

ผลการใช้วิธีการสอนแบบแผนภาพโครงเรื่องเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ ของนักเรียนชั้นประถมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

Effects of Story Maps on Reading Comprehension Skill Improvement of Thai EFL Sixth Graders

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลการใช้วิธีการสอนแบบแผนภาพโครงเรื่องในการพัฒนาทักษะการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนชั้นประถมศึกษาปีที่ 6 ที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ และเพื่อศึกษาเจตคติของนักเรียนที่มีต่อวิธีการสอนแบบแผนภาพโครงเรื่องในการพัฒนาทักษะการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ โดยวิธีการสอนแบบแผนภาพโครงเรื่องดังกล่าวมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อพัฒนาการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนในประเภทเรื่องเล่า ที่ระดับความเข้าใจความหมายตามตัวอักษร กลุ่มตัวอย่าง คือ นักเรียนชั้นประถมศึกษาปีที่ 6 โรงเรียนขยายโอกาสทางการศึกษาแห่งหนึ่ง ในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ ประเทศไทย จำนวน 13 คน การดำเนินการวิจัยใช้เวลาทั้งสิ้น 8 สัปดาห์ โดยมีการเรียนการสอนจำนวน 2 ชั่วโมงต่อสัปดาห์ เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลวิจัยประกอบด้วย แบบทดสอบผลสัมฤทธิ์ด้านการอ่านภาษาอังกฤษ เพื่อความเข้าใจก่อนและหลังเรียน และแบบสอบถามวัดเจตคติของนักเรียน ผลการวิจัย พบว่าผลสัมฤทธิ์ด้านทักษะการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจของนักเรียนในประเภทเรื่องเล่า มีความแตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.01 หลังจากการใช้วิธีการสอนแบบแผนภาพโครงเรื่องในการพัฒนาทักษะการอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่าผู้เรียนมีเจตคติที่ดีต่อวิธีการสอนแบบแผนภาพโครงเรื่อง อยู่ในระดับสูง โดยมีค่าเฉลี่ยเท่ากับ 3.78

คำสำคัญ : การอ่านเพื่อความเข้าใจ, แผนภาพโครงเรื่อง, เรื่องเล่า

Abstract

This present study aimed to investigate the effects of story maps on Thai EFL sixth graders' reading comprehension skills and to examine the students' attitudes toward the story map implementation into their reading comprehension skill improvement. The story maps were adopted as an instructional strategy intended to improve the students' reading comprehension skills of narratives at a literal comprehension level. The participants were thirteen sixth grade students in an opportunity extension school in the Northeast of Thailand. The implementation of the story maps lasted for eight weeks. The period for instruction in each week was two hours. The instruments for data collection were reading comprehension pre-test and post-test and a student attitude questionnaire. The findings of this study showed that there was a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level in the students' narrative reading comprehension skills before and after using the story maps. The students' attitudes towards the implementation of the story maps were found at a high level with a mean score of 3.78.

Keywords : Reading Comprehension, Story Maps, Narratives

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Introduction

Reading is one of the most important skills for those learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and for those learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is considered the ability to understand the meaning of written texts that enables learners to acquire knowledge, gather information, and also learn grammar structures and vocabulary from various types of texts (Day & Bamford, 1998: 12). These contribute to language proficiency, academic success, and personal development (Wei, 2005: 2). Therefore, emphasizing that learners read with comprehension is an essential point for their language proficiency development and learning success.

