# ปัญหาและข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการ: เสียงสะท้อนจากนักศึกษาคณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์วิทยาเขตปัตตานี

# Problems and Suggestions to Improve English Academic Reading Course: Voices from Humanities and Social Sciences Students at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus

ธันย์ชนก พรมบุตร[1*]

Tanchanok Prombut[1*]

[1] สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ จังหวัดปัตตานี 94000

[1] English Language Programme, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani 94000

[*] Corresponding author: tanchanok.p@psu.ac.th

**บทคัดย่อ**

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์หลัก 2 ประการ 1) เพื่อศึกษาปัญหาที่มีต่อการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการของนักศึกษาคณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตปัตตานี และ 2) เพื่อสำรวจข้อคิดเห็นและข้อเสนอแนะของนักศึกษาที่มีต่อปัญหาการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการ การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีกลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 103 คน เก็บข้อมูลจาก 2 แหล่งข้อมูล 1) แบบสอบถาม 78 คน และ 2) การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก 25 คน การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล

เชิงสถิติที่ได้จากแบบสอบถามโดยใช้วิธีหาค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน พบว่า นักศึกษา
คาดหวังให้มีการเพิ่มการเรียนการสอนเนื้อหารายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษมากขึ้น ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62,
SD= 0.78) นักศึกษาไม่เข้าใจโครงสร้างไวยากรณ์ภาษาอังกฤษ ($\bar{x}$ = 3.49, SD = 0.81)  สมรรถนะ
ในการสอนของอาจารย์มีผลกับความต้องการในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษา ($\bar{x}$ = 3.42,
SD = 0.80) และนักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ไม่เข้าใจเนื้อหาภาษาอังกฤษที่อ่าน ($\bar{x}$ = 3.29,
SD = 0.73)  นอกจากนี้ การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลที่ได้จากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกแสดงให้เห็นว่า
นักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่ยอมรับว่า ไม่ชอบและไม่มั่นใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ อย่างไรก็ตาม
นักศึกษาตระหนักถึงความสำคัญของภาษาอังกฤษและต้องการที่จะเรียนภาษาอังกฤษมากขึ้น
รวมถึงแนะนำให้ผู้สอนเน้นการจัดกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้ที่หลากหลายมากกว่าการสอนบรรยาย
เพียงอย่างเดียว

งานวิจัยนี้มีความแตกต่างจากงานวิจัยอื่น ๆ ตรงที่งานวิจัยนี้เน้นการสำรวจปัญหาและ
ความต้องการของผู้เรียน และเนื่องจากภูมิหลังของประชากรส่วนใหญ่เป็นประชากรในจังหวัด
ชายแดนภาคใต้ซึ่งมีปัจจัยที่อาจส่งผลต่อผลสัมฤทธิ์ทางการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ ดังนั้น
การสะท้อนปัญหาและความต้องการของผู้เรียนกลุ่มนี้จะทำให้ทราบถึงสาเหตุและที่มาของ
ปัญหา รวมทั้งเป็นแนวทางในการจัดการเรียนการสอนที่ส่งเสริมศักยภาพในการอ่าน
ภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการของผู้เรียนได้ตรงจุดและมีประสิทธิภาพมากขึ้น

**คำสำคัญ:** ปัญหาการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ  ผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษชาวไทย  เสียงสะท้อนและ
คำแนะนำจากผู้เรียน  การอ่านภาษาอังกฤษเชิงวิชาการ

## Abstract

This study aims to accomplish two main objectives: 1) to explore the English academic
reading challenges encountered by students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, and 2) to provide insights from students to
address and overcome these reading challenges. The study involved a total of 103 participants,
comprising 78 respondents who completed questionnaires and 25 respondents who
participated in interviews. Data analysis from questionnaires revealed significant findings:
participants highlighted the importance of increased English content ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62, SD = 0.78),
challenges in grammar comprehension ($\bar{x}$ = 3.49, SD = 0.81), the critical role of effective

teaching methods in fostering motivation for learning ($\bar{x}$ = 3.42, SD = 0.80), and difficulties in English comprehension ($\bar{x}$ = 3.29, SD = 0.73). The data analysis from in–depth interviews with students indicates that most students admit to disliking and lacking confidence in learning English, a problem that has persisted since before entering university. However, students are aware of the importance of the English language and express a desire to learn it more. Additionally, they suggest that instructors focus on applying teaching techniques that emphasise a variety of learning activities. They requested greater integration of active learning techniques, rather than solely relying on lectures.

