Scaffolding English L2 Academic Reading through Contextualized Grammar

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Abstract

This study investigated the perceptions of Thai EFL students at the university level towards their English learning experiences. The two-pronged approach to data collection comprised a 27-item questionnaire administered to graduate students (*n* = 26) enrolled in an academic reading class and, following the dictum of triangulation, semi-structured interviews with three participants representing three levels of English proficiency. Aiming to shed light on the role of contextualized grammar in an academic reading class, the findings suggest that most participants considered course contents (e.g., analyzing sentences and locating main ideas) of great benefit. Moreover, doing focus-on-form exercises enabled them to see how English sentences were strung together to form a holistic meaning. In conjunction with this are the reported appropriate use of learning strategies and supportive teaching performances which helped them to realize that English L2 academic reading through contextualized grammar is useful and practical.

Key words: perceptions; contextualized grammar; English L2 academic reading

1. Introduction

The issue of grammar teaching in the L2 English class has received considerable attention. In fact, there have been arguments and counterarguments concerning the exact nature of grammar teaching (Batstone & Ellis, 2009). According to Macaro (2010), grammar has always been the *sine qua non* of language learning—first and second. He argues that second language acquisition landscape includes "[t]he acquisition of the rule system…[t]he development of language skills…[t]he beliefs that teachers and learners hold about second language learning…"(p. 9). Suffice it to say that grammar teaching is a topic worth investigating, especially given the English as a foreign language context to which most, if not all, Thai learners of English belong.

This study examined the perceptions of a group of Thai EFL learners at tertiary level towards English grammar teaching in an academic reading class. This line of research should be of sufficient relevancy given that the L2 teaching landscape has shifted from "method to postmethod" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), suggesting that close attention should be paid more to factors other than the so-called best teaching method. That is, of equal significance is a study on L2 learners' perceptions that potentially inform existing pedagogical practices. It is believed that findings reported in this study could shed light on the current teaching of LC 4001: Reading Skills Development in English for Graduate Studies, an English foundation course that the participants of this study enrolled in. Granted the focus of this study, it sought to answer the following research question:

What are salient perceptions of the participants towards course contents, their learning strategies, and teaching performances?

2. Focused Literature Review

2.1. Formal instruction

Saying that language learning cannot occur without some input is stating the obvious. But several second language acquisition researchers (e.g., Doughty & Varela, 1998; Muranoi, 2000) have pointed out that second language (L2) learners need not only natural language input but also sufficient opportunity to be taught grammar if they are to succeed in their L2 endeavors, construed as being fluent and accurate alike. That is to say, teacher intervention in the form of grammar instruction may yield educational benefits to students because some linguistic features need to be made salient for noticing by L2 learners; they cannot afford to be "picked up" by learners themselves.

2.2. Grammar

In this study, grammar is defined as a type of focus on form, which according to Doughty and Williams (1998), refers to the explanation of language structures not as an end in themselves but as ones used in combination with meanings and functions. Hence, grammar as used in this investigation entails not only authentic text but also context of use. In this sense, the focus of this study is on descriptive and discourse grammar, a topic discussed below.

2.2.1.Descriptive grammar

DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman (2002) explain that descriptive grammar, unlike prescriptive grammar, focuses on how people, not the grammar book, go about using language in real-life situations. Grammar rules serve as "…a blueprint for building well-formed structures… this approach focuses on how native speakers actually do speak and does not prescribe how they ought to speak" (p. 19). In this regard, descriptive grammar does not pass any value judgment, similar to the tenet of sociolinguistics that stresses that all language forms in real use are of equal importance and dignity.

2.2.2. Discourse grammar

Similar to descriptive grammar, discourse grammar, both spoken and written, takes into consideration language forms, functions and its uses in various contexts. DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman (2002) put forth that in discourse grammar, analysis is placed on the functional roles of grammatical structures in discourse. "Speakers and writers make grammatical choices that depend on contextual features and how they wish to position themselves in the world" (p. 24).

Studies abound in which the role and efficacy of grammar teaching in an ESL/EFL classroom are investigated (Loewen, 2004; McDonough, 2004; Norris & Ortega, 2001). Such studies, however, concern grammar classes mostly taught by native speaker teachers, although the interactions under study have been between non-native speaker learners with other non-native speaker learners in either homogenous or heterogeneous classes.

In the next section, I will discuss studies conducted to date concerning the role of grammar instruction in an L2 classroom.

