STUDY ON THE INTEGRATION OF SEMANTIC MAPPING AND SYSTEMATIC VOCABULARY RECORDING IN IMPROVING CRITICAL ENGLISH READING ABILITY

WIPADA PRASANSAPH

English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand
E-mail: prasansaphw@gmail.com

Abstract— This study integrates the use of semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording in teaching critical English reading to pre-service English teachers at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand. It aims to investigate how the integration of the two methods works in order to improve critical English reading ability. Four lesson plans on English reading texts at the undergraduate level have been used to teach thirty-six third-year English-major pre-service teachers in eight teaching periods. The per-test and post-testare used before and after the teaching. The opinion questionnaire is used after the teaching. The result shows that the participants' critical English reading score after learning through the integration of semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording is higher than that of before learning. The participants' opinion also indicates the'highest level' positive attitude towards the integration ofsemantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording.

Keywords— Semantic Mapping, Systematic Vocabulary Recording, Critical Reading, English Learning, English Teaching.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, English is taught in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context. Everybody knows the importance of English, but they do not have much opportunity to use the language, except in class in school. English reading skill needs to be improved among Thai learners because this is the way they can expand the opportunity of English language use.

For the undergraduates, English reading is even more important. The university students have to deal with English reading skill all the time e.g. searching for new knowledge, proving their ideas or sharing their perspectives to publics by critical reading and then writing. With this importance, the English reading learning is emphasized. However, according toSuknantapong, W., Karnchanathat, N, &Kannaovakun, P. (2002), though Thai students have positive attitudes towards reading and English reading, students' reading ability as a whole performs poorly.Thammongkol, K. (1994) investigates the problem of Thai learners' reading that they have reading problem from primary to tertiary level of their education. This is due to the limited knowledge on word order, tenses, agreements, connections, and punctuations. This knowledge comes from the reading practice. Beck; &McKeown (2006: 35-36) also reflects the learning reading activities that to study the meaning of words, read the texts and then do the exercises at the end of the lesson is not enough. By this way, the learners may not understand the whole text and the main point of the author critically. This way of learning English reading has been usually practiced in typical Thai classrooms. English language learners tend to just understand the meaning of each word and translate the sentences in order to answer the provided questions at the end of each lesson.

From the aforementioned problems, the solution must focus on the understanding of the vocabulary in context as well as seeing the overall idea of the author. By using the semantic mapping which emphasizes the understanding of the text organization as a whole, as well as the author's purpose, language learners will encounter the idea connection through various types of mapping. Semantic mapping, or is sometimes called "graphic organizer", refers to visual displays of key content information (Fisher and Schumaker, 1995) can help language learners organize the ideas while reading a text carefully. Moreover, learners also need to record their vocabulary in context, not just the separate word written in their notebook. The systematic vocabulary recording provides the learners to select their own important vocabulary and record the words in context.

In this study, the researcher integrates the two ways of teaching reading: semantic mapping and the systematic vocabulary recording to form another method for teaching critical English reading. The detail of the study will be discussed later in this article.

II. DETAILS OF THE STUDY

Four lessons have been planned for teaching critical reading to 36 third-year English-major pre-service teachers in the Faculty of Education, SuanSunandhaRajabhat University who enrolled the course EED3203 Critical Reading and Writing in English. Therefore, they are chosen by using purposive sampling. The study covers eight 150-minute periods in 8 weeks. By designing the teaching and learning activities, the researcher integrates the two ways of teaching reading: semantic mapping and the systematic vocabulary recording. The detail of

each and they are integrated will be described more below.

2.1. Semantic Mapping

Semantic mapping or is sometimes called "graphic organizer"refers to visual displays of key content information. It can be displayed in several forms such as concept maps, flow diagram or sequence chart, compare/contrast or Venn diagram, cause-and-effect diagram, main idea and details charts, attribute chart, and story map.

• A concept map is a general organizer that shows a central idea with its corresponding characteristics.

