

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter consisted of four parts. The first part began with a brief summary of the study. It reviewed the objectives, the research design, the research methodology, and the research findings. The second part discussed the interpretations of the findings. The third part suggested the implications drawn from the study. The last part offered recommendations for further research.

#### **Summary**

The objectives of this study were to: 1) design two modes of Four-Blocks literacy framework with repeated reading (FB-RR), the teacher-directed FB-RR and the learner-directed FB-RR for university students; 2) investigate the effects of two modes of Four-Blocks literacy framework with repeated reading on the students' English reading comprehension proficiency scores; and 3) study students' opinions on the two instructional modes. The research design was '*the pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design.*' The design was used for comparing the English reading comprehension proficiency scores before and after using the teacher-directed FB-RR and the learner-directed FB-RR with high and low-proficiency students.

The development of two modes of FB-RR instruction comprised two phases. Phase one was concerned with the development of an English reading comprehension instruction, and phase two dealt with the implementation of the FB-RR instruction.

#### Phase I: The development of an English reading comprehension instruction

The instructional development was composed of six stages: 1) to explore and study the basic concepts and related documents; 2) to construct two instructional modes; 3) to construct the instructional manual, lesson plans, and instruments; 4) to verify the effectiveness of the instructional manual, lesson plans, and instruments; 5) to pilot the instruction; and 6) to revise lesson plans and instruments.

Stage one, the theories and basic concepts underlying second language reading were explored. The studied topics were reading comprehension, reading models, the balanced reading instruction, Four-Blocks literacy framework, repeated reading, and autonomous learning.

Stage two, the FB-RR instruction was constructed. The documents and related research gained from stage one were compiled and analyzed. After the documents were studied, the FB-RR instruction was derived and its components were specified. Basically, the variations in the four blocks were not changed. However, some activities were put in the FB-RR in order to modify this instruction for adult EFL learners. The additional activities were sustained-silent reading, word bank, analyzing word parts, and using context clues.

Stage three, the instructional manual, two types of lesson plans, and other instruments including FB-RR questionnaires, FB-RR learning logs, and FB-RR observation forms, were constructed for the course of English for Communication and Study Skills.

Stage four, the checklists were constructed for evaluating effectiveness of the instructional manual, lesson plans, and instruments. The quality of them was obtained by nine experts in reading and second language education. Then the instruments were revised after being validated by all nine experts.

Stage five, two pilot studies were carried out for three weeks prior to the main study. The samples in the pilot study consisted of 92 second year science major students studying in two classes at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University. One group received three teacher-directed FB-RR lesson plans, and the other received three learner-directed FB-RR lesson plans.

Stage six, after the materials were tested in the pilot study, they were revised for the main study.

#### Phase II: The implementation of the FB-RR instruction

The implementation of the FB-RR instruction composed of three stages that were: 1) to prepare the experiment; 2) to conduct the experiment; and 3) to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction.

Stage one, the experiment was prepared by specifying the population and sample. The population of this study included 1,584 second-year students who were studying in six faculties in semester two, academic year 2005 at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University, Phetchaburi Province, Thailand. The sample of the main study was 81 second-year students who were studying in two classes of computer science major.

The SLEP® reading comprehension proficiency test form four, section two, was administered to place the samples in two proficiency subgroups. The high-proficient

subgroups referred to 25% of students in a group who achieved the highest scores on the test. The low-proficiency subgroups referred to 25% of students in a group who achieved the lowest scores on the test. In the teacher-directed group ( $n = 45$ ), there were 11 students in each subgroup. In the learner-directed group ( $n = 36$ ), there were 9 students in each subgroup. After that, the lesson plans, other materials, and instruments were prepared for the participants.

Stage two, the experiment was conducted. The duration of the experiments was 10 weeks with 2½ hours per week. Each weekly lesson was divided into four blocks of reading and writing. During the study, most learning conditions in both groups were similar, except the modes of FB-RR instruction.

The students in the teacher-directed FB-RR group were taught by the teacher. The daily activities began with 1) Working With Words block (30 minutes), 2) Guided Reading block (35–50 minutes), 3) Self-Selected Reading block with repeated reading (40 minutes), and 4) Writing block (30–40 minutes).

In the learner-directed FB-RR group, the teacher provided materials for independent study. The blocks and activities were similar to the teacher-directed mode, but the sequence of blocks was not fixed. Students started with any block, however, they were recommended to end with the Writing block. They selected to study the blocks by themselves, while the teacher guided and monitored the activities.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> week, both groups of students were tested with a researcher-made parallel test. The data was collected over a period of 12 weeks. The data from FB-RR questionnaires, FB-RR learning logs, and FB-RR observations, was examined quantitatively and qualitatively to find students' opinions on two modes of FB-RR instruction.