In the Thai education system, students study English as a Foreign Language (EFL), with reading as one of the four English skills that they have to master based on the school curriculum. According to the foreign language indicators stated by the Ministry of Education (2008: 262), students in sixth grade are expected to be able to state the main idea and answer questions from dialogues, simple tales, and stories. They are also required to have English language proficiency at an A1 level, which is defined by The Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) after they graduate (Ministry of Education, 2015: 11). That means the students need to understand very short simple texts, picking up familiar names as well as words and basic phrases. However, fulfilling such reading comprehension requirements is quite difficult for some Thai students, especially at the primary level. What is more, the results of the Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET) for English language indicated that the sixth graders' average scores were below fifty percent and also less than those achieved in other subjects, equivalent to 34.59, 36.34, and 39.24 respectively from 2016 to 2018 (National Institute of Educational Testing Service (Public Organization), 2016-2018). This indicates that the students have relatively low English language proficiency levels which clearly illustrates their inappropriate level of English especially with regards to their reading comprehension skills (Sawangsamutchai & Rattanavich, 2016: 54). Studies on problems of Thai students' reading ability showed that a limited knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure is regarded as the main problem (Chawwang, 2008: 3 and Jittisukpong, 2019: 203). Lacking knowledge in those two areas, students could not discover the meaning of words in context, and face difficulty in understanding complex and very long sentences. These interfere with their reading success and reading comprehension skills. Besides, another factor that influences Thai students' reading comprehension skills is inappropriate reading instructions (Padungkit, 2009: 2). English reading comprehension in Thailand generally involves translating sentences, and grammar structures word by word from the text. Under this kind of the instruction, students will not have the opportunity to observe their own reading process and to resolve their own difficulties. Because of this, students lack practice using various strategies to read, which affects their reading comprehension skills.

As mentioned previously, the problems are similar to Thai EFL students in the current study. The students were sixth graders who studied in a Fundamental English Course for academic year 2020 at an opportunity extended school of a rural area in Yasothon province in Northeast of Thailand. They are all Thai nationals and have Thai as their native language (L1). English is therefore a foreign language to the students. All have been learning English as a foreign language at least five years, so they have English learning experience at school. However, the students faced difficulties in comprehending English reading texts. Their reading competence was found to be at a low level even in basic text, stories, or fables. Furthermore, most of the students do not understand what they have read especially at a literal comprehension level that involves the ability to understand information and facts directly stated in the text, identify the main ideas, and recall details that support the main ideas.

In recent years, one of the instructional strategies that has been highly recommended to improve the reading comprehension skills for young students is graphic organizers (GOs) (Jiang & Grabe, 2007: 34). Using various types of GOs in reading instruction helps students improve their reading comprehension skills on the aspects of summarizing, analyzing, and memorizing key ideas. A story map is one of the graphic organizer types that provides key elements of narrative text and which facilitates students to identify the elements of the story in chronological order and to make it easier to read a story (Boulineau, Fore, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2004: 106). It is a way of teaching where the students are taught to organize the story into specific parts, including the setting, problem, goal, action, and outcome (Idol, 1987 : 5). By using the story map, research studies demonstrated that the students' reading comprehension has increased (Grünke, Wilbert & Stegemann, 2014: 62; Li & Wen, 2017: 64; Nurpitriyani, 2015: 73; Splittstoesser, 2020: 27). Therefore, this current study focused on using a story map as an instructional strategy for the teaching of reading narrative text for sixth graders. Additionally, to yield better results in the current study, the previous reading strategy of summarizing in the study by Barrantes' s (2015: 268) was combined with the use of the graphic organizer. This strategy builds comprehension by helping to reduce confusion which enables students to learn to determine essential ideas and consolidate essential details that support them. This study adopted two effective comprehension strategies suggested by Duke and Pearson (2002: 212) which consist of (1) prediction in the pre-reading stage, and (2) think-aloud at the while reading stage. The first strategy helped students make connections between their prior knowledge and the text, using information from a text and their own personal experiences to comprehend and interpret contextual meaning beyond the passage. For the other strategy, think-aloud encouraged the students to recognize the differences between reading the words and comprehending the text by talking aloud about what they are thinking. This study also used think-pair-share strategies developed by Lyman (1981: 109) at the post-reading stage to allow the students to collaboratively work together promoting higher levels of thinking about the reading materials. The strategies also enabled the students to raise their awareness of becoming strategic readers, and to express all their thoughts in order to create an understanding of the reading texts.

Therefore, this current study aimed (1) to investigate the effect of using a story map in improving reading comprehension skills of Thai EFL sixth graders, and (2) to examine the students' attitudes towards the story map in improving their reading comprehension skills.

Objectives

The study was aimed to:

1. Investigate the effect of using a story map in improving reading comprehension skills of Thai EFL sixth graders.
2. Examine the students' attitudes towards the story map in improving their reading comprehension skills.

