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Enhancing Reading Literacy in Thai Grade 2 Students through Active Learning Activities

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Abstract. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of employing a comprehensive active learning management plan in enhancing reading literacy among 2nd-Grade students in Thailand. The participants were 24 English as a foreign language (EFL) students in Thailand, selected through cluster random sampling. The research instruments included a learning management plan featuring a mix of active learning activities, including game-based learning, interactive storytime, story swap, and comprehension puzzles, and a pre-post reading literacy test. Data were analyzed using percentages, mean score, standard deviation, learning management effectiveness (E1: E2), the Effectiveness Index (E.I.), and a paired samples *t* test. The results show that active learning is effective, with students' post-test scores being significantly higher than their pre-test scores. This study contributes to the existing body of evidence supporting active learning in primary school language classrooms. It highlights the benefits of incorporating a variety of active learning activities, rather than relying on a single approach, to enhance reading literacy.

Keywords: active learning; language education; primary school education

1. Introduction

Reading is one of the most crucial skills at the fundamental stage of education (Rieben & Perfetti, 1991). In Grade 2, students start to read more complex texts, striving to understand the meaning and reflect on how it relates to their lives (N'Namdi, 2005). This stage is pivotal as it lays the foundation for advanced comprehension skills and critical thinking, which are essential for their future education and personal growth. The ability to read and understand texts deeply

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influences their academic success and lifelong learning capabilities, making reading literacy a vital component of their overall development (Jiang et al., 2000; Rieben & Perfetti, 1991).

Reading literacy has become a significant focus in language teaching (Frankel et al., 2016). It involves the ability to locate important information, analyze and comprehend the text, and evaluate its relevance and applicability to real life (Delgadova, 2015). Developing these skills is essential for students to navigate and interpret the vast amounts of information they encounter daily. Effective reading literacy enables students to understand content, engage in critical thinking, and apply knowledge in practical situations, thus preparing them for future challenges (Nel & Adam, 2014).

Teaching literacy in Thailand presents significant challenges due to a variety of complex factors. One primary issue is the diversity in linguistic backgrounds among students, especially in regions where Thai is not the first language (Boonaree et al., 2017). This linguistic diversity can make it difficult for some students to grasp reading and writing skills in Thai effectively. Additionally, economic disparities result in unequal access to educational resources and quality instruction, with schools in rural or impoverished areas often lacking adequate materials and trained teachers (Intasena & Nuangchalerm, 2022). Moreover, traditional pedagogical approaches in many Thai schools emphasize rote learning over critical thinking and interactive learning, which can stifle student engagement and hinder the development of comprehensive literacy skills (Paige et al., 2024). Lastly, the rapid changes in technology and media consumption habits have reshaped how young people engage with text, requiring educators to continuously adapt their teaching strategies to remain effective. These factors collectively create a challenging environment for literacy education in Thailand, necessitating innovative and inclusive approaches to teaching.

It is evident that developing reading literacy requires active learning activities, particularly for students in the early stages of education. Young learners need stimulation and hands-on activities to maintain their focus and engagement in the classroom (Hovland, 2019). Active learning encourages participation, collaboration, and practical application of knowledge, which are crucial for enhancing reading skills. These activities help students retain information better and develop a deeper understanding of the material (Knight, 2006).

Moreover, a passive classroom environment, where teachers primarily lecture and students passively listen, might not support the development of reading literacy effectively (Brown, 2014). Such an environment can lead to disengagement and a lack of motivation among students. In Thailand, students often face challenges with reading, partly due to the prevalence of passive learning environments in language classrooms (Hovland, 2019). This situation highlights the need for a shift toward more interactive and engaging teaching methods.

Therefore, active learning activities present a possible solution to the problems in the Thai educational context. Active learning involves instructional methods that actively engage students in the learning process, encouraging them to participate, discuss, and apply what they have learned (Elmetaher, 2021; Fornari & Poznanski, 2021). These methods can significantly help young learners develop their reading literacy by making learning more dynamic and interactive. Therefore, the current study applies the principles of active learning to develop a learning management system aimed at enhancing reading literacy in Thai Grade 2 students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reading Literacy

Reading literacy is an evolving concept that reflects the dynamic changes in society, economy, and culture (OECD, 2019). Historically, literacy was viewed as a basic skill acquired in childhood, but the modern understanding has expanded to see it as a set of knowledge, skills, and strategies developed throughout life (Marilyn et al., 1997). Reading literacy encompasses the ability to locate and understand important information, analyze and comprehend texts, and evaluate and reflect on their content in various contexts (Becker et al., 2010). It is a continuous process of building and applying reading skills through interaction with peers and the broader community. This ongoing development is crucial for lifelong learning and adapting to the demands of different situations.