Stage three, to evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction, a t-test was used to analyze the mean differences of pretest and posttest scores within and between two groups. Also, the data from FB-RR learning logs, FB-RR questionnaires, and FB-RR observations were examined. The findings of the study had two parts with regards to the instructional development and the hypotheses.

#### Findings from the instructional development

The instructional development in this study was the Four-Blocks literacy framework with repeated reading (FB-RR). This instruction was designed as two modes, the teacher-directed FB-RR and the learner-directed FB-RR. They were developed for EFL university students enrolling in the course English for

Communication and Study Skills. The purpose of this instruction was to develop the reading comprehension proficiency, which included reading skills and strategies, extensive reading, vocabulary comprehension, and writing skills. The topics and contents of this course were related to culture, hobbies, sports, news, and social problems. To show the different conditions between the two groups, the instructional modes, the classroom condition, and the materials were summarized as follows.

The characteristics of FB-RR comprised four literacy blocks taught in one session. The repeated reading was put in the Self-Selected Reading block. The teacher suggested students to read the same passages of self-selected materials two or three times. Moreover, some additional activities were combined with FB-RR instruction, which were sustained-silent reading, word bank, analyzing word parts, and using context clues. Instead of the reading aloud as used in the original Four-Blocks, the sustained-silent reading was utilized in the self-selected reading. Similarly, instead of using phonics and phonemic awareness activities in the original Working with Words block, the teacher taught the word bank, analysis word parts, and using context clues. In the teacher-directed group, the lesson began with Working with Words, Guided Reading, Self-Selected Reading, and ended with Writing. The sequences of blocks in this mode were fixed. On the other hand, the lesson in the learner-directed group was different. The students had a choice to when or where to begin with any block they preferred. There was no fixed block. Each block allowed 30-40 minutes to complete the task. Each session took approximately 2½ hours.

The classroom conditions between the two groups were somewhat different. In the teacher-directed classroom, the teacher carried on the instruction like any regular class. In the Self-Selected Reading block, the teacher allowed time for students to study materials by themselves without teacher' interference. In the learner-directed classroom, the teacher overviewed and brainstormed the lesson for 5-10 minutes. Then the students were allowed to work in pairs or small groups. The teacher monitored, controlled time, and gave guidance when students needed help.

The materials included the instructional manual, the lesson plans, and other instruments. The instructional manual was based on the principles of Four-Blocks literacy framework and the repeated reading for university students. The manual comprised rationale, theoretical framework, course outline, contents, activities, evaluations, and sample lesson plans (see the instructional manual in Appendix H). The lesson plans were constructed as two modes: the teacher-directed and the learner-directed. There were 10 lesson plans for each mode. The duration of each plan was 2½ hours. There were also worksheets and exercises for students. The answer keys

were specially provided for the learner-directed group. Other instruments included FB-RR questionnaires, FB-RR learning logs, and FB-RR observation forms. The FB-RR questionnaires and the FB-RR learning logs were printed in Thai. One was utilized with the teacher-directed group, and the other was used with the learner-directed group. The FB-RR observation forms were printed in English for the teacher to rate students' behavior and other classroom conditions

#### Findings from the hypothesis test

The findings indicated the effectiveness of the FB-RR instruction. The findings were divided into three aspects: 1) modes of FB-RR instruction; 2) levels of students' proficiency; and 3) students' opinions.

##### Modes of FB-RR instruction

1. The significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the teacher-directed and the learner-directed FB-RR groups were at the .05 level.
2. There was no significant difference of the pretest and posttest mean scores between the teacher-directed and the learner-directed FB-RR groups.

##### Levels of students' proficiency

3. The difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of both high-proficiency subgroups in the teacher-directed and the learner-directed FB-RR groups were not statistically significant.
4. The significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of both low-proficiency subgroups in the teacher-directed and the learner-directed FB-RR groups were at the .05 level.
5. In the teacher-directed FB-RR group, the difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the high-proficiency subgroup was not significant; while the pretest and posttest mean scores of the low-proficiency subgroup was significantly different at the .05 level.
6. In the learner-directed FB-RR group, the difference between the

pretest and posttest mean scores of the high-proficiency subgroup was not significant while the pretest and posttest mean scores of the low-proficiency subgroup was significantly different at the .05 level.

#### Students' opinions

7. Overall, students in the teacher-directed group and the learner-directed group had positive opinions on the two modes of FB-RR instruction.

### **Discussions**

After the FB-RR instruction was conducted, the instructional effectiveness was found. The findings were discussed on two aspects: the modes of FB-RR instruction, and the levels of students' proficiency.