Literature Review

The story map was considered the key component of the current study, combining reading comprehension strategies including prediction, think aloud, think-pair-share, and summarizing in reading activities to improve reading comprehension skills of sixth grade students. The implementation was conducted following three reading stages, namely pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading. This current study used the story map as an instructional strategy during the post-reading stage. The story map format was adapted and modified for teaching reading from Franciscone (2008: 27) and Grünke el at. (2014: 55),

consisting title setting, characters, problem, events, and solutions for read narrative text. The following flowchart shows the conceptual framework used in the current study.

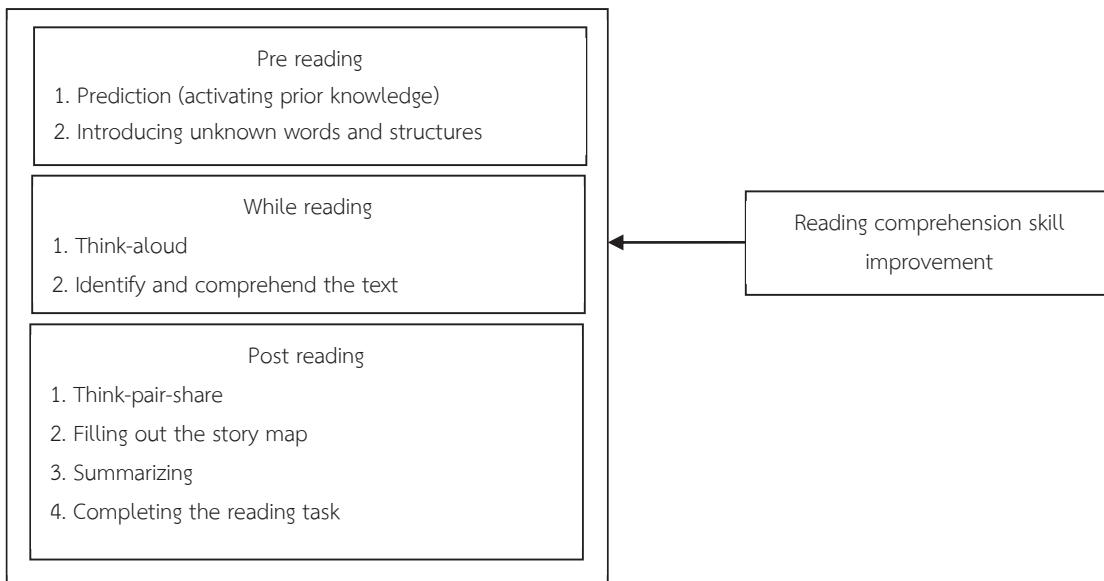


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the study

Methodology

This current study employed two cycles of action research as the research method. It lasted eight weeks for about two hours each week and was conducted in a Fundamental English Course throughout the first semester of academic year 2020.

1. Participants

The participants in the study were thirteen EFL sixth graders who were enrolled in the Fundamental English Course for academic year 2020, they were aged between 11-12 years old, from one intact class at an opportunity extended school of a rural area in Yasothon province in Northeast of Thailand. The group was selected through a purposive sampling procedure including five males and eight females.

2. Research Tool

2.1 Reading comprehension test was constructed in the form of a pre-test and a post-test. The test was a total of thirty items consisting of twenty-two multiple choice items and eight short-answer items about four narrative reading passages which are taken from several sources including English commercial books and academic websites for EFL students. The passages were based on the students' level of language proficiency and background knowledge. Moreover, these passages were related to the Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2008 determination of themes. The test aimed to assess the students' reading comprehension at a literal comprehension level, so the questions required the students to find information directly stated in the text and to identify the main idea. In ensuing the test validity, the result of the Index of Item-Objective-Congruence (IOC) values indicated that reading comprehension test items were rated higher than 0.5. The results of the reading comprehension test difficult index indicated that the items had appropriate level of difficulty with a mean score of 0.42. This indicated that the items were good in term of its difficulty. In addition, the results of the discrimination index for items showed a mean score of 0.36. The result indicated that the items of the test had high discrimination ability and also reliability.