According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), reading literacy involves the individual understanding, using, reflecting on, and engaging with written texts to achieve their goals, develop knowledge and potential, and participate in society (OECD, 2019). This definition highlights the interactive and constructive nature of reading, where readers generate meaning based on their prior knowledge and contextual cues. Reading literacy requires a range of cognitive competencies, from basic decoding to advanced comprehension and metacognitive strategies (OECD, 2019). These competencies are essential for navigating both print and digital texts, allowing individuals to make informed decisions and actively participate in their communities. Engaging with texts also fosters a motivation to read, promoting an interest and enjoyment in reading that supports continuous learning and personal growth.

2.2 Reading Development in Young Learners

Young learners are at a crucial stage of their education as they develop their reading skills (N'Namdi, 2005). Prior to this point, language is primarily used as a verbal tool for communication, with students understanding words as sounds and meanings. However, reading introduces a new dimension where they must recognize symbols – letters and vowels – and understand the rules of spelling and grammar, as well as engage in contextual analysis to interpret meaning (Krashen, 1981, 1985). This process is quite complex for young learners compared to their natural learning tendencies. In the early stages of primary school, young learners especially need stimulation to maintain their focus in class. Considering that reading is a continuous process requiring the recognition of alphabets and rules before comprehension can occur, it is evident that failing at the initial stage can hinder their ability to read effectively (Jiang et al., 2000).

To support young learners in developing reading skills, several key principles should be applied. Teaching students to recognize and manipulate the sounds in spoken words through phonemic awareness is fundamental, as it helps them understand the relationship between sounds and letters, which is crucial for decoding words (USAID, 2018). Systematic phonics instruction enables students to connect letters with sounds and use these connections to read words, enhancing their reading fluency (Lloyd, 1993). Building a robust vocabulary is essential for reading comprehension, and students should be exposed to a variety of words in different contexts to enhance their understanding and use of language (Nation, 1990, 2006). Developing reading fluency involves practicing reading with speed, accuracy, and proper expression, allowing students to focus on understanding the text rather than decoding each word. Teaching students comprehension strategies, such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing, helps them engage with and think critically about what they read (Karami, 2008; McKown & Barnett, 2007). Finally, creating an engaging and motivating learning environment is crucial. Incorporating interactive and hands-on activities, such as storytelling, reading games, and group discussions, can make reading enjoyable and encourage a lifelong love for reading (Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al., 2023).

2.3 Active Learning in Reading Development

Active learning is an instructional approach that actively engages students in the learning process through activities and discussions, rather than letting them passively receive information (Fornari & Poznanski, 2021). This method emphasizes collaboration, critical thinking, and the practical application of knowledge, making learning more interactive and enjoyable (Vickery, 2013). In a reading classroom, active learning can significantly enhance students' engagement and motivation, leading to better comprehension and retention of material. Involving students in activities that require them to analyze, evaluate, and create could help them develop higher-order thinking skills essential for reading proficiency (Elmetaher, 2021).

Active learning involves a range of cognitive tasks that stimulate deeper understanding and critical thinking. These tasks include problem-solving, where students tackle reading challenges that require analytical thinking; discussion and debate, which encourage them to articulate their understanding and consider different perspectives; and reflection, where they think about their learning process and how it applies to real-life contexts (Jacob, 2023). These activities help students build connections between their prior knowledge and new information, fostering a more profound and lasting comprehension of the reading material. Additionally, active learning tasks promote metacognition, enabling students to monitor and regulate their own learning strategies effectively.