#### 1. The modes of FB-RR instruction

In a hypothesis test for the effectiveness in both modes of FB-RR instruction, it was found that the significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the teacher-directed and learner-directed groups were at the .05 level ( $p < .05$ ). In other words, both modes of FB-RR instruction, significantly improved students' English reading comprehension.

These findings supported hypothesis one and supported the previous studies of Cunningham and Hall (2002), Cunningham, Hall, and Defee (1998), Hall, Prevatte, and Cunningham (1995), and Poppelwell and Doty (2000) which indicated that students in the Four-Blocks classroom read on or above grade levels and scored significantly better after the interventions. The multilevel and multimethod instruction worked more effectively than any single approach. The study of Abbott, Reed and Abbott (1997) also revealed that a balanced reading intervention brought most readers to the expected levels on most of the IQ and grade level in reading and writing measures. To explain the effectiveness in two modes clearly, the findings were discussed on the teacher-directed FB-RR, the learner-directed FB-RR, and both teacher-directed and learner-directed FB-RR.

#### 1.1 The teacher-directed FB-RR

Like in the present study, there were a number of research findings which indicated that the teacher-directed mode significantly improved the English reading comprehension proficiency of students. According to Cunningham and Allington (1999), Four-Blocks literacy framework emphasizes explicit instruction. The climate in the teacher-directed learning classroom was formal, authority-oriented, competitive, and judgmental (Knowles, 1975). When the reading instruction is

consistently conducted by the teacher in the whole class, it is often a highly scripted and sequenced reading program. However, the lesson permitted students with similar needs to be grouped for appropriate instruction.

In Guided Reading block, the teacher brainstormed and modeled comprehension strategies using predictions, pictures as cues, skimming, scanning, or making KWL charts. Teacher's explicit modeling and practice were crucial in developing reading comprehension (Fordham, 2006). The class format was various, such as, one on one, individual, partners, and the whole class. Regarding the students' opinions, a number of students indicated in FB-RR learning logs and FB-RR questionnaires that they did best in Guided Reading block and found that it helped them comprehend the text. They tried to work on post-reading exercise. The findings from the FB-RR observations also revealed that they learned to read and work on activities at a very satisfactory level after the half term of the treatment. These findings were congruent with Lorah (2003) and Thomas's studies (2003) that Guided Reading led to positive attitudes towards reading.

In Working with Words block, the teacher taught vocabulary skills by encouraging students to guess the meaning from context, or to analyze word parts. The teacher also taught word wall words by modeling and chanting. For the students' opinions on Working with Words block, the findings from the FB-RR questionnaires showed that students gained the most positive opinions on Working with Words block. The students' comments in learning logs indicated that they exhibited motivation towards learning vocabulary. They were aware of their own problems and tried to find a solution. After a few weeks, most students brought their dictionary to class. They appeared enthusiastic when they encountered new words in the passage by quickly looking up new words from their own dictionaries.

An explanation for students' positive opinions on Working with Words block lay in the probability of repeated encounters with words. Vocabulary was encountered by students through word walls, word bank, analyzing word parts, and using context clues. Besides, students also encountered incidentally new words during the Guided Reading and Self-Selected Reading blocks (the repeated reading) throughout the 10 week study. The word instruction may lead to a better sense of how words were used in actual communication. Vocabulary strategic instructions were consistent to ways to develop meaning vocabulary of Cunningham (2006). She stated that students need to learn to use morphemes, context, and dictionary to help them refine the meaning of words. This finding supported Beck and McKeown (2001) who suggested that the vocabulary instruction should be repeated and varied. In addition,

they report that if new words are to become a permanent part of students' vocabulary, practice must extend beyond classroom learning. Consequently, in this study, the teacher challenged students to use new words in their written work during Writing block.

In Self-Selected Reading block, the teacher directed the lesson less than in other blocks. The teacher modeled the repeated reading and recording the reading speed. The findings from the teacher-directed FB-RR questionnaires showed that students gained most positive opinions on Self-Selected Reading block. This supported Cho and Krashen (1994), Frank, Dixon and Brandts (2001), Hayashi (1999), Kong and Fitch (2002) who found that the positive effects of self-selected reading meant a higher motivation and a better attitude.

In this study, the majority of the students reported that they preferred to choose their own reading materials. They also noted that the post-reading exercises helped them comprehend a text better. Results from the teacher's observations also revealed that the students concentrated on their reading after the first few weeks. It also indicated that the students' reading attitudes and interests were relevant to various self-selected reading materials.

In Writing block, the teacher modeled writing on the overhead projector. Based on the students' opinions, they showed a minimal decrease in their opinions. They noted in the logs that they needed more time to generate ideas and write. Moreover, they were not familiar with spelling and writing English. The findings were consistent with Myles (2002) who found that ESL learners had negative attitudes toward writing for academic purposes. Richardson (1992) also proposed that students reporting negative attitudes towards writing might result from their previous writing experiences. Richardson stressed the necessity of frequent opportunities to write. The teacher and students should expect it to be a regular practice.