This research stands apart from others as it focuses on investigating the issues and requirements of learners. Moreover, given the predominantly border region population sample, numerous factors may influence learning outcomes. Thus, addressing the concerns and needs of this demographic will aid in pinpointing the causes and origins of challenges and serve as a roadmap for enhancing English academic reading proficiency both effectively and efficiently. By identifying factors impacting academic achievement, it offers insights for devising effective teaching and learning strategies, ultimately bolstering students' English academic reading abilities.

**Keywords:** English Reading Problem, Thai Learners of English, Learners' Voices and Suggestion, English Academic Reading

## Introduction

English has evolved into the global lingua franca (Smokotin et al., 2014), facilitating cross–cultural communication and playing a central role in fields such as information technology, economics, trade, and international finance (Dewey & Jenkins, 2010). It is also essential for social and human development, medical practice, and education. Consequently, the significance of attaining proficiency in English cannot be overstated, particularly in today's era of rapid and convenient communication (Mauranen, 2015). In the realm of education, English offers significant advantages to students by granting access to up–to–date information, as many educational resources, including teaching materials, research articles, and scholarly journals,

are primarily available in English. Thus, the ability to comprehend English academic is vital for contemporary learners, enabling them to tap into information from various English-language sources (Knapp, 2015). Moreover, in higher education, the importance of English is continually increasing. It transcends local knowledge and aims to align with global trends, equipping students with the skills necessary to both acquire and contribute to the evolving body of knowledge in their respective fields (Sitthitikul, 2014). Therefore, English proficiency is paramount for both learners and the educational system (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000). Additionally, Carroll (1963), as cited in Sitthitikul (2014), proposed that student learning hinges on three key factors: (a) the attributes of the learner, (b) the amount of time devoted to learning and the objectives, and (c) the quality of instruction. Among these factors, the quality of instruction emerges as the most influential in shaping learning outcomes.

The Bachelor of Arts Programme in English at Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus plays a pivotal role in providing English instruction to undergraduate students. Notably, the " English Academic Reading" course stands out as a mandatory core subject for students across various majors, excluding those specialising in English. This aspect, observed by the researcher who also served as the instructor, is inherently intrigued due to its direct impact on student learning outcomes. It is noteworthy that all students enrolled in the 'English Academic Reading' course were non-English majors, with the majority having a lower level of English proficiency.

Based on the researcher's four-semester teaching experience in this course, it became apparent that many students encountered challenges in their English academic reading skills. Only a limited percentage (16%) managed to achieve scores in the "Good" range. Moreover, academic performance data indicates that a significant proportion of students scored between 40 and 56 points. Specifically, in January 2019, 53 percent of students fell within this range, and in February 2020, a similar percentage (56%) achieved comparable scores. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and instructional strategies to enhance English academic reading proficiency among non-English major students at the university.

In instructing the English Academic Reading course, the researcher has witnessed a multitude of obstacles encountered by students, including struggles with comprehending

English articles, grasping lesson materials, addressing questions about readings, and limited proficiency in English grammar and vocabulary. Smith (2018) and Johnson et al. (2020) have underscored significant barriers faced by non-native English learners during the language acquisition journey, citing issues such as cultural differences, lack of exposure to authentic language use, and challenges in adapting to new linguistic structures. These investigations underscore the intricate nature of English language acquisition, influenced by socio-cultural aspects like language exposure and immersion (García, 2016), as well as individual learner characteristics such as motivation and prior language learning experiences (Gardner, 2001; Dörnyei, 2005). Moreover, instructional techniques and resources are pivotal in the efficacy of English language instruction, with studies by Ellis (2008) and Richards & Rodgers (2014) emphasising the importance of employing varied teaching methods and incorporating authentic materials to facilitate language learning.

Therefore, a holistic comprehension of these diverse factors is essential for formulating strategies to improve English language learning outcomes among non-native speakers. This includes creating a supportive learning environment that encourages language practice and fosters cultural understanding, as well as implementing tailored instructional approaches that address the specific needs and challenges of diverse learner groups.

