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## **Reading Matters: Framing and Metacognition with Thai Postgraduate Students**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Reading is a critical skill for postgraduate students—effective reading, reading comprehension, and awareness of varying interpretations contribute to students' greater progress in their academic fields (Anderson, 1999). Many students arrive at their Australian university with a mismatch of expectations and skills. This study examined reading practices as a holistic, multi-dimensional phenomenon, exploring students' reading practices between their first and third semesters at an Australian university. The overall aim of this part of the research was to develop a better understanding of and the changes in reading practices of Thai postgraduate students, in particular the intertextual and extratextual framing used, and the extent of their self-knowledge.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, there has been an increase in international student enrolment, particularly into Australian universities. Academic faculty members often express concern about the learning approaches of international students. In particular, Smith (as cited in Zuber-Skerritt, 1998) highlights reading problems as one of the most neglected challenges facing international postgraduate students. Reading is, of course, of particular importance to their study; much subject-specific academic reading is required to give the students grounding in their field. Reading is a complex skill influenced by background knowledge, educational upbringing, and previous experience in reading. Part of a larger study, the overall aim of this study was to develop a better understanding of the reading practices of a cohort of Thai postgraduate students studying at an Australian university, in particular the intertextual and extratextual framing used, and the extent of their self-knowledge. In addition, this part of the research examined the changes in reading practices between these students' first and third semesters, taking into account the sociocultural and educational influences both in Thailand and in Australia.

### **METACOGNITION AND FRAMING THEORIES**

Around the world, throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, there was an extensive amount of research related to metacognition and reading, much of it regarding second language readers (Anderson, 1991; Block, 1986, 1992; Carrell, 1989; Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, 1996; Knight, Pardon, & Waxman, 1985; Padron, 1992; Pritchard, 1990). Many

researchers, for example, Baker and Brown (1984), have been aware since the turn of the century that reading incorporates the “planning, checking, and evaluating activities now considered as metacognition” (p. 354). Metacognitive experiences, according to Flavell, are “cognitive or affective experiences that pertain to a cognitive enterprise” (p. 107). Most researchers agree that metacognition, with specific regard to reading, includes two components: *knowledge* and *self-regulation* (otherwise known as executive control), with motivation often considered a third component. Successful cognitive monitoring can lead to the ability to distinguish which tasks are easy and which are difficult (Moses & Baird, 2000).

Metacognitive-strategy research for reading has been significant because it has demonstrated two important aspects: (1) readers’ metacognitive awareness of their reading processes and strategies enhances proficiency (Auerbach & Paxton, 1997), and (2) training in strategy can result in a raised awareness of reading problems, as well as subsequent efforts for reading improvement (Park-Oh, 1994). Leon and Carretero (1995), for example, assessed the outcomes of an instructional program designed to improve knowledge and use of expository text structure as a comprehension strategy with good, as well as poor, first language (L1) readers. The results showed improvement for the proficient readers in expository text comprehension, as well as improvement in the ability to transfer the strategies to texts whose organizational structures had not previously been taught. The program, however, did not have the same effect on less proficient readers.

In addition to metacognitive theory, this research was grounded in *framing theory*, which identifies *how* readers approach texts and the reasons for their approaches, and helps identify any mismatches in readers’ expectations regarding studying in a different educational setting. While not widely used for reading research, the framing theory has been used in the sociolinguistic research of Tannen (1993), sociologists of education such as Bernstein (1971), and the research of linguists such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Gumperz (1982a, 1982b). More recently, framing theory was used in a study by Reid, Kirkpatrick, and Mulligan (1998), who found that foreign students often experienced a mismatch of frames. They stated that while both native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English will experience “interpretive ‘gaps’ in the knowledge, experiences and assumptions” they apply to reading, non-native speakers of English are likely to be less “culturally in tune” (p. 71). Using metacognitive theory in combination with framing theory enhances the identification of the awareness of metacognitive reading features (i.e., the knowledge of self, and the identification of readers’ expectations that guide their approaches to reading).