2.3. Studies about grammar instruction

The past decade has witnessed an array of studies focusing on the role of grammar instruction in an L2 classroom (e.g., Erlam, 2003; Han, 2002). For example, Erlam (2003) investigated the effects of deductive and inductive instruction on the acquisition of direct object pronouns in French as a second language. She defined deductive teaching as isolated grammar instruction involving rule presentation and metalinguistic information, and inductive teaching as the teaching that focuses on meaning without explicit grammar instruction. The study also investigated the interaction between type of instruction and the morphological and syntactical features involved in the grammatical features under the study. The results revealed that those subjects in the deductive instructional group performed better at the task. Moreover, this study highlighted the difficulty of designing language measures that access implicit language knowledge.

Han (2002) conducted a small-scale study of recasts—a form of corrective feedback—employing eight adult L2 learners of English. These subjects were asked to complete written and oral narratives, and with the recasts provided by the instructor, they were able to improve their grammatical accuracy. More specifically, conditions that appeared to enable them to improve their grammar through the tasks provided were individualized attention, consistent focus and developmental readiness. Consistent focus refers to the pedagogical focus for the recast group during the instruction period (test consistency). "During the instruction sessions, the subjects consistently received recasts whenever the researcher noticed instances of tense inconsistency in their oral narratives," as Han (2002) puts it. In short, the findings of this study suggest that recast (a type of grammar instruction) is beneficial.

With reference to the Asian EFL context, Chan et al. (2002) conducted an empirical study involving form-focused remedial instruction. The main goal of their study was to explore the effectiveness of giving oral remedial instruction to secondary and university students, focusing on such grammar points as the connective "on the contrary. " The instrument consisted of two identical tests before treatment and after treatment, as well as a delayed post-test with different test items. The subjects (n = 80) were two classes of university students majoring in English in a Hong Kong university. Major findings suggested that …effective acquisition took place and both the experimental and control groups show

significant improvement in their performance. Where conditions of treatment were the same, students in the experimental group slightly outperformed those in the control group, suggesting that a model of remedial instruction structured in the form of proceduralized steps supported by explicit rules is more manageable and therefore more conducive to acquisition. (p. 24)

The aforementioned studies of the role of form-focused instruction indicate that grammar instruction is still viable; that is, grammar is strongly believed to exert much influence on the teaching effectiveness. At the same time, it has been found that teacher intervention in the form of grammar explanation in various forms (e.g., enhanced input, input flooding, recast, or corrective feedback) yield differing L2 acquisition outcomes, depending on the context of study.

In conclusion, the role of "appropriate" grammar teaching still needs to be considered, given the fact that both theories and empirical studies have provided even more avenues for further research in this area. Of course, the teaching of grammar that takes account of real use of grammar by real speakers of English will only help us to better understand the underlying principles of SLA. Indeed, the grammar war should now be stopped; the dichotomous thinking about to teach or not to teach grammar no longer holds true.

2.4. English L2 Academic Reading

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), academic reading is an active process involving linguistic, cognitive and world-knowledge factors. The act of reading is not simply the ability to decode and encode; rather, success or failure in L2 academic reading hinges on the L2 learner ability to actively engage in the reading process. Research abounds that delves into the challenging nature of L2 academic reading. In this study, I will briefly discuss four studies that are germane to the focus of the study.

Baker and Boonkit (2004) investigated learning strategies of Thai university students (n = 195) of a local university. The study focused on their use of learning strategies in reading and writing in the English for academic purposes context. The study intended to identify the most frequently used strategies and different strategy use between the more and less able students. The findings as reported revealed that, in the main, the subjects managed to use metacognitive, cognitive and compensation strategies. The most frequent use of these strategies, according to the authors, was due to the emphasis on academic English instruction. Another important finding reported is that "…students do use a number of social and affective strategies in their everyday reading in English" (p. 320).

Gorsuch and Taguchi (2010) conducted a longitudinal study ascertaining whether the use of repeated reading (RR) increased the reading fluency and comprehension of 30 young adult EFL learners in Vietnam. The findings reported showed evidence of the positive effects RR has on the subjects' reading fluency and comprehension development. Moreover, it was found that the subjects considered RR as having a meaningful role in increasing the use of metacognition in reading strategy use.

Based on the aforementioned studies on academic reading from both the learner and teacher foci, it may be concluded that English L2 academic reading is an area worth investigating, especially when dealing with the EFL context because of the ubiquity of reading as a source of L2 acquisition.