Incorporating active learning strategies into the reading classroom can be done through various engaging activities (Rojas-Drummond et al., 2014). For instance, collaborative reading groups can be formed where students read a passage together and then discuss its meaning and implications. Interactive reading games, such as word scavenger hunts or reading bingo, can make learning fun

while reinforcing key concepts. Role-playing and dramatization of stories can help students better understand character motivations and plot developments. Additionally, integrating technology through educational apps and online reading platforms can provide interactive and personalized reading experiences. These activities not only make reading more enjoyable but also help students apply their skills in diverse and meaningful ways, thereby enhancing their overall reading literacy.

2.4 Previous Studies

Active learning has been employed in reading classrooms in various studies (e.g., Çetinkaya et al., 2019; Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021; Doniyarov, 2022; Dwigustini & Widiya, 2020; Gao et al., 2020; Intasena & Nuangchalerm, 2022; Ştefana, 2023; Syahfutra & Niah, 2019; Yan & Cai, 2022). Various types of active learning activities, such as book reading activities (Çetinkaya et al., 2019), interactive reading aloud (Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021), think-pair-share (Dwigustini & Widiya, 2020), and rapid reading skill training (Gao et al., 2020), have been proven to benefit reading classrooms. These activities make classes more interactive, capture students' attention, lead to a deeper understanding of the reading text, and develop reading skills. Moreover, previous studies emphasize the importance of combining activities to enhance the results.

However, a limited number of studies have explored the use of a combination of active learning strategies over an extended period, particularly focusing on reading literacy. Additionally, few studies have specifically examined the impact of these strategies on younger learners, especially those in Grade 2. Given that the current study aims to use the principles of active learning to develop a learning management system to teach reading over a semester, relying on only one technique might bore Grade 2 students. Therefore, several active learning strategies were applied in this study to ensure a dynamic and engaging learning environment. This approach not only maintains student interest but also fosters a comprehensive development of reading skills, thereby addressing the aforementioned gaps and contributing to the body of research in this area. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of active learning management on Thai Grade 2 students' reading literacy.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a one-group experimental design to explore the effectiveness of incorporating active learning into a structured learning management system, complemented by lesson plans, aimed at improving various aspects of reading literacy among 2nd-Grade students in Thailand. The impact of this active learning management approach was evaluated by assessing participants' performance through a pre-test, engagement in learning activities, and a post-test.

3.2 Participants

The study included 24 2nd-Grade students selected through cluster sampling from five classes within the participating school. Thailand, an English as a foreign

language (EFL) country with low English proficiency according to the English Proficiency Index (Education First, 2020), was the setting for this research. None of the participants had had prior experience abroad or attended international program schools. Ethical considerations regarding human research were meticulously observed in the treatment of the participants.

3.3 Instruments

3.3.1 *Active learning management plan for Grade 2 students*

This study employed a comprehensive active learning management plan aimed at enhancing reading literacy among 2nd-Grade students in Thailand. Developed based on effective classroom management principles, the plan detailed the rationale, objectives, timeline, activities, and assessment methods. It comprised six distinct lesson plans, each targeting specific aspects of reading literacy, such as story comprehension, understanding narratives, poems and songs, current events, and explanatory texts. The active learning approach embedded in the plan was designed to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment for eight-year-old students.

To achieve this, various instructional activities were incorporated, including game-based learning, interactive storytime, story swap, and comprehension puzzles. Prior to formal implementation, the plan was evaluated by a panel of three experts, including scholars and experienced educators. Additionally, a trial study involving participants with similar characteristics to the target group was conducted, with the results indicating the plan's suitability for implementation, achieving a mean score of 4.46. Insights gathered from this evaluation process ensured that the plan was well aligned with the educational needs and developmental stage of the students. Each of the learning activities is discussed below.

Game-based learning. Students participated in educational games that incorporated reading tasks. These games were designed to be fun and competitive, encouraging the students to read clues, follow story-based instructions, and solve problems collaboratively. For example, a treasure hunt game with written clues promoted reading comprehension and critical thinking, as students had to read carefully and think logically to advance in the game.

Interactive storytime. During interactive storytime, students gathered around as the teacher read aloud from a children's book. They were encouraged to ask questions, predict story outcomes, and discuss characters' motivations, which helped deepen their understanding of and engagement with the text. By involving them in the storytelling process – through asking predictive questions, discussing possible character emotions, and even suggesting alternative endings – the students became active participants rather than passive listeners. This not only made the stories more relatable and interesting but also encouraged deeper engagement with the text.