• A flow diagram or sequence chart shows a series of steps or events in the order in which they take place.

•A compare/contrast or Venn diagram is used to look at the similarities and differences between two or more concepts.

•A cause-and-effect diagram highlights the direct relationship between different events or concepts.

•A main idea and details chart shows the hierarchical relationship between major concepts and their subordinate elements.

•An attribute chart displays major concepts that share similar categories of information but include different details.

•A story map displays the main characteristics and elements of a piece of fiction. It usually includes space to note the characters, setting, problem, events, and solution of a given story.

Learners are asked to create semantic maps while they read the text in order to show their understanding of the text organization, the main idea and the supporting details.

2.2. Systematic Vocabulary Recording

Thirty-six participants of the study are required to make their own systematic vocabulary recording by deciding which words they want to know more. Then they start making the collection of vocabulary by following the given headings.

• Orthography: The participants or language learners write down the correct spelling of the target word they want to record three times to make sure they are able to memorize how the word is spelled correctly.

• Phonetic Symbols: The language learners write down the phonetic symbol of the word next to the orthography.

• Thai meaning: The Thai meaning is written under the orthography of the word.

• Related words: The language learners try to think of some words that they also think about when they see the target word. For example, if the target word is "consider", they may think of "think" or "determine".

• Figure: The language learners must draw any picture related to the meaning of the target word.

• The word seen from the sentence in the text: The language learners copy the sentence that they have seen the target word in.

• The word in a new sentence: The language learners try to create their own sentence using the target word.

The participants can design their own systematic vocabulary records according their creative ideas.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show how the systematic vocabulary records look like.