2.5. Learning Strategies

Given the fact that learning strategies have always been of great importance to L2 learners, the next section will briefly discuss extant studies with regard to L2 learning strategies that appear to be relevant to this study.

Huang (2011) examined the effects of classroom assessment events on English L2 Taiwanese learners' motivation and learning strategies. 105 college students took part in this study. Results revealed that the subjects in the more traditional test differed in their acceptances of the more innovative test as far as listening and reading abilities are concerned. But, concerning speaking ability, the more innovative test was considered better. This suggested that assessing learning strategies and motivation should be re-conceptualized, bearing in mind that the decision to employ any learning strategies could be motivated by factors other than the learner him/herself.

Qingquan et al. (2008) investigated learning strategy use of successful and unsuccessful Chinese EFL learners (n = 184). The study found that more able students used a wider range of learning strategies than less able ones, that the former were more active in class, having positive attitude toward the lessons, whereas the latter tended to use surface, L1-based, world-level, rote memory and gesture

strategies. It was also found that word-for-word translation did not help the less able students perform better at the reading tasks. The authors went on to report that, "[u]nlike their successful peers, the unsuccessful students often used out-of-context word-building… that entails shallow processing of language information that contributes less to language learning" (p. 351).

The studies reviews above indicate that learning strategies are of great importance to English L2 development. The more able students tend to use numerous strategies in tacking their reading or learning in English. Although learning strategies alone do not bring about durable success in L2 learning, they are useful in most cases of L2 acquisition/learning.

3 Method

3.1. Participants

All the respondents (n = 26) were first year students enrolled in LC 4001, a foundation course required of all entering students who had not been exempted based on their scores earned in the NIDA Entrance Exam (English Paper). They represented different fields of study in their first degree programs, ranging from public administration to human resource development. All of them had not been to an English-speaking country at the time of their participation in this study, nor had they studied in the English-medium programs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents exemplified a homogeneous group of participants as far as their English proficiency is concerned.

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Questionnaire

I first administered a set of questionnaires to students in my LC 4001 class titled "Reading Skills Development in English for Graduate Studies". Forty copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the students and 26 copies were returned with 24 completed and two not completely answered.

3.2.2. Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three students. Initially, ten students volunteered to be interviews, but in order to make certain that the interview should represent students at three different levels of English proficiency, namely excellent, good and poor. I decided to select from among the ten, using their mid-term test scores as the criteria. The three students were Choengchai (excellent), Piromrasamee (good), and Duriyatipmontri (poor). This purposive sampling attempted to triangulate the interview data sources that would lead to a high level of trustworthiness. According to Merriam (1998), "…triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity" (p. 207).

4. Findings

4.1. The questionnaire data

The questionnaire contained questions focusing on 1) course contents; 2) learning strategies; and 3) teaching performances. The following section will report the findings from 26 respondents as follows.

4.1.1. Course Contents

As far as course contents are concerned, 9 respondents strongly agreed that the overall contents were useful for reading; 14 agreed and 2 were undecided, resulting in 1 respondent thinking the content was of little use.

When it comes to more specific grammar points that concern types of sentences, one respondent strongly agreed that the teaching of the sentence types mentioned was very useful; 19 were in agreement, whereas 4 were undecided, thus leaving 2 respondents finding such teaching not that useful.

Concerning the teaching of noun clause, adjective clause and adverb clause, the results are as follows. Two respondents strongly agreed that the focus on those subordinate clauses was very helpful in their reading with 18 agreeing, 4 being undecided and 2 finding such teaching of little use.

As regards the teaching of core part, the results are as follows. Four respondents strongly agreed the core part helped them to read better; 11 respondents were in agreement; 7 were undecided and 3 found core part of little use.

When asked further whether they found the teaching of headwords and modifiers of use, one respondent strongly agreed that focusing on headwords and modifiers did help him/her to better

understand English with 8 people agreeing; 11 respondents were undecided and 2 found the study of headwords and modifiers less useful. It should be noted, however, that three respondents failed to respond to this and the remaining questions. Therefore, the report of the findings concerning item 6 onward was from 22 respondents rather than 26 as in previously reported items.

In this item, the respondents were asked about the teaching of sentence comprehension. Sentence comprehension is part of the exercises that allows students to apply the grammar points previously taught to the task of reading. And the pattern of responses is as follows. Two strongly agreed that the sentence comprehension exercises were useful; 10 respondents agreed, whereas 8 respondents could not decide, leaving 2 other respondents finding this exercise not that useful.