Several studies delving into the challenges faced by Thai English learners have demonstrated that the effectiveness of English language acquisition is influenced by various factors (Srikrai et al., 2016; Thamajaree & Sa-ngiamwibool, 2014; Thongwichit, 2018). These findings underscore the multitude of obstacles encountered by Thai learners, ranging from differences in language structure and pronunciation to socio-economic factors affecting access to quality language education. It is also crucial to consider regional disparities within Thailand, such as the research conducted by Hayikaleng et al. (2016), which pinpointed a lack of motivation among Thai students in the Pattani province, situated in the southern part of Thailand, regarding the learning of English as a foreign language. This highlights the importance of localised approaches and targeted interventions to address specific challenges faced by learners in different regions.

Therefore, the researcher emphasises the significance of conducting research to delve into the issues and learning needs tied to the English Academic Reading course. The aim is to uncover the underlying causes of these challenges and grasp students' precise requirements within the realm of English academic reading. The insights gleaned from this research can subsequently be leveraged to improve and fine-tune the teaching and learning approaches utilised in English Academic Reading classes, ultimately bolstering students' proficiency in English reading. This proactive approach ensures that instructional strategies are tailored to address the specific difficulties encountered by students, leading to more effective learning outcomes in the long run.

Acknowledging the numerous research studies that have investigated English reading challenges among Thai students in various contexts (Akkakoson & Setobol, 2009; Anuyahong, 2018; Boonkongsaen et al., 2016; Chomphuchart, 2007; Degang, 2010; Kasemsap & Lee, 2015; Liangpanit, 2018), this study stands out by addressing a critical issue: the barriers encountered by a specific demographic in academic English reading. The research focuses on students enrolled in the Academic English Reading course within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus. Its objectives are to explore the English academic reading challenges encountered by students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus and to provide insights from students to address and overcome these reading challenges.

It is crucial to note that many students at Prince of Songkla University Pattani campus originate from Pondok schools, where religious studies hold primacy. This aspect is significant as it may indicate differing English academic backgrounds among participants compared to students at other universities. Moreover, due to various factors, including the unrest situation in the region, there was a scarcity of native English speakers willing to work under such circumstances. Consequently, students in the area have had fewer opportunities to immerse themselves in an authentic English language environment, which could potentially impact their English language proficiency and academic performance. These contextual nuances underscore the importance of exploring and addressing the specific challenges faced by students in this academic setting.

The researcher anticipates that this study will offer valuable insights into the challenges and learning requirements of this specific group, which constitutes the primary objective of the research. This knowledge stands to benefit not only the researcher but also all stakeholders engaged in tackling these educational hurdles. By gaining a deeper understanding of the unique difficulties faced by students in this demographic, educators, policymakers, and administrators can develop targeted interventions and educational strategies aimed at enhancing academic outcomes and fostering student success. Additionally, the findings of this study may contribute to the broader discourse on English language education in similar contexts, thereby potentially informing future research endeavours and policy decisions aimed at improving educational equity and inclusivity.

## Objectives

1. Investigate the reading difficulties experienced by students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus.

2. Present insights from students on ways to address and solve the reading challenges experienced by students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus.

## Scope of the study

The study focuses on students enrolled in the English Academic Reading course at Prince of Songkla University Pattani Campus, totaling 200 individuals. The study then outlined the following hypothesis: students experienced difficulties in reading English academic texts. Utilising a selective sampling technique, 103 students were chosen from this population, all of whom were enrolled in the researcher's class. Out of these, 78 students were selected for questionnaire responses, while 25 were chosen for interviews. These samples were specifically drawn from students who scored below the average points in their academic performance. To ensure impartiality, a research assistant supervised the data collection process, thereby reducing any potential conflicts of interest between the researcher and the students in

the classes. This thorough approach aimed to uphold the integrity and objectivity of the research findings by mitigating biases in the selection process.

## Research Methodology

The study was built upon several core assumptions (Liangpanit, 2018; Hayikaleng et al., 2016; Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008; Aegpongpaow, 2008), which encompassed various factors believed to have affected students' development of English language skills. These factors involved students' existing knowledge, their proficiency in understanding English, the impact of teachers, along with external elements like familial encouragement, motivation, requirement, and the unique interests of individual learners.