The underlying principle of Four Blocks emphasizing on 'instruction' is also congruent with the principle of the balanced reading instruction. Ellis (2005) emphasized that the balanced reading instruction is a combination of direct instruction and strategy instruction. A number of second language researchers proposed that teaching reading strategy is crucial in reading as a second language. Bernhardt (1991), Cummins (1991), Fitzgerald (1995), Goodman (1970) and Tang (1996) viewed that readers use similar comprehension strategies when they read in first and second language. That is, the reading comprehension strategy is universal. It is concluded that FB-RR instruction which is one consistent view with the balanced reading instruction



is appropriate for the teacher-directed mode. It is recognized as a promise for improving proficiency outcomes for all students in a reading class.

### 1.2 The learner-directed FB-RR

The finding of this study indicated that the learner-directed FB-RR significantly improved students' English reading comprehension proficiency. In other words, the FB-RR was learned effectively by students themselves.

Although FB-RR instruction highlighted the teacher's explicit instruction, for this study it revealed a different finding. A reason to explain this finding was probably the age of the students. Four-Blocks literacy framework was originally designed for elementary students. However, students in this study were young adults who were able to motivate themselves. They had high degrees of responsibility and autonomy. Instead of being instructed by the teacher to complete prescribed reading or assignments, they were responsible for implementing their reading strategies. Students were able to read and follow the directions. They could do exercises, check the answers with the answer keys, and control time when they worked in each block. Moreover, the learning condition in the learner-directed mode was informal, mutual, and collaborative. The concept of this learner-directed mode is similar to the concept of individualization which is associated with the autonomy (Benson, 2001). In this mode, the students were expected to work their way at their own pace through materials prepared by the teacher. These conditions increased problem solving skills, enhanced thinking skills, promoted understanding of concepts and principles (Farr & Shaeffer, 1993), and promoted positive attitudes (Paterson & Elliott, 2006). Based on the results from FB-RR questionnaires, students in the learner-directed group gained significantly positive opinions after the treatment. Outstanding gains were found in every block. These gains in opinions were greater than those in the teacher-directed group. This might be due to the mode of learner-directed instruction which allowed students to collaborate in reading.

In Guided Reading block, students were usually allowed to study from the worksheets in pairs or small groups. The reading activities included shared reading, partner reading, book club groups, picture walks, predictions, and KWL. These activities were what Fordham (2006) called tool for thinking, or the essential cognitive gear that generated active and proficient comprehension. Data from

students' learning logs showed that most of them chose to begin the lesson with Guided Reading block. Students also rated that they worked best in Guided Reading block. Moreover, they reported that this block helped them comprehend a text.

In Working with Words block, students studied new words from the worksheets, looked up the meanings in their dictionaries, and shared the words they knew. Similarly, students in this mode reported that Working with Words block helped immensely. However, most students commented that they had problems in words. When they encountered new vocabulary, they were not able to predict words from context clues fluently because of their limitation. Nagy (1988) suggested the repeated exposure to words. Vocabulary instruction must not only focus on what the readers know about the word meaning, but also ensure that they have sufficient practice to find the meaning quickly during reading.

Even though students reported their problems with words, most students appeared enthusiastic about encountering new words. They quickly looked up new words in dictionaries. This enthusiasm might be due to student interest in vocabulary learning. The teacher always supported students' using dictionaries when they were unable to predict the meaning. This was congruent with Nagy (1988) proposing that the ability to use a dictionary is an important skill.

Another extensive activity in Working with Words block was making word bank books. The teacher assigned students to collect vocabulary words on their own. This led to independent word learning.

FB-RR instruction included the combination of word learning strategies. It emphasized both the use of 'context clues' and the 'learning of word meanings' (definition instruction). FB-RR instruction included the teaching of specific words, vocabulary comprehension strategies such as using context clues and analyzing word parts, and the use of dictionary. Results from this study indicated that students increased their motivation to learn vocabulary and vocabulary skills which in turn led them to increase vocabulary knowledge and their ability to read independently. According to Beck and McKeown (1991), there is no one best method and there are advantages from using various techniques. Baumann and Kameenui (1991) supported a combination of methods. They reported that students are more likely to learn new words when definition is combined with context clues.

In Self-Selected Reading block, students in this mode rated that they learned the best in the block. Basically they worked individually. They had choices in selecting the reading passage, read repeatedly, recorded the reading rate, and completed post-reading exercises. The advantage of self-selected reading was that students became conditioned to an on-going routine to deepen their text comprehension (Buehl, 2006).