This item has to do with sentence interpretation, another major exercise that forces students to read critically while at the same time applying previously taught grammar points to the task of "reading between the lines". The response pattern is as follows. Three respondents strongly agreed that this exercise was useful; 10 other respondents agreed; 8 remained undecided with 1 respondent finding it not of much use.

Items 9 and 10 are concerned with vocabulary learning. Specifically, item 9 asked whether the teaching of contextual clues in determining the meaning of an unknown word was useful, and item 10 focused on the use of a monolingual dictionary, a skill that is becoming less and less common in the teaching of foundation English. I will describe results of items 9 and 10, respectively.

As for item 9, one respondent lent strong support to this kind of teaching with 10 respondents agreeing. However, 9 respondents were undecided as to the utility of contextual clues, leaving 2 finding the teaching of contextual clues of little use.

Concerning item 10, the response pattern is the following. Two strongly agreed; 10 agreed, 8 remained undecided with 2 considering the teaching of dictionary usage of little use.

The teaching of main idea and topic sentence of the reading passage is also of concern here. When asked about the usefulness of this paragraph-level exercise, the respondents came up with the following response patterns. One respondent strongly agreed to the utility of it; 15 were in agreement; five were undecided and one found it less useful.

In conjunction with the teaching of main ideas and topic sentences, movement of thoughts is also another exercise that should help respondents see the big picture of how ideas are discussed by a given author. It is believed that this reading technique would enable learners to read at the discourse level, focusing on cohesion and coherence of the reading paragraph or passage. Results from item 12 revealed an interesting pattern of responses as follows. One respondent was very supportive of the teaching of movement of thoughts; 8 others were in agreement. However, 11 respondents seemed ambivalent about its usefulness with 2 others considering the topic of little use.

Item 13 focused on one of the important reading skills, drawing inferences. The respondents varied in their responses as follows. One strongly agreed that the teaching of drawing inferences was of great help; 10 agreed with 10 other being ambivalent and one found it of little use.

Item 14 asked about the appropriate number of paragraph-level reading exercise. The respondents thought that 30 paragraphs were quite right (n =2), that the number was acceptable (n = 13), that they did not have any comment about the number (n= 5) and that the number was not appropriate (n = 1) and the number was absolutely unacceptable (n=1).

After all those detail questions concerning grammar points and the teaching of reading, item 15 shifted the focus to the overall contents once again, inviting the respondents to express their views about content appropriateness. The response patterns are as follows. A total of five found the contents much to their liking with 12 more agreeing that the contents were appropriate. However, four respondents felt ambivalent about the contents and one respondent did not seem to enjoy it.

Overall, the majority of respondents found effective the course contents that had been arranged structurally from word analysis to sentence analysis. The teaching of sentence types and phrases as well as core parts and headwords/modifiers was not only the case of explicit teaching but also conforming to the Processing Instruction (PI) framework (VanPatten and Uludag, 2011). According to VanPatten and Uludag (2011), PI enables L2 learners to "… receive structured input activities, which contain input manipulated in particular ways to push learners away from less-than-optimal processing strategies" (p. 45). In particular, the respondents appeared to suggest that explicit, teacher-led teaching

allowed them sufficient opportunities to interact with the teacher and text in ways that better understanding could be fostered. In this sense, the respondents believed that teacher talk led to their learning opportunities (Walsh, 2002).

4.1.2. Learning Strategies

Items 16 to 22 are concerned with learning strategies. The respondents varied in their response patterns as would be expected. Item 16 focuses on the use of sentence structure in dividing sentence elements. In this regard, one respondent strongly agreed that he/she had used it; seven agreed that they had resorted to sentence parsing; 12 were not certain about their use and two did not report using it.

The contextual clues strategy, item 17, provided the following response pattern. Three respondents reported having greatly used the strategy with 9 others agreeing they had used it, whereas 8 participants were not clear about their use and two stated that they had hardly used it.

Also included in this subheading is the use of a monolingual dictionary as a learning strategy. The respondents answered this item as follows. One respondent reported having extensively used it; five others agreed that they used it regularly; 10 participants were ambivalent and 6 others reported having rarely used it.

Item 19 asked if the respondents had analyzed the sentences in order to come up with the correct interpretation of a given sentence. And the answers are as follows. Nine respondents agreed that they had done so; 11 were not certain whether they had done it, and the remaining two reported not having used it.