## Methodology

To achieve the research objectives, a mixed–methods approach was utilised, combining structured questionnaires with in–depth interviews. This methodological strategy provides the advantage of potentially offering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Almalki, 2016). The primary goal of this methodological choice is to provide a thorough insight into the challenges encountered in English Academic Reading from the perspective of students. The research design and questions, both for questionnaires and interview were cross–checked by three specialists for research validity and reliability were resulting in an IOC range of 0.80–1.00. It is noteworthy that both the questionnaire and interview questions were formulated and collected in Thai to mitigate potential misunderstandings and language barriers. Subsequently, during data analysis, they were translated into English. In addition, this research has been underwent the process of research ethics and was granted the REC Number of psu.pn.2–011/64

**Structured Questionnaires:**

The primary method utilised for quantitative data collection was the administration of structured questionnaires, organised into four sections. Initially, these questions were formulated, presented and collected in the Thai language, before being translated into English for further analysis.

Basic information about participants, such as their age, homeland, field of study, and how long they have been studying English, was collected. Challenges in general English reading were investigated, covering comprehension issues, preferences for English, past negative experiences, vocabulary difficulties, and problems with sentence structure and grammar. Factors contributing to these difficulties, like participants' English proficiency before university and family influences on language learning, were examined. Teaching and learning aspects related to English Academic Reading were also assessed, including the relevance of content and how effectively instructors help students understand and enjoy reading in English.

**In-Depth Interviews:**

In addition to the structured questionnaires, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with a selected group of twenty-five students. These interviews were constructed in Thai, aimed to gather qualitative insights into the students' perceptions, experiences, and recommendations regarding English Academic Reading. The objective was to delve deeper into the challenges and potential solutions from the participants' perspective.

To mitigate any potential pressure, an assistant researcher was assigned to conduct these interviews. Each session lasted approximately 5-10 minutes per participant. It's important to note that the interviews were conducted in the Thai language for effective communication. The selected participants were chosen selectively based on their performance in a pre-test.

Data collected through both structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews were analysed and interpreted, forming the basis for subsequent discussions and conclusions in this research.

## Results

### Structured Questionnaires' findings

Based on the results obtained from the questionnaires, it has been observed that students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences encounter reading difficulties, consistent with the research hypotheses. Table 1 displays the questionnaire items along with the corresponding agreement indicators: 1 – Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neither agree nor disagree, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly agree. The data is also presented in terms of the mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD).

Table1. Structured Questionnaires' findings

| Problems with reading English in general | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  I usually do not understand the reading text. | 3.8 | 2.6 | 62.8 | 25.6 | 5.1 | 3.29 | 0.73 |
| 2.  I don't like studying English. | 9 | 21.8 | 41 | 19.2 | 9 | 2.99 | 1.08 |
| 3.  In the past, I have had a bad experience learning English. | 6.4 | 3.08 | 38.5 | 16.7 | 7.7 | 2.89 | 1.03 |
| 4.  I don't understand the words, vocabulary when reading English academic. | 1.3 | 11.5 | 47.4 | 34.6 | 5.1 | 3.26 | 0.75 |
| 5.  I don't understand English sentence structure or grammar. | 2.6 | 6.4 | 34.6 | 50 | 6.4 | 3.49 | 0.81 |
| | | | | | | 3.18 | 0.88 |
| **Personal Factors Affecting Reading English** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
| 1.  I like reading in English | 9 | 6.4 | 50 | 21.8 | 12.8 | 3.24 | 1.02 |

| Personal Factors Affecting Reading English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.  I like reading English from various media such as newspapers, the internet, etc. | 6.4 | 39.7 | 33.3 | 19.2 | 1.3 | 2.72 | 0.89 |
| 3.  I realise that reading English well is very beneficial to me. | 1.3 | 11.5 | 20.5 | 33.3 | 33.3 | 3.89 | 1.04 |
| 4.  I can apply my knowledge when reading English. | 0 | 26.5 | 50 | 16.7 | 6.4 | 3.04 | 0.84 |
| **Personal Factors Affecting Reading English (cont'd)** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
| 5.  When I encounter problems reading English, I can use reading techniques to understand the reading material. | 2.6 | 26.9 | 50 | 16.7 | 3.8 | 2.95 | 0.83 |
| 6.  When I read English documents, I always use a translation application to translate for me. | 0 | 2.6 | 26.9 | 43.6 | 26.9 | 3.92 | 0.80 |
| 7.  I often get bored when reading content in English, whether it is the content of the English subject or the content of my main area of study. | 2.6 | 25.6 | 37.2 | 26.9 | 7.7 | 3.07 | 0.93 |
| 8.  I think studying English is difficult and boring. | 3.8 | 32.1 | 4.1 | 16.7 | 6.4 | 2.89 | 0.96 |