2.2 Students' attitude questionnaire contained two sections: closed and open-ended questions which was adapted from Darmawan (2013: 112-119) and Vásquez (2018: 22). The first section includes twenty-three items with three aspects; attitude towards the story map, reading comprehension strategies, and teaching and learning in the reading class. In addition, the second section contained three open ended items for participants to elaborate on and provide further comments about using the story map in improving their reading comprehension skill. The validity of the students' attitude questionnaire was verified using the IOC. The result obtained from the experts' evaluation form indicated that the items were congruent with the aspects of the questionnaire with a score higher than 0.5, and a mean score of 0.78. It was considered that the items of questionnaire were valid.

3. Data Collection

3.1 The researcher introduced the story map for reading comprehension to the participants and described each step of the reading instructions as well as the reading assessment.

3.2 The pre-test was administered to the participants. It aimed to assess the participants' reading comprehension skill at a literal comprehension level before employing the treatment. The test lasted sixty minutes. One point was given for one correct answer.

3.3 Before conducting the treatment, the participants were trained to use the story map in reading instruction. They were provided with an example of the story map used in a reading lesson in order to become familiar with and gain experience in each step of the treatment. This phase took two periods of fifty minutes each and included wrap up and discussion in each step of the reading implementation.

3.4 The participants were taught to comprehend reading passages following five lesson plans in three reading stages namely pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading. Each plan took two periods of fifty minutes per week. The reading passages were appropriate for sixth graders, their level of language proficiency, and were related to reading comprehension at a literal level. The topics in the lesson plans for the current study consisted of 1) The Hottest Day Ever, 2) Mother's Day Celebration, 3) Eating Out, 4) Michael and His Stomach, and 5) Martin's Vacation

3.5 The study carried out in the action research, two cycles including planning, acting, observing, and reflecting were conducted.

Cycle 1

First, the researcher prepared five lesson plans in doing the action for two cycles. The observation sheets, reading tasks, and post-test were also provided to know whether students' reading comprehension improved or not. Second, the researcher implemented the treatment that was used for the improvement in the reading comprehension skills of the participants. The materials given in this cycle were lesson plans 1 and 2. Third, the researcher observed and monitored students' activities in the classroom during learning through the treatment. It was aimed at finding out the strengths and weaknesses of the story map's ability to enhance students' reading comprehension. Forth, the researcher evaluated the process and the result of the implementation. The result indicated that students had some problems with the word recognition, and therefore less time in completing the story map after reading. These problems affected students' abilities to comprehending the text and led to them receiving low scores. Finally, the researcher revised the plans by adding vocabulary game, which used after the introducing unknown words and structures activity, and giving more time to fill in the story map.

Cycle 2

The researcher conducted the implementation of lesson plans 3 to 5 with more improvements based on the problems occurring in the first cycle. A vocabulary game was added to enhance their word recognition. In addition, the participants were given more time to complete the story map. The researcher observed participants' ability in the implementation, the activeness of the class, and the problems occurring in the classroom. After that, the researcher evaluated the process and the result of the implementation. The result from the observation indicated that there was an enhancement in the participants' reading comprehension. They could identify story elements, complete the story map individually, and answer relevant questions from the text, which was seen from their scores on their reading tasks.

3.6 After finishing the treatment phase, another reading comprehension test was administered as a post-test in order to examine the students' reading comprehension skills. The test lasted sixty minutes. It contained the same set of questions as the pre-test, but item numbers were changed. Additionally, the students' attitude questionnaire was distributed. Twenty minutes were used for responding to the questionnaire.

4. Data Analysis

This study aimed to investigate the effect of the story map in improving the reading comprehension skills of sixth graders, as well as to examine the students' attitude towards the use of the story map in reading comprehension. The collected data was analyzed quantitatively.

4.1 The collected data from the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test were analyzed. The test scores were calculated to examine percentage, mean, and standard deviations. Then the mean scores of the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test were compared to see whether there was a statistically significant difference by using a paired t-test in SPSS.