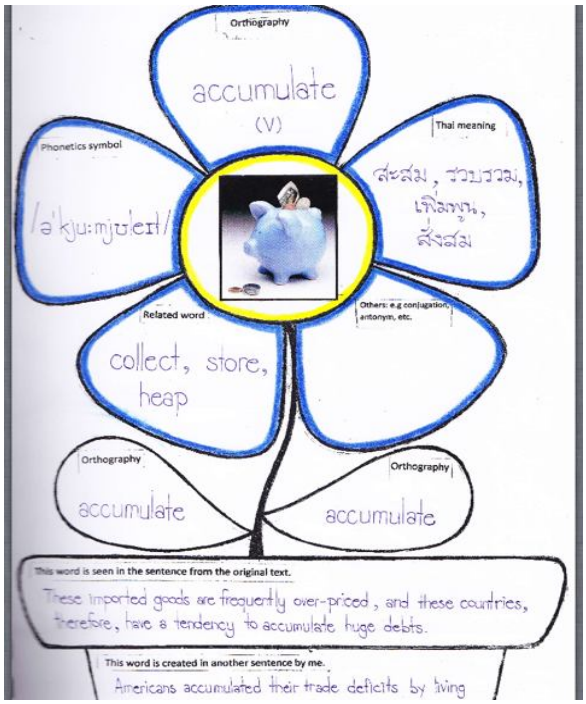


Figure1: Systematic Vocabulary Record 1

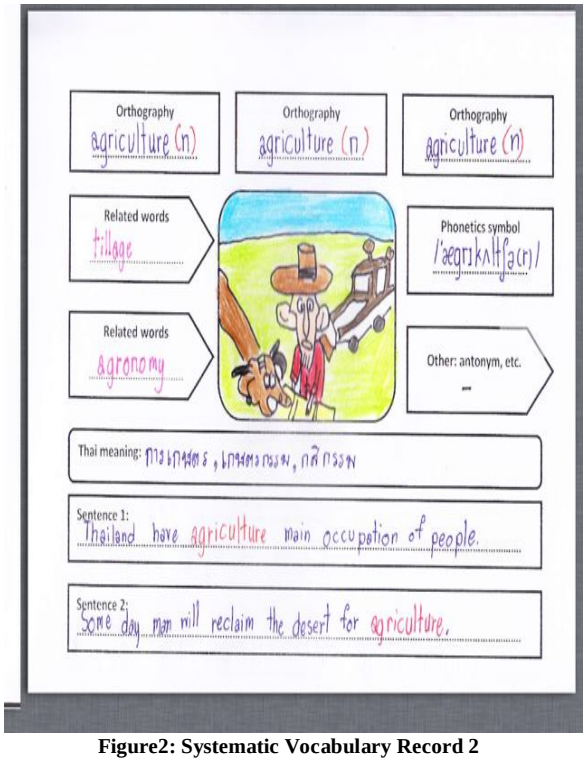


Figure2: Systematic Vocabulary Record 2

2.3. The Integration of Semantic Mapping and Systematic Vocabulary recording

The integration is designed to be a procedure of teaching reading activities that cover the four lesson plans namely Homeschooling and Higher Education, Current Wisdom: Balance The Internal and External Motivation methods, Myths and Misconceptions in Second Language Learning, and Fame in Foreign Language: Joseph Conrad. The procedure covers three stages: Pre-reading Activities, While-reading Activities, and Post-reading Activities.

• Pre-reading Activities: This stage includes the previewing and prediction of the text before the learners start reading. After that, the teaching of necessary vocabulary is started, followed by the teaching of semantic mapping. In this stage of each lesson plan, the different semantic mapping types are introduced.

• While-reading Activities: In this stage, the learners are allowed to read through the text silently. Then, they are divided into groups of 3-4 in order to make their own semantic map of the reading text. They are asked to present their semantic maps in front of the class. By doing this, they learn the idea of reading comprehension and critical reading from one another.

• Post-reading Activities: The learners are asked to make their own collection of systematic vocabulary recording. They finally record around 80-100 words in their own list with the clear understanding of how to spell, how to pronounce, what the meanings are, what the meaning in the context they have read is, and how to use the word in their own sentence.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The statistics used in this study are mean, standard deviation and paired t-test, independent group.The result shows that the participants' critical English reading score after learning through the integration of semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording (20.36) is higher than that of before learning (10.18).(Table 1) The participants' opinion also indicates the positive attitude towards the integration ofsemantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recordingafter the learning procedure. (Table 2)The average score of opinion is 4.59, showing the most agreeable level of opinion towards the integration ofsemantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording in teaching critical English reading.

Table 1Critical English reading score before and after learning through the integration of semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording

	N	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t
Before	36	10.18	2.08	-15.33
After	36	20.36	3.78	

Table 2 The participants' opinion after the learning procedure.

Opinion	Score
1. I enjoy learning in class making semantic maps when reading various texts.	4.55
2. I enjoy recording vocabulary according to the system that the teacher assigns.	4.69
3. I agree that integrating semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording is an effective way of learning reading.	4.69
4. I hope that the integration helps retain my vocabulary memory.	4.72
5. The integration helps me organize my idea when reading various types of texts.	4.55
6. I involve my schemata in the learning procedure which helps me understand the texts better.	4.44
7. The group discussion in order to produce the semantic maps helps me understand the texts better.	4.58
8. I am able to understand the meaning of the text better when I integrate semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording.	4.42
9. I understand the author's purpose better when I integrate semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording.	4.53
10. I can adapt the integration of semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording in my other subjects study.	4.72
Average	4.59

CONCLUSIONS

This study has proven the integration of semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording in teaching critical English reading that the participants' critical English reading ability after learning is higher than that of before learning. Also, the participants' opinion indicates the 'highest level' positive attitude towards the integration of semantic mapping and systematic vocabulary recording. In the procedure of learning through semantic mapping, learners practice systematic thinking in which they transfer their reading comprehension in the form of semantic maps. In the while-reading stage that they discuss how to make a semantic map in their group, and also how to present their map to the class, they need to organize their ideas and speech. Group working skills are also involved. Moreover, post-reading stage requires learners' self-discipline and creative thinking in order to create the systematic vocabulary records successfully.

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