| Personal Factors Affecting Reading English (cont'd) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. I think that my future career may not require as much English as it should. | 3.8 | 7.7 | 19.2 | 43.6 | 3.8 | 2.20 | 1.05 |
| 10. I think that knowing other languages such as Malay, or Arabic is more useful than English. | 10.3 | 41 | 38.5 | 9 | 1.3 | 2.51 | 0.86 |
| 11. I often spend my free time with various entertainment rather than spending time reading books. | 0 | 2.6 | 14.1 | 47.4 | 35.9 | 4.16 | 0.77 |
| | | | | | | 3.14 | 0.91 |
| **Environmental Factors Affecting Reading English** | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
| 1. Before starting university, my prior English knowledge and skills were sufficient. | 7.7 | 37.2 | 51.3 | 3.8 | 0 | 2.54 | 0.68 |
| 2. I love reading books (any language) | 3.8 | 33.3 | 53.8 | 7.7 | 1.3 | 2.68 | 0.73 |
| 3. My family members have been encouraging me to read since I was young. | 7.7 | 32.1 | 37.2 | 17.9 | 5.1 | 2.83 | 1.00 |
| 4. My family members are strict and request that I read regularly. | 7.7 | 52.6 | 29.5 | 6.4 | 3.8 | 2.47 | 0.89 |

| Environmental Factors Affecting Reading English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. My family members provide support and encouragement for me to read English books. | 6.4 | 39.7 | 35.9 | 15.4 | 2.6 | 2.72 | 0.87 |
| 6. My family members recognise the advantages of English and frequently encourage me to engage in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. | 7.7 | 38.5 | 42.3 | 7.7 | 3.8 | 2.63 | 0.89 |

| Environmental Factors Affecting Reading English (cont'd) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. My family members believed that using languages other than English (such as Malay and Arabic) was more advantageous and regularly supported and encouraged me to utilise those languages. | 16.7 | 35.9 | 37.2 | 9 | 1.3 | 2.43 | 0.93 |
| 8. My family members are interested in my English learning, particularly my performance in English test scores. | 12.8 | 41 | 34.6 | 7.7 | 3.8 | 2.49 | 0.96 |
| | | | | | | 2.60 | 0.87 |

| Teaching and learning factors affecting reading English | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | $\bar{x}$ | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. In my opinion, there should be an increase in the number of English reading courses included in the curriculum. | 0 | 5.1 | 43.6 | 37.2 | 14.1 | 3.62 | 0.78 |
| 2. In my opinion, the English reading materials covered in the curriculum have practical applications. | 0 | 5.1 | 19.2 | 42.3 | 33.3 | 4.05 | 0.83 |
| 3. In my opinion, the teaching-learning activities in the English Academic reading course are not interesting. | 1.3 | 39.7 | 46.2 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 2.72 | 0.74 |
| 4. Currently, teachers employ effective teaching techniques that enable me to comprehend and foster a passion for reading in English. | 2.6 | 6.4 | 42.3 | 43.6 | 5.1 | 3.42 | 0.80 |
| | | | | | | 3.45 | 0.79 |

### In-depth interview's findings

In addition to the quantitative data gathered through the questionnaires, the in-depth interviews have provided valuable insights and perspectives that have enriched the study. The researcher conducted interviews with a total of twenty-five participants, addressing their challenges in studying English Academic Reading and soliciting their suggestions for enhancing teaching and learning in this field. To maintain confidentiality, the student's names are not disclosed. A summary of a sample of the interview results is provided below:

One of the interviewees expressed their challenges in learning English, stating, *"Because I am from a rural area and had limited exposure to English, I lacked a strong foundation. When I entered university, I found it challenging because I had little prior knowledge about English. It was unfamiliar to me"* (Student A. from Narathiwat)

Another interviewee highlighted their concerns related to the instructor's teaching style, stating, *"Most of the problems I encounter are related to the instructor. Sometimes, the instructor teaches too quickly and moves on without checking if I understand. When I don't understand, I feel discouraged and lose motivation to study. My suggestion is for the teacher to teach more intentionally and incorporate activities during the class"* (Student B. from Pattani)