Item 20 questioned whether the respondents had used English-Thai translation techniques in reading the sentences and paragraphs provided. The response patterns are the following. Two stated that they had extensively translated the text; 13 agreed that they also had translated from English into Thai; five were reluctant to commit themselves to either yes or no and two others reported having rarely used it.

Item 21, which is concerned with the strategy of looking for key words in a given paragraph for better understanding, revealed the following response patterns. Fourteen respondents reported having used key words in identifying the meaning; six others were not forthcoming about whether they were using the strategy or not, and two others reported having rarely used it.

Item 22, which asked if the respondents had used mixed methods—translation and grammar—in helping themselves to understand the text, gave the following patterns. Three respondents clearly stated that they had used both methods; 11 others agreed that they also had used both translation and grammar, whereas 6 remained uncommitted to either of the methods with 2 more respondents reporting having barely used either of them.

In responding to items concerning the use of learning strategies in relation to grammar points previously taught, namely types of sentences and subordinate clauses, phrases and core parts, including headwords/modifiers, the respondents' answers pointed to the ambivalence they held towards the incorporation of the two in the task of reading. For example, they were uncertain whether dissecting sentences was what they were doing when reading, even if they may have found it a useful strategy. Or when asked about the use of monolingual dictionary as a learning strategy, many of them were not certain, which could suggest that they never used it. In the case of sentence interpretation, many respondents seemed unaware whether they had used sentence parsing in so doing. This may have been due to their overreliance on vocabulary knowledge rather than sentence structure knowledge in unlocking the implied meaning of the sentence. Interestingly enough, when asked about their use of English-Thai translation in reading the sentences, many of them tended to use this strategy a great deal. This should not be surprising, given the fact that L2 readers are more inclined to rely on their first language background knowledge in reading the L2, especially if their L2 proficiency is somewhat low. The use of English-Thai translation was also reaffirmed in the responses to item 22, which was about the use of mixed methods—translation and grammar. In this case, many respondents said that they had used both in a given reading task

4.1.3. Teaching Performances

Items 23 to 27 invited the respondents to evaluate teaching performances of the teacher. Specifically, the question items focused on whether the teacher had prepared his lessons methodically (item 23); whether the lecture was given in an effective manner (item 24); whether the teacher could professionally handled student questions (item 25); whether the teacher was punctual (item 26); and

whether the teacher behaved properly in class (item 27). I will discuss each of these items below.

The respondents gave the following responses for item 23. Ten respondents strongly agreed that the teacher had prepared his lessons very well; 12 also agreed.

Concerning item 24, the pattern of responses could be reported as follows. Fifteen respondents strongly agreed that the lecture was effectively executed and the remaining seven thought that the teaching was well conducted.

When it comes to the teacher's ability to handle questions in class, the respondents thought that the teacher did an excellent job (n =14) and that the teacher did well (n = 8).

Regarding punctuality, the teacher also was rated well with 18 respondents strongly agreed that the teacher was very punctual, thus leaning four others rating the teacher punctuality well.

The last item which is concerned with the teacher's behavior in class revealed the following patterns. Fifteen respondents thought that the teacher's behavior was quite appropriate, and seven respondents provided a positive answer as well.

As can be seen from the findings reported above, most respondents found the teaching performances acceptable. This suggests that non-native English speaking teachers could teach as well as or, in this case, could be a better choice because the course contents focused on grammar points and low-ability students. Had they had a native-speaking teacher teach the course, they could have produced different response patterns. However, this study did not aim to compare and contrast teaching effectiveness of native- and non-native-speaking teachers.

To properly answer the main research question concerning salient perceptions of the participants towards course contents, their learning strategies, and teaching performances, one cannot afford to rely on survey results. The following section will be results of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the three participants as mentioned earlier: Choengchai (excellent), Piromrasamee (good) and Duryatipmontri (poor). Their ideas are discussed below.

4.2. The semi-structured interview data

When asked why they found the course contents acceptable, all three were in agreement that the contents appeared to help them better understand sentence mechanics. For example, Choengchai said, "Because unit 1 started from sentence analysis…you see…I had a good chance to review my understanding of English sentences. But of course, there were many difficult words. That's another thing." Choengchai's belief about the usefulness of sentence analysis was corroborated by Piromrasamee, who asserted that "When you began teaching types of sentences and subordinate clauses, I think they were useful because now I could see how strings of words were put together…But then again, the problem is too many hard vocabulary…sometimes it's discouraging." However, when the same question was asked to Duriyatipmontri, the least able student, she quipped, "I don't know. Admittedly, I really don't know what's going on in class. I had to force myself to come to class because I felt that the teacher was so very eager to teach. You know…I think it's not OK to skip class. But in terms of understanding, I found the lessons, especially those sample sentences somewhat hard to understand."