Story swap. In this activity, students were paired up to tell their favorite stories to one another. This exchange not only helped them practice recounting stories in their own words but also exposed them to different storytelling styles and plots,

enhancing their narrative skills. This peer-to-peer interaction also fostered social skills such as listening and taking turns. The variety of stories shared enriched their exposure to different themes and vocabularies, broadening their linguistic and cultural understanding.

Comprehension puzzles. Students worked on puzzles that required them to match text excerpts with corresponding images or to assemble a sequence of story events correctly. This activity aimed to reinforce their comprehension skills by making them think about the content and structure of the texts they read. Such activities appeal to kinesthetic learners and help solidify comprehension by making the abstract task of reading more concrete and visually accessible.

3.3.2 Reading literacy test

A reading literacy test was developed using a multiple-choice design consisting of 20 items. The test aimed to assess how well students could find key information, comprehend the text, and connect the text with their lives. The items were carefully evaluated for their alignment with the objectives (Index of Item Objective Congruence [IOC]: 0.67-1.0), their difficulty levels (0.26-0.72), and their discrimination (0.28-0.78). The reliability of the test, assessed using the Lovety Method, yielded a robust coefficient of 0.87, confirming its consistency and reliability. This comprehensive assessment tool was essential in measuring the effectiveness of the active learning management plan in enhancing the reading literacy of 2nd-Grade students as the participants of the study.

3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study utilized a one-group pre-and-post-test design during the first semester of the 2023 academic year to evaluate the effectiveness of an active learning management plan. The evaluation was based on two indicators: process effectiveness (E1), determined by the participants' average scores during activities, and product effectiveness (E2), assessed through post-test scores, both compared against a criterion of 75. To explore the relationship between post-test performance and initial proficiency, the Effectiveness Index (E.I.) was calculated. In detail, the E.I. is calculated by subtracting the sum of the pre-test scores from the sum of the post-test scores and dividing this difference by the product of the number of students and the maximum score, minus the sum of pre-test scores. This formula measures the improvement in students' performance from before to after the learning intervention. Additionally, a paired samples *t* test was conducted to determine significant differences between participants' pre- and post-test scores. This approach provided comprehensive insights into the impact of the active learning management plan on the reading literacy of 2nd-Grade students.

4. Findings

Table 1 presents the statistics on the effectiveness of the active learning management. The effectiveness of the learning management was evaluated by calculating the percentage of students' average scores in class activities (Process: E1) and the percentage of post-test scores (Product: E2), with a threshold of 75%. The findings reveal that students achieved an average score of 906.38 out

of a maximum of 948 points during the learning management activities, corresponding to 95.61% proficiency. Additionally, the average score on the post-test was 15.13, representing 75.63% of the maximum possible score of 20. The effectiveness of the active learning management approach in improving participants' reading literacy was calculated as 95.61/75.63 (E_1/E_2), surpassing the predetermined criterion of 75/75. These results indicate that active learning management significantly contributes to the development of reading literacy among students, both during the learning process and upon its completion.

Table 1: Effectiveness of the active learning management

Effectiveness	Maximum points	Sum	\bar{x}	%
Effectiveness of the process (E_1)	948	21,753	906.38	95.61
Effectiveness of the product (E_2)	20	363	15.13	75.63
Effectiveness of the active learning management (E_1/E_2) = 95.61/75.63				

Table 2 illustrates statistics on the E.I. of active learning management. The findings reveal that the initial assessment scores of the participants totaled 214, while their collective scores in the follow-up evaluation reached 363. Considering the test's maximum achievable score of 480, the computed E.I. for the active learning management plan stands at 0.56. This indicates a significant enhancement, with students demonstrating a notable improvement of 56% in their reading literacy.

Table 2: Effectiveness Index of active learning management

n	Pre-test	Sum	Post-test	E.I.
24	214		363	0.56

Table 3 presents a comparison between participants' pre-test and post-test scores. The mean score for the post-test ($\bar{x} = 15.13$, $SD = 3.05$) was significantly higher than the mean score for the pre-test ($\bar{x} = 8.92$, $SD = 1.95$). A paired samples t test revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, $t(23) = 10.37$, $p < .05$. This significant decrease in scores suggests that there was a notable change in the participants' performance from the pre-test to the post-test, indicating the impact of the intervention.