Repeated reading might be one factor that improved students' reading proficiency and vocabulary comprehension. Students read two or three times and also recorded their reading rate. According to Rasinski (2006), repeated readings has helped students make remarkable progress in reading rate, even though improving reading rate is not emphasized. Significantly, the positive opinions on reading also increased as showed in the learning logs.

In Writing block, after the modeled writing, students brainstormed with partners, but wrote their own drafts. They read the directions and worked on their writing with partners. The mode of learner-directed FB-RR allowed students to generate ideas more freely. These kinds of activities affected them to have outstanding positive opinions. Their positive opinions might be due to the less-controlled writing.

The findings of the learner-directed FB-RR supported the previous studies that the learner-directed mode promoted reading comprehension proficiency and positive opinions. In Mejang's (2004) study of collaborative learning with Thai university students, the results indicated that students' working in small groups enhanced their reading ability and positive attitudes towards peer interaction. The findings were consistent with the studies of Lee (2001) and Soonthornmanee (2002) that when the group was smaller, students not only improved their reading proficiency, but also showed more confidence and reported more interaction with their teacher and peers. Furthermore, Berne and Clark (2006) supported students engaging in and maintaining the discussions to promote strategic comprehension process. This finding concluded that the learner-directed FB-RR was beneficial for the whole class.

### 1.3 Both teacher-directed and learner-directed FB-RR

In a hypothesis test, comparing the effectiveness in the two modes of FB-RR instruction, it was found that there was no significant difference between the

pretest and posttest mean scores in the teacher-directed and learner-directed groups ( $p > .05$ ). These findings failed to support hypothesis two which stated that the teacher-directed group significantly differed from the learner-directed group in their English reading comprehension proficiency scores. Hypothesis two was therefore rejected.

The finding of this FB-RR indicated that this instruction is a comprehensive method. With whatever mode of FB-RR instruction was used, it had proven to be effective for the whole class. These findings were consistent with the studies of Mathes, Howard, Allen, and Fuchs (1998) and Baker (2005) who found that there were no statistical differences between students in the learner-directed instruction and the teacher-directed instruction groups on any measure. They also indicated that both learner-directed instruction and teacher-directed instruction, on average, enhanced reading performance for low achievers both in terms of statistical significance. The meta-analysis of Kroesbergen and Van Luit (2003) also revealed that the direct instruction and the self-instruction had a significantly higher effect than other form of instruction.

With regard to students' opinions, students in the teacher-directed and learner-directed groups had positive opinions on the FB-RR instruction. These findings supported hypothesis six which stated that students in both groups had positive opinions on the instruction. Thus, hypothesis six was accepted.

In some related research on reading, it was commonly contended that attitudes towards reading influenced reading achievement. Ehrman (1996) and Oxford (1990) indicated that the attitude in learning is probably one of the strongest influences on language learning success or failure. Negative attitude can stunt progress. Contrarily, positive attitudes can make language learning far more effective and enjoyable. Alexander and Filler (1976) stated that a positive attitude is essential for successful mastery of the text comprehension.

In conclusion, both teacher-directed and learner-directed modes could be integrated in a reading instruction. It was suggested that moving from any single mode leads to teacher and learner harmony. The intervention should be directed firstly for enhancing students' knowledge base. Secondly, students should be taught strategies that allow them to monitor and coordinate their learning more effectively (Van Kraayenoord & Elkins, 2004). The teacher should use multiple delivery

arrangements, including peer assisted and small groups. The findings suggested a promise for Four-Blocks literacy framework with repeated reading that can improve reading proficiency for all students.

## 2. The levels of students' proficiency

The levels of students' proficiency was discussed in four topics: 1) the high-proficiency students; 2) the low-proficiency students; 3) the high and low-proficiency students in the teacher-directed FB-RR group; and 4) the high and low-proficiency students in the learner -directed FB-RR group.

### 2.1 The high-proficiency students

In a hypothesis test examining the effects of the teacher-directed and learner-directed FB-RR on the two high-proficiency subgroups, it was found that the difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of both subgroups were not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). In other words, both modes of FB-RR instruction did not significantly improve the English reading comprehension proficiency of high-proficiency students. These findings failed to support hypothesis three which stated that each FB-RR instruction (teacher-directed and learner-directed) significantly improved the English reading comprehension proficiency of high-proficiency students. Hypothesis three was therefore rejected.

According to the research-based assumptions, good readers read quickly and have more time to read independently (Morgan, 2001). However, there is no set of instructional strategies that is effective all of the time for all students. FB-RR instruction is strategy-based and emphasizes several reading comprehension and writing activities. In this study, the learning blocks were more in pair and group formats than in individual or one-on-one format. The activities allowed time for students to think and work together. During paired or small group activities, some of high-proficiency students liked to work individually or with partners who were as good as them. The class activities and format might not interest high-proficiency students. This implied that high-proficiency students felt more self-confident and they did not recognize the importance of interacting with others to improve their reading comprehension.