Once probed further about other content details, such as the teaching of core part, headwords/modifiers and so on, the three interviewees were of interesting opinion. Choengchai said, "the core part exercises really forced me to look closely at all the words in the sentences…that's good because I had never thought before that all the words in a sentence have a function to play." Piromrasamee, on the other hand, believed that focusing on core part is not that necessary. She said, "I don't know…but the thing is trying to find core part seems to confuse me because a core part doesn't give any meaningful elements. So why bother?" And Duriyatipmontri put it that, " when we did the core part exercise, I was at a total loss because I still had to struggle with understanding words, so how could I jump to the level of having to divide up sentence elements…Just forget it."

In terms of learning strategies, their answers revealed the following. Choengchai said that he managed to apply the sentence knowledge to the task of comprehending and interpreting sentences. However, Piromrasamee and Duriyamontri were not quite certain. In fact, both of them believed that because most of the vocabulary found in the text and exam were beyond their understanding, no matter how hard they tried to analyze them, eventually they could not really make full use of the sentence knowledge. As Piromrasamee put it, "I know that I should have applied the sentence knowledge taught

to trying to comprehend or interpret the sentences, but because of the overwhelming difficulty level of vocabulary, I had to give up." Or Duriyatipmontri said, "trying to understand and interpret the sentences both in the exercises and the exam was very hard for me. Poor vocabulary is the real problem here…Who could help me?"

As for teaching performances, all three considered the teaching and explanations successful. As Choengchai put it, "you seemed to know how to explain difficult concepts to less able students. Because you provided lots of exercises, I could see your points clearly." Piromrasamee said, "You were Ok, although I wish you had spoken more slowly. You were very patient when some of us appeared not to get the point you were trying to make." And Duriyatipmontri said, "I was very afraid that you would be impatient with me. I think you must have liked to teach only smart students. But it turned out that you also could handle less able students well. When we gave you wrong answers, you didn't laugh at us, but tried to help… You must have been very tired teaching us…I think…but thank you."

5. Conclusion

This study intended to find out about the perceptions of a group of university students concerning their experiences of studying an English foundation course at a local university. Salient perceptions are that the majority of the participants found course contents useful, albeit difficult for some of them. Explicit grammar instruction in this academic reading class was not only relevant but also supportive of their understanding of the lessons. This finding was in congruence with most of the studies reported in the literature. In fact, the findings reported here about the utility of grammar teaching lend further support of the enabling role of grammar in the English class, even the reading one. While most participants viewed sentence samples used in the lessons somewhat hard, they realized that those represent "real" English that they would eventually encounter in their other content classes.

As far as learning strategies are concerned, the majority of them appeared to have used English to Thai translation for the most part. In this sense, translation could be viewed as a scaffold that helped many of them make some sense of the reading task at hand. However, it should be noted that many of them were ambivalent about the other uses of learning strategies. To confirm this finding, a follow-up study could be conducted that would allow the researcher to directly observe their learning behaviors in class. It could be that they were not aware that they had used some of the strategies but such use was not properly documented, thus resulting in their disregard of the strategies employed.

Concerning teaching performances, the interviewees brought up key factors suggesting that teachers should teach with passion. The use of Thai, the shared language, turned out to be conducive to proper understanding for most of the students. The teacher's eagerness to teach and students' willingness to learn are key ingredients that made this class a success from the teaching performance perspective. Certainly, the challenges that lie ahead need to be confronted with care. As much as it takes the whole village to raise a child, it takes the whole teaching community, especially the teacher, to enable students to learn successfully.

If as Littlewood's (2010) study focusing on students' conceptions of the 'ideal English lesson' reveals that "[A]ttention has moved away from set methods and towards ways in which teachers can develop their own pedagogy based not only on general principles but also on their understanding of the specific situation and learners" (p. 46) rings true, then the findings as reported in this study suggest that we now must stop being confined to rigid teaching methods and dispel the myth as to whether grammar should be taught. The overwhelming majority of the participants in this study turned out to rely heavily on contextualized grammar, which can be construed as scaffolding their L2 academic reading improvement.

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