One interviewee shared his perspective, saying, *"Personally, I have a strong liking for English, but I struggle with grammar. When I have to study grammar, my enthusiasm diminishes because it is challenging. I believe that Thai education tends to place more emphasis on grammar than practical application. I genuinely wish that teachers would prioritise practical usage over grammar"* (Student C. from Pattani)

One of the participants expressed her enthusiasm for studying English but acknowledged their limited basic knowledge and vocabulary. They also mentioned their struggle with using unfamiliar English structures. Their suggestion was straightforward: *"I'd like the teacher to start with the basics. I'm willing to put in the effort."* (Student D. from Songkhla)

One participant (Student E) shared her educational background, stating, *"I graduated from a Pondok with a focus on religious studies, which didn't place much emphasis on general subjects. Some of the teachers who came to teach us were graduates from other faculties. However, when it comes to learning English, I feel that I couldn't progress as I should have. I lack basic knowledge, and even simple words are unfamiliar to me. I constantly rely on Google Translate. This deficiency in English has been with me since elementary school through high school. In this course, I find the vocabulary very challenging, and even with common words, I struggle with understanding complex ones. I don't even want to mention them; they are just too difficult for me."* On the other

*hand, the participant expressed appreciation for her teacher, saying, "In terms of my feelings towards the teacher, I always tell my friends that I get along very well with the teacher. The teacher understands the students deeply. The teaching strategies are engaging, ensuring that the lessons are not boring, and the teacher genuinely cares about the students. For instance, the teacher noticed that some students were scoring poorly on exams and wanted to understand the reasons behind it."* (Student E from Pattani)

Student F. from Yala offered several recommendations based on her experience. She suggested that before delving into content, it would be beneficial to assess students' English basics. Emphasising vocabulary enrichment is key to expanding students' word knowledge. She also advised incorporating regular reading–aloud practice and ensuring that students are encouraged to ask questions and engage in discussions after every class to enhance their understanding.

The student G. from Pattani offered thoughtful recommendations, emphasising the need for additional subjects related to English to accommodate a broader spectrum of students interested in learning the language. He stressed the importance of not limiting opportunities for students. To enhance the learning experience, he suggested incorporating activities into minor subjects to boost students' motivation. Additionally, the participant expressed a strong desire for the university to consider bringing in foreign teachers to provide students with valuable international teaching experiences.

## Conclusion and Discussion

The study aimed to achieve two primary objectives: 1) to investigate the English academic reading challenges faced by students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus, and 2) to gather insights from students to address and overcome these reading challenges. The study posited the following hypothesis: students face difficulties in English academic reading. In conclusion, the findings of the study underscored the significant challenges students encountered in their efforts to improve their English academic reading skills. Both the questionnaire and interview result consistently highlighted the various obstacles students faced in this endeavour. Notably,

a substantial proportion of students struggled with understanding English sentence structures ($\bar{x}$ = 3.49, SD = 0.81), and a significant number had difficulty comprehending English reading materials ($\bar{x}$ = 3.29, SD = 0.73). Additionally, most students expressed difficulties in vocabulary comprehension ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26, SD = 0.75). These findings confirmed the prevalence of challenges in students' English academic reading endeavours, thus supporting the research hypothesis. Moreover, besides the challenges students face in studying English, they also provided suggestions regarding English academic studies. Most students acknowledged the benefits of proficient English reading ($\bar{x}$ = 3.89, SD = 1.04). Additionally, they recommended an increase in the number of English reading courses included in the curriculum ($\bar{x}$ = 3.62, SD = 0.78). The recommendations offered valuable insights from students enrolled in English Academic Reading courses, as detailed below.

### 1. Challenges in English Academic Reading

Based on the findings, the questionnaire unveiled that most participants encountered challenges in English reading. Table 1 illustrated various difficulties students faced.

Teaching and learning factors played significant roles in studying English academic reading, with a mean score of 3.45. Students suggested that English reading material should have practical applications (mean score of 4.05) and advocated for an increase in the number of English reading courses (mean score of 3.62). Additionally, students revealed that teachers currently employ effective teaching techniques that help them comprehend and foster a passion for reading in English, with a mean score of 3.42.