One study of Praphruitkit (2002) indicated that most high-proficiency students majoring in math and computer science at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University did not like to participate in group process activities. They felt that the activities were

too slow and tedious. Another study of Mejang (2004) with Thai university readers revealed that the high-proficiency readers did not improve their reading ability significantly after using the collaborative learning. On the contrary, the intermediate and low-proficiency readers in the present study significantly improved their reading comprehension. This could be explained that while low-proficiency students used social strategies to become even better, high-proficiency students drew back from social participation, evading much needed communicative practice and thus stunting their English language acquisition progress.

Another reason to explain why high-proficiency readers did not perform well might be due to the role of memory strategies. Oxford (1990) explained that these strategies enable learners to retrieve information from memory when they need to use it for comprehension or production. While good language learners use these strategies to build up their knowledge bases, these strategies become less useful as the foreign language proficiency increases, and other strategies take over (Gregersen, Martinez, Rojas & Alvarado, 2001). The effects of inadequate use of memory strategies reflected in the scores of high-proficiency students.

The final reason which could explain the finding is that students used different levels of compensation strategy (Oxford, 1990). Gregersen, Martinez, Rojas, and Alvarado (2001) found that the good language learners, who did not suffer from linguistic roadblocks as much as poor learners, maintained the same level of use, while poor learners reported that they used them more. This is similar to Stanovich's assumption (1980) which assumed that the strength in one's processing stage compensates for weakness in another. The evidence from FB-RR study showed that the high-proficiency students did not gain higher scores when tested, even though they did outstandingly better in assignments and exercises, and also read faster than the low-proficiency students.

## 2.2 The low-proficiency students

In a hypothesis test, examining the effects of the teacher-directed and learner-directed FB-RR on the two low-proficiency subgroups, the findings revealed that the significant difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores in the two low-proficiency subgroups were at the .05 level ( $p < .05$ ). Both modes of FB-RR instruction significantly improved the English reading comprehension proficiency of

low-proficiency students. These findings supported hypothesis four which indicated that both modes of FB-RR instruction significantly improved the English reading comprehension proficiency of low-proficiency students at the .05 level. Hypothesis four was accepted.

In this study, the low-proficiency students eagerly engaged in activities. They liked to work in pairs and small groups. During the Self-Selected Reading block, they seemed to be enthusiastic to select the reading materials. They gained good scores in the post-reading exercise and were proud of scores they made. They read two or three times and recorded the reading rate, and compared the rate with their peers. It was proved that FB-RR instruction developed their motivation and attitude towards reading.

The linguistic compensation might be able to explain why low-proficiency students improved reading comprehension scores than the high-proficiency students. The low-proficiency students used first language and strategies to compensate for linguistic weaknesses. Consequently, they improved their performance in reading activities, and gained significant higher scores after the course.

The findings were consistent with the Four Blocks' major goal that the framework is multilevel and reaches different levels of readers (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998). The study of Cunningham, Hall, and Defee (1998) indicated that students with reading difficulties performed better after receiving Four Blocks. Additionally, the positive effects of Four Blocks were consistent with the research findings on balanced reading instruction. They showed that struggling readers reached the expected levels in reading and writing measures (Abbott, Reed & Abbott, 1997). They grew in fluency, strategic comprehension abilities, and their attitudes towards reading (Duffy, 2001). In other words, students with learning difficulties are most positively influenced by balanced reading instruction (Honig, 2003; Spiegel, 1999; Swanson, 2001; Vaughn, Gersten & Chard, 2000). When considering proficiency levels, it implied that Four-Blocks literacy framework with repeated reading specifically improved reading comprehension proficiency and positive opinions of the low-proficiency students.

### 2.3 The high and low-proficiency students in the teacher-directed FB-RR group

In a hypothesis test determining the effects of the teacher-directed FB-RR on the high and low-proficiency subgroups, the findings indicated that the difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the high-proficiency subgroup was not significant ( $p > .05$ ); while the difference of pretest and posttest mean scores of the low-proficiency subgroup was statistically significant at the .05 level ( $p < .05$ ). These findings partly supported hypothesis 5.1 which states that the teacher-directed FB-RR significantly improved the English reading comprehension proficiency of students in low proficiency level. This hypothesis was partly accepted. To explain why the high-proficiency students did not perform well, the instruction characteristics, and the mode of instruction were discussed.

