills.

Specific Purpose

The purposes of the this study were:

1. to investigate the effect of repeated reading on students' reading skills.

2. to investigate the effect of self-directed behavior on students' reading skills
3. to compare the repeated reading effect with self-directed behavior teacher-directed behavior on the students' reading skills.
4. to examine the improvement of the students' reading skills at each text exposure.
5. to investigate the generalization of the students' reading skills.

Hypothesis

Many researchers have found that unassisted repeated reading facilitates increases in reading rate, word accuracy, expression, and comprehension of practiced material (Rasinski, 1990; Sindelar et al., 1990; Levy et al., 1993) Further more, some findings have indicated that practicing one passage, either unassisted or assisted several times, leads to improvements in new unpracticed passages (Layton, 1994; Young, 1994; Levy et al., 1993).

The assisted repeated reading implies that the reader is controlled by external things or persons, for instance a tape or a teacher. Being controlled by an external event tends to diminish an individuals sense of autonomy (self-determination) (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Deci et al. (1991) pointed out that there are evidences that in educational settings, providing students with the opportunity to participate in the decision process relative to educational activities tends to encourage the self-determined regulation of those activities, which in turn is likely to produce beneficial learning and adjustment outcomes. For example, Dickerson and Greedon (1981) found that the second and third-grade students who determined reinforcers by themselves were higher achievers in learning-to read and arithmetic than those who

were reinforced by the teacher. From these evidences and reasons above, the following hypotheses were proposed.

1. Students who performed repeated reading were more improved on reading skills than those students who read without repeated reading.
2. Students who used self-directed behavior were better on reading skills than those students who use teacher-directed behavior.
3. Students who performed repeated reading and self-directed behavior were more improved on reading skills than those students who performed repeated reading and teacher-directed behavior.
4. The subsequent rereadings were more effective than the previous readings in the students who performed repeated reading with self-directed behavior.
5. The students' reading skills in repeated reading were more generalized than non-repeated reading.

Scope of Research

1. Subjects

The 28 hilltribe students who were poor readers, and were studying in the third-grade at Chiang Mai Suksasongkraw School (Welfare School) in Chiang Mai province.

2. Variables

2.1 Independent variables

2.1.1 Reading method.

- a) repeated reading
- b) non-repeated reading

2.1.2 Directed behavior

- a) self-directed behavior

b) teacher-directed behavior

2.2 Dependent variables

2.2.1 Reading time

2.2.2 Error detection

2.2.3 Comprehension

2.2.4 Generalization

Definition

1. Repeated Reading (RR) meant the repetition of the same story (4 times in this study) in order to receive the specific goals.
2. Self-directed Behavior (SDB) meant a set of certain behaviors which the students performed by themselves in order to achieve the specific goals. The self-directed behavior in this study mainly involved self-recording, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement.
3. Repeated Reading With Self-directed Behavior (RR+SDB) meant the repetition of the same story by the facilitation of self-directed behaviors.
4. Repeated Reading With Teacher-directed Behavior (RR+TDB) meant the repetition of the same story by the facilitation of teacher-directed behaviors.
5. Reading Speed meant the number of words read per minute (WPM).
6. Reading Time meant the time allocated for reading a whole story measured in seconds.
7. Error detection meant an ability to indicate correctly the errors or misspelled words (nonword error and word error) embedded in a story.
8. Comprehension meant an ability to answer correctly the written comprehension questions in a story which was assessed by the unaided recall (literal) questions from the story.

9. Reading skills means the readability in terms of reading time, error detection, and comprehension.

10. Generalization means the reading skills in new stories is more improved than the reading skills on the first reading in practiced or unpracticed stories.

11. Students refer to the hilltribe participants (Karen, Hmong, Lahu, and Lisu), who were studying at the third-grade level of Suksasongkraw Boarding school in ChiangMai province, and met the subject selection criterion.

12. The experimenter refers to the person who did this study.

The Importance of the Study

As has been mentioned earlier, almost all hilltribe students have major problems in learning to read official Thai. They are at risk to not complete school if they can not master in reading and writing official Thai. Thus this group of students needed an effective study tool that helped them to learn to read Thai efficiently. This study revealed an effective technique that could help the poor third-grade hilltribe readers to develop the reading skills. That was repeated reading with self-directed behavior could improve the poor third-grade hilltribe students' reading speed and detection skills. Repeated reading with self-directed behavior in the present study was an easy technique which each student could performed by themselves. All subjects reported their satisfaction in using this technique. It was important that there were several kinds of students that shared common reading problems with the hilltribe students in this study; for example, the students who spoke native language in the northern part, southern part, and east-western part, of Thailand. The technique of repeated reading with self-directed behavior may be useful to those students as well as the poor hilltribe readers.