4.2 The scores of students' attitude towards the story map in reading comprehension from the self-rating scale were calculated to perceive mean and standard deviations. This could be used to indicate the students' attitudes towards the use of the story map in reading comprehension of the study.

Results

The following section presents the results of the study and how the results address the two research aims.

1. The Effect of the Story Map on Reading Comprehension Skill of Thai EFL Sixth Graders

The students' reading comprehension pre-tests and post-tests were significantly different at the 0.01 level after learning through the use of a story map. The scores for the students' post-tests ($\bar{X} = 14.92$) was higher than the score of the students' pre-tests ($\bar{X} = 8.46$).

Table 1 Comparison of reading comprehension pre-test and post-test mean scores of the sixth graders

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
Pre-test	13	8.46	1.984	15.466	.000**
Posttest	13	14.92	2.100		

** Significant at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$)

As shown in Table 1, the results show a significant difference between the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test mean scores of the sixth-grade students at the .01 level, ($t=15.466$). The pre-test mean score of the participants is 8.46 with a standard deviation of 1.984. In contrast, after the implementation, the post-test mean score is 14.92 with the standard deviation of 2.100. The results of a paired t-test gain indicate that the story map had an overall positive effect on the students' reading comprehension skills.

2. Students' Attitude towards the Story Map in Improving Their Reading Comprehension Skill

The students had a positive attitude towards the story map in improving their reading comprehension at a high level ($\bar{X} = 3.78$). The results of the overall mean score of the students' attitude questionnaire are presented in the following table.

Table 2 The overall mean score of the students' attitudes questionnaire

Aspects	\bar{X}	S.D.	Interpretation
1. Attitude towards the use of the story map in reading comprehension	3.69	0.97	High
2. Attitude towards the reading comprehension strategies in reading class	3.82	0.91	High
3. Attitude towards the teaching and learning in reading class	3.85	0.88	High
Total	3.78	0.92	High

From the data presented in Table 2, the overall mean score of the students' attitudes questionnaire was high with the mean score (\bar{X}) of 3.78 and standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.92. The results indicated that the students had positive attitudes towards the story map in improving their reading comprehension skill. The highest mean score was the third aspect; it revealed that students were satisfied with the teaching and learning in reading class at a high level (3.85).

Discussion

This section discussed the findings in detail including the effect of a story map on students' reading comprehension, and the students' attitude towards the story map in improving reading comprehension.

1. The Effect of the Story Map on Students' Reading Comprehension

Based on the current study's findings, it was found that a story map can improve students' reading comprehension. The students' achievement in reading comprehension of narrative texts had significantly increased after being taught through the use of a story map. The result was consistent with the findings revealed in the related research studies that the use of a story map has a positive effect on the students' reading comprehension skill (Franciscone, 2008: 20; Grünke et al., 2014: 62; Li & Wen, 2017: 64; Nurpitriyani, 2015: 73; Splittstoesser, 2020: 27).

One reason that could help explain why reading comprehension improved after the implementation might be an appropriate selection of graphic organizers. In this study, the researcher selected the story map to improve the students' reading comprehension of narrative text. It provided a visual-spatial display for key information contained in narrative texts including title, setting, character, event, problem, and solution which enhanced the students' ability to focus on what they needed to know from reading the story.

Jiang and Grabe (2007: 37) who asserted that graphic organizers that represent the text structure would be effective in improving students' reading comprehension. Whereas graphic organizers that do not represent the text structure would be less effective in improving students' reading comprehension. In this implementation, the students were trained to use a story map that emphasized the key elements of the story. The researcher introduced and elaborated on what story elements are, and what information from the story goes into each box on the story map explicitly. Hence, the students read purposely and became familiar with the narrative text. When they were filling in the story map, they could easily see what is happening in the story, what the problem is, and how to solve it, which improved their reading comprehension. This is in line with Isikdogan and Kargin (2010: 1513) who argued that the story map works on relating the story' parts which clarify the elements of the story in the schemata to the learners who face difficulty in reading.