As discussed before, Four Blocks is a balanced reading framework which is based on explicit instruction (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Four Blocks had been proven to be effective, especially for unsuccessful readers (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998). However, the FB-RR was developed using the balance of direct instruction and multi-method reading. The class format was various, such as one-on-one, individual, partners, small groups, and the whole class. For this reason, the instruction characteristics may not interest the high-proficiency students. In a study of Praphruitkit (2002), the findings also showed that the high-proficiency students did not participate well in group process activities because they felt that the activities were too slow and tedious. These students' attitudes towards the instruction might hinder their progress.

The mode of teacher-directed instruction might be one factor that impeded the reading comprehension of high-proficiency students. The teacher-directed instruction develops the awareness of comprehension that increases reader-text comprehension (O'Donnell & Wood, 1999). The teacher paced students, especially the struggling students, through the lessons. When students found a lesson easy, the teacher would move to the next lesson. And when they found a lesson difficult, the teacher would persist with the same lesson until they succeeded. This phenomenon made the lesson move on slowly resulting in the high-proficiency students not performing well in reading comprehension tasks.

To explain why low-proficiency students performed statistically well, the instruction characteristics and the mode of instruction were also discussed. Four Blocks is a framework which improves reading outcomes, particularly for poor



readers (Cunningham, Hall & Defee, 1998; Swanson, 2001). This framework is evidently effective for students in this proficiency level. The low-proficiency readers met greater success when they read in group or with partners who were slightly better because they felt safe. On the other hand, students who were reading at higher levels would like to share and coach students working at a lower level.

Concerning the mode of instruction, one study of Mathes and Allison (2001) suggested that the teacher-directed instruction enhances reading performance of struggling readers. This suggestion was consistent with Swanson, Carson, and Sachse-Lee's (1996) study. They compared instructional approaches and concluded that direct and strategic instruction was effective for students with learning difficulties. Teaching reading comprehension strategies and explicit instruction are the most effective teaching approaches for low-proficiency students (Forness, 2001). The findings implied that receiving FB-RR instruction from a teacher was somewhat powerful for the intermediate and low-proficiency students.

#### 2.4 The high and low-proficiency students in the learner-directed FB-RR group

In a hypothesis test investigating the effects of the learner-directed FB-RR on the high and low-proficiency subgroups, the findings revealed that the difference between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the high-proficiency subgroup was not significant ( $p > .05$ ) while the difference of pretest and posttest mean scores of the low-proficiency subgroup was statistically significant at the .05 level ( $p < .05$ ). These findings partly supported hypothesis 5.2 which stated that the learner-directed FB-RR significantly improved the English reading comprehension proficiency of students with low proficiency. This hypothesis was partly accepted.

As mentioned above in 2.3, students in the high-proficiency subgroup did not read well, because of the similar reason of the instruction characteristics. Thus, in this topic, only the mode of instruction was discussed.

The selection of appropriate language learning strategies enables students to take responsibility for their own learning by enhancing learner autonomy, independence, and self-direction, necessary attributes for life-long learning (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). The learner-directed mode enhances students' achievement at all levels. However, a study conducted at Phetchaburi Rajabhat University revealed that high-proficiency students didn't like and had negative attitudes towards the group

process (Praphruitkit, 2002). They found the lessons awkward because the lessons in this mode were mostly based on group and pair works. The findings were consistent with the present study of FB-RR instruction. In conclusion, the learner-directed FB-RR was not effective for high-proficiency students who preferred tough and accelerated learning than the collaborative learning.

To explain why low-proficiency students significantly improved their reading comprehension proficiency after the treatment, again, the mode of learner-directed FB-RR was discussed. Students in this group learned in the specific time from the materials that the teacher provided. They worked in pairs, groups, and individually. Several activities were in a group structure that was not based on ability or achievement. This non-ability multilevel grouping is an underlying principle of Four Blocks which believes that learners can learn to read and write without being labeled and ability grouped. This allowed students who were working at lower levels to work with students reading at higher levels. This classroom condition provided them authentic opportunities to read within familiar and nonthreatening contexts, and offered them a high degree of autonomy and responsibility (Paterson & Elliott, 2006). It is a condition that fostered reading proficiency of low-proficiency students.

The learner-directed mode confirmed that socially based reading experiences build self-esteem and increase motivation to read (Paterson & Elliott, 2006), as show in student self-report data, from both the questionnaire and learning logs. In one study of literacy for students with learning difficulties, Swanson and Hoskyn (2001) suggested that either a small group setting or indirect teaching activities increased the productive power of instruction effectiveness. Furthermore, research evidence indicated that strategic instruction with learner-directed instruction improves reading comprehension and can help remediate the academic problems of such low-proficiency students (Dole, Brown & Trathen, 1996; Pressley & Wharton-McDonald, 1997). Based on proficiency levels, the findings of this study suggested that the learner-directed FB-RR most benefited intermediate and low-proficiency students.