Table 3: Comparison between participants' pre- and post-test scores

Score	n	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Pre-test	24	8.92	1.95		
Post-test	24	15.13	3.05	10.37	.00**

* $p < 0.05$

5. Discussion

The results demonstrate that a combination of active learning activities effectively enhances students' reading literacy. This finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Çetinkaya et al., 2019; Ceyhan & Yıldız, 2021; Doniyarov, 2022; Dwigustini & Widiya, 2020; Gao et al., 2020; Intasena & Nuangchalem, 2022; Ştefana, 2023; Syahfutra & Niah, 2019; Yan & Cai, 2022) that have also reported the benefits of active learning in language education at primary school levels. These studies collectively emphasize that active learning strategies promote better engagement, comprehension, and retention of material among young learners.

Active learning is particularly effective for very young learners, such as the 2nd-Grade students participating in this study, due to their developmental stage. At this age, students are naturally curious and learn best through interactive and hands-on experiences (Elmetaher, 2021). Active learning activities cater to these needs by creating a dynamic and stimulating classroom environment. For example, an interactive story activity could involve students working in small groups to explore a story through role-playing. Each group could be assigned a different character or scene from the story and tasked with acting out their part while also identifying key information, such as the main idea or important details. After the role-playing, students could come together to discuss their interpretations and reflect on how their understanding of the story changed through the activity.

Engaging students in tasks that require them to find key information, comprehend texts, and reflect on what they have read makes learning more meaningful and enjoyable. This approach aligns well with young learners' cognitive and social development, fostering a deeper understanding and retention of reading materials (Fornari & Poznanski, 2021; Ştefana, 2023). The focus on key information gathering, text comprehension, and text reflection is crucial in developing reading literacy among young learners. Active learning strategies, such as interactive storytime, comprehension puzzles, and collaborative reading activities, help students practice these skills in a supportive and engaging setting (Elmetaher, 2021). For instance, participating in interactive storytime, students not only practice decoding and understanding texts but also learn to connect the material to their own experiences and reflect on its meaning. This comprehensive approach ensures that students develop a well-rounded set of reading skills that will serve as a strong foundation for their future academic success.

Therefore, it could be summarized that the implementation of active learning activities in the reading classroom for 2nd-Grade students significantly enhances their reading literacy. These findings highlight the importance of using interactive and student-centered teaching methods, particularly for young learners who benefit most from engaging in hands-on educational experiences. The positive impact on key information gathering, text comprehension, and text reflection underscores the effectiveness of active learning in promoting literacy skills among primary school students.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of employing a comprehensive active learning management plan in enhancing reading literacy among 2nd-Grade students in Thailand. Utilizing a one-group pre-and-post-test design, the study assessed participants' performance through a pre-test, engagement in active learning activities, and a post-test. The results showed significant improvements in students' reading literacy, indicating the positive impact of active learning strategies.

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of active learning in language classrooms at the primary school level. By incorporating various types of active learning activities—such as game-based learning, interactive storytime, story swaps, and comprehension puzzles—this research addresses a gap in previous studies, which often focused on a single type of activity. The findings provide robust support for the integration of diverse active learning strategies to enhance reading literacy, demonstrating their effectiveness in engaging young learners and improving their comprehension and critical thinking skills.

The implications of this study are significant for pedagogical practices. Educators are encouraged to adopt a variety of active learning activities to create a dynamic and stimulating learning environment. This approach not only keeps students engaged but also helps them develop essential reading skills. Future research should continue to explore the impact of different combinations of active learning activities and their long-term effects on reading literacy. Additionally, expanding the study to include a larger and more diverse sample, as well as incorporating qualitative data, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits and challenges of active learning in reading instruction.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings, and the lack of qualitative data prevents a deeper understanding of students' experiences and perceptions. Future studies should address these limitations by including larger, more diverse samples and integrating qualitative methods to capture a richer, more nuanced picture of the impact of active learning on reading literacy.

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