Specifically, the mean score for 'Problems with reading English in general' was 3.18, indicating a significant struggle. Additionally, students expressed issues with understanding English sentence structure or grammar, evidenced by a mean score of 3.49. Comprehending English reading texts was also notably challenging, with a mean score of 3.29. Furthermore, students found it difficult to understand words and vocabulary when reading English academic texts, as indicated by a mean score of 3.26.

The mean score for 'Personal Factors Affecting Reading English' was 3.14, suggesting personal factors played a role. Students often spent their free time engaging in various entertainment activities rather than reading books, as indicated by a mean score of

4.16. Moreover, they frequently relied on translation applications when reading English documents, as indicated by a mean score of 3.92. Additionally, they recognised the benefits of reading English well, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.89.

The mean score for 'Environmental Factors Affecting Reading English' was 2.60, indicating limited influence from family members or peers. Prior to university, students lacked sufficient English knowledge and skills, with a mean score of 2.54.

In summary, these challenges included difficulties in understanding English reading materials, a lack of enthusiasm for the subject, negative past experiences, complex English vocabulary, and struggles with English sentence structures. Although participants recognised the potential benefits of proficient English reading, they encountered obstacles in applying reading techniques, often resorting to Google Translate for help. Additionally, most participants highlighted the importance of incorporating more English reading courses into the curriculum. They also emphasised the significant impact of teachers' instructional methods on their motivation to learn English.

**2. Insights from Students on Enhancing the English Academic Reading Course**

According to the insights gathered from in-depth interviews with the participants, several suggestions were highlighted:

1. English Background: Many students revealed that they lacked a strong foundation in English and found English studies challenging. They expressed a lack of confidence, and some even admitted to being afraid of all English courses. The issues they faced ranged from difficulties with English grammar to vocabulary.

2. Teacher's Teaching Style: Several interviewees reflected on their instructors' teaching methods, noting that some teachers taught too quickly and moved on without checking if students understood the material. This approach left them feeling discouraged and demotivated to continue studying.

3. Student's Educational Background: Most students mentioned that their educational background differed from the mainstream. Many graduated from Pondok schools, which focused primarily on religious studies. Consequently, when it came to learning

English, they struggled to progress due to a lack of basic knowledge, making even simple words unfamiliar to them.

4. Pre and Post Evaluation: Some participants suggested that it would be beneficial to assess students' English proficiency before diving into the course content. They stressed the importance of vocabulary enrichment to expand students' word knowledge. Additionally, they recommended incorporating regular reading-aloud practice and encouraging students to ask questions and engage in discussions after each class to enhance their understanding.

5. Additional English-related Courses: Several students highlighted the need for additional subjects related to English to cater to a wider range of students interested in learning the language. Additionally, they expressed a strong desire for the university to consider bringing in foreign teachers to provide students with valuable international teaching experiences.

In summary, insights from the in-depth interviews revealed that many participants had, to some extent, the negative experiences with English study. These experiences, largely shaped by their teachers, led to a strong aversion towards the English language and related subjects. Additionally, most students admitted to struggling with basic aspects of English grammar, syntax, and vocabulary, which continued into their current academic pursuits. However, they proposed several solutions to address these challenges, including pre-tests to gauge proficiency levels and creative extracurricular activities to enhance learning effectiveness. Moreover, many students suggested incorporating regular reading aloud sessions and encouraging active participation in discussions to deepen understanding. Furthermore, participants stressed the importance of personalised feedback from teachers to address individual learning needs and improve overall English language proficiency.

### Suggestion and Recommendations for Applying Research Findings

Based on the findings of this research, there is significant potential for educators teaching English academic subjects, especially to non-native English speakers, to benefit from the insights provided by students. The recommendations made by students, particularly the suggestion to incorporate reading aloud activities in the classroom, offer promising avenues for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. This recommendation

is consistent with previous research conducted by Ninsuwan (2015), which demonstrated the effectiveness of the reading aloud technique in English language teaching. Therefore, educators may consider adopting this approach to create more dynamic and interactive learning environments conducive to improving English language proficiency among students.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Future research endeavours could delve into other dimensions of English language learning, such as English sentence structure, vocabulary acquisition, and sentence patterns. By investigating these areas, researchers can gain a more holistic understanding of the challenges encountered by students across different aspects of English language acquisition. This expanded scope of inquiry would contribute to the development of more targeted interventions and instructional strategies aimed at addressing students' diverse learning needs in English language education.

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