## **Implications**

The findings suggested a promising Four-block literacy framework with repeated reading (FB-RR) for a reading instruction that can foster reading comprehension proficiency for university students. Several implications were drawn from the findings.

Firstly, the FB-RR is a comprehensive instruction which fosters the reading comprehension proficiency. The learning of word was conducted at the beginning because it was the underlying component in comprehending a text in foreign language reading. Then the Guided Reading allowed students to read the text using their background knowledge and cognitive strategies. The Self-Selected Reading allowed time for students to employ reading strategies without teacher's interference, have their own decision-making, and read for pleasure. In this block, students repeatedly read the same text for a few times. This promoted fluency, comprehension, and word recognition. Finally, the lesson was wrapped up with the practice of writing. By whatever mode was conducted, the students significantly gained their reading comprehension proficiency. Moreover, both groups of students showed their positive opinions on the FB-RR instruction.

Secondly, in planning the modes of instruction, the teacher should know that both teacher and learner can direct the FB-RR instruction. The finding from this study indicated that both modes were workable for developing the reading comprehension proficiency. As a result, the researcher suggested the moving from teacher-directed philosophy to teacher and learner in harmony. The learner-directed instruction should not be used in place of the teacher-directed instruction. Instead, teacher should use multiple class formats, including peer assisted and small groups. The teacher-directed instruction could be directed by firstly enhancing students' knowledge base. The learner-directed instruction should practice strategies that allow students to monitor and coordinate their learning more effectively. The findings of this study could be used by literacy educators to plan a reading instruction that meets the needs of students. It should also provide students with opportunities to see how EFL reading is important in their future education and career.

Thirdly, concerning levels of proficiency, the findings of this study suggested that FB-RR instruction most benefited the at-risk to intermediate students. Slow and inexperienced readers would be given multiple opportunities to read and write in a variety of individual, partner, and small group formats. Moreover, this instruction

works more effectively in less ability classes because the less experienced readers can get help and support from the more experienced readers. So, the instruction should be used in a whole class.

Fourthly, the learner-directed mode aims to promote students' success in developing autonomy. The autonomous learning in this study implies both independent and interdependent reading.

Fifthly, an implication from the learner-directed mode is that if the teacher provides students with a well-designed course and well-prepared materials, students will be less dependent on the teacher. This develops students' autonomy in language learning.

Lastly, a reading course implementing FB-RR is recommended to be used alongside with some other intervention for learners' benefits. In this study, the repeated reading was included in the self-selected reading time. In order to employ both teacher-directed and learner-directed modes in a reading course, the intervention should be directed by firstly enhancing students' knowledge base and secondly teaching students strategies that allow them to monitor and coordinate their learning more effectively. In addition, the teachers should concern students' positive opinions on reading comprehension when they plan the lesson. In this study, the Self-Selected Reading block helped a lot in fostering students reading proficiency and promoting positive opinions on the reading.

## **Recommendations**

This study serves as one of the research studies that explore the area of instructional development for reading English as a foreign language. It established a new reading framework which was developed by Cunningham, Hall, and Defee (1991) to enhance students' reading comprehension proficiency. The findings from this study generated some recommendations for the teacher and further study.

#### Recommendations for the teacher

Firstly, it is recommended that the FB-RR program include both teacher-directed and learner-directed modes. The researcher should realize that the teacher-directed mode should be used in the first few weeks, and the learner-directed mode should be introduced when students are familiar with the FB-RR lessons.

Secondly, the FB-RR should be used among struggling readers or early EFL readers. For more effective further research, it is recommended that the teacher encourage students to write something simple everyday during the Writing block. The teacher might dictate vocabulary as a quiz regularly to maintain students' word practice and to expand their word bank.

Lastly, the teacher should be trained for FB-RR teaching skills before implementing the instruction.

#### Recommendations for further study

Firstly, further research should examine students with different proficiency levels in correlation with their attitudes towards the instruction. For example, the research might explore why high-proficiency students who showed positive opinions on the instruction did not increase their reading proficiency after the instruction.

Secondly, further study related to FB-RR should explore other independent variables, such as genders, years of study, ability group, and majors.

Lastly, it is recommended that research on FB-RR be conducted with instruction of other languages, such as Thai as a native language.

### **Summary**

Chapter five comprised four parts. The first part dealt with a brief summary of the study. It reviewed the objectives of the study, the research design, the research methodology, and the research findings. The second part was concerned with the discussions of the findings based on two aspects: the modes of FB-RR instruction, and the levels of students' proficiency. The third part suggested the implications drawn

from the study. It implied that both teacher-directed and learner-directed FB-RR were powerful for the whole class. When considering proficiency levels, they most benefited the intermediate and low-proficiency students. Finally, the last part provided recommendations for further research that explores the area of instructional development for reading English as a foreign language.