In addition, another effect that may have helped improve the students' reading comprehension of narrative texts must be the use of the story map at the post-reading stage. In this case, at post-reading, the story map was assigned to the students to fill in the information from text individually. By completing the story map at post-reading, the students practiced comprehending and identifying each part of the story which affected their reading comprehension. This finding is in-line with Özmen (2011: 790) who affirmed that filling in the graphic organizer after reading the text is more effective than before reading. Finally, by using the story map with the teacher's clear directions and monitoring, the students would clearly understand the story map and may be able to better improve their reading comprehension.

2. Students' Attitude towards the Story Map in Improving Reading Comprehension

This section discussed three aspects of the questionnaire: the use of the story map in reading comprehension, reading comprehension strategies in reading class, and teaching and learning in reading class.

The findings revealed that the students had a positive attitude towards the story map in improving reading comprehension skill at a high level, with a mean score of 3.78. The students' view on the story map showed that the strategy helped them comprehend the narrative text better. The reading comprehension strategies, including prediction, think-aloud, think-pair-share, and summarizing all of which

were used as activities in the reading stages, also affected students' attitudes towards the story map. In conclusion, the success in performing the reading tasks may enhance their positive attitude about the strategy.

The first aspect attempted to examine the students' attitudes towards the use of the story map in reading comprehension. The result showed that students had positive attitudes at a high level, with a mean score of 3.69. Students reported that the story map helped them summarize the stories, that it was interesting, and that they liked using it in the reading classes. They also agreed that the story map made reading more meaningful and purposeful which helped them to identify the main ideas and key elements of the stories and promoted the use of it in upcoming reading classes. The students also had highly positive attitudes that the use of story map helped them understand the content of the story better. Using the story map after reading can help them to remember details from the stories and answer comprehension questions. Moreover, the students moderately agreed that completing the information in the story map was easy.

The second aspect focused on reading comprehension strategies in reading class. The strategies, including prediction, think-aloud, think-pair-share, and summarizing which were used as the activities in different reading stages, also affected students' attitudes. The findings revealed that students had positive attitudes at a high level, with a mean score of 3.82 with all items at a high level of agreement. These indicated that the reading comprehension strategies in reading class enable the students to comprehend the texts. Students reported that using knowledge of the title, pictures, and illustrations to predict the content before reading together with teacher's various questions which related to a particular story helped them connect their existing knowledge to new information from the story. They also agreed that thinking aloud while reading, summarizing after reading, and sharing information with friends helped them to understand the stories better.

The last aspect investigated teaching and learning in reading class. The results indicated that the means of the students' responses was 3.85, which is at a high agreement level. Students revealed that the teacher's monitoring made them understand what they were expected to do in each activity, as well as in lessons and reading class activities to improve their reading comprehension skills. Finally, with the teacher's clear directions and explanations, the students reported that they could meet their reading goal. Consequently, it could be concluded that the students had positive attitudes toward the story map in improving their reading comprehension.

Suggestions

1. Suggestions for Application

In order to succeed in implementing the story map, especially in enhancing students' reading comprehension, there are some implications to be considered as follows.

1.1 A presentation of a blank teacher-constructed story map should be provided to the students, especially for young learners. From the teacher-constructed story map, the students will be guided to focus on the important information units while reading the text. This can prevent the students from extraneous processing and raise the students' awareness of text structure and discourse organization in reading comprehension.

1.2 Training procedure plays an important role in the success of the implementation. The purposes and value of the story map should be provided explicitly and explained to students. Moreover, the teacher's role is also important. The students should work first in small groups with the teacher acting as a facilitator, monitor, and supporter of the groups. It can also be noted that constant feedback to the students is necessary.

1.3 The reading implementation of the study was designed to be used with various reading comprehension strategies as the activities at three reading stages. They were primarily aimed to stimulate students' reading comprehension in reading a narrative text. Therefore, when the students encountered text to read, teachers should provide the strategies and encourage them to use it in order to promote their reading comprehension.

2. Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the results of this study, some recommendations for the further studies are provided as follows.

2.1 Students should be given more training of how to work on the story map and reading activities as well as have great deal of examples in order to make them feel more confident when doing their own.

2.2 Further studies should be conducted to investigate students building their own story map after practicing with teacher-constructed diagrams to compare the results obtained in the implementation terms of the story map's effectiveness to understand the reading texts and their performance on both tasks.

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