The study presented here is part of a longitudinal study examining the intertextual, extratextual, intratextual and circumtextual framing and metacognition used by two cohorts of postgraduate students, Thai and Indian/Bangladeshi. *Intertextual framing* and *extratextual framing*, along with self-knowledge, were the foci of this study with regard to Thai postgraduate students. Intertextual framing occurs when a reader links other readings with his present reading to help make sense of the present reading; extratextual framing takes place when a reader uses his or her background knowledge and experience to assist in interpreting the text. New information causes reframing of what has gone before and affects expectations of what lies ahead (Reid, Kirkpatrick, & Mulligan, 1998).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Much of reading research has focussed on individual components of the reading process and a number of studies examined the influence of text structure on reading. For example, Anderson (1991) and Block (1992) investigated the influence of text structure on ESL readers in conjunction with the good/poor variable. Research has demonstrated that good

readers seem to use the text structure to aid recall of the main ideas in the text, as well as a means of facilitating comprehension (Leon & Carretero, 1995). Research has also focussed on the difficulties experienced by readers related to the structures of academic texts (Bhatia, 1993; Clyne, 1981, 1987; Hinkel, 1994; Holm & Dodd, 1996). Taylor and Tingguang (1991) conducted a comparison of introductions to scientific papers among Anglo-Americans writing in English, Chinese writing in English, and Chinese writing in Chinese. Their findings indicated that there was an underlying rhetorical structure common to all language groups, but that there were systematic variations, some of which related to the discipline rather than the language or nationality of the writers.

Good thinkers, according to Brown and Pressley (1994), use cognitive strategies, and the appropriate use of these strategies is engineered through two types of metacognition: (a) long term knowledge about where and when to use the strategies they know, and (b) the use of monitoring and shifting of strategies where necessary. Rather than revealing which strategies were used and how frequently, a study from a metacognitive perspective by Finkbeiner (1998) suggested that German high-school students may not be adequately applying metacognitive strategies to their reading (i.e., being aware of their reading, monitoring, and controlling their reading). She added that *university* students in Germany might also be using less than adequate metacognitive strategies. Thus, these students may not have the strategies that university lecturers often assume they have.

Fitzgerald's (1995) review of research of ESL readers in the United States showed that ESL readers seemed to use a specific process "less often, less well, and/or more slowly" (p. 181). In addition, ESL readers used fewer and different metacognitive strategies, monitored comprehension more slowly, and read more slowly than native readers. However, Anderson (1991) found that more proficient ESL readers used a wider variety of strategies. Problems resulting in surface-level reading were highlighted in another study (Burke & Wyatt-Smith, 1996): discipline-specific terminology, reliance on general, specialist, or bilingual dictionaries, and having to re-read.

Research on knowledge and awareness of strategy use has been important to reading efficiency, but much of the research has been with the reading of single texts. Academic study requires, however, the reading of multiple texts, as well as complex abstract material. Chi (1995a) investigated the mental connections made by 15 advanced Taiwanese ESL students while reading two short stories, and the effect of self-report methodology. He found repeated evidence of readers metacognitively monitoring and controlling their intertextual linking of the texts. This research shows that when ESL readers are ready, they can not only interpret single texts but can relate to two or more texts effectively when given a learning environment conducive to making personal, meaningful connections between texts. This study explored the use of multiple texts to explain meanings using the framing theory. A study by Fernandez de Morgado (2009) using an extensive reading program showed that, while students enjoyed the extra reading, their reading performance was essentially the same as it was before the program. However, the students reported that they felt their vocabulary and comprehension skills had improved.

In a study of a different kind focussing on interpretation and the use of background knowledge (framing extratextually), Hinkel (1994) compared native speaker and non-native speaker thoughts on four short essays, two written by native speakers and two by advanced ESL learners. She found disparities in the interpretations between the native and non-native speakers of English. Despite being familiar with English language conventions, the non-native speakers from Southeast Asian cultures, influenced by Confucian and Taoist conventions, did not share common background knowledge and the contextual assumptions associated with L2 rhetorical conventions; hence, their interpretations were dissimilar to those of the native speakers.

Another aspect of ESL reading research is that much of it has been comparative in nature. Many studies have attempted to correlate the variables in comparative studies between L1 and L2 readers, thus comparing with a target monolingual competence rather than an L2 competence. Cook (1992) suggests that such comparisons may be invalid if we consider L2 readers to be different and, therefore, researchers should at least compare L2 readers to fluent bilingual readers rather than monolingual readers. Some studies have incorporated university students (e.g., Carroll, 1992), but only a few have studied the strategy use of postgraduate students (e.g., Tercanlioglu, 2004). Tercanlioglu (2004) indeed carried out research with postgraduate students from different cultures; however, her study grouped the differing cultures together simply as ESL readers. The study presented here focussed specifically on Thai students' reading practices while studying in their own countries and how their reading practices changed during their study at an Australian university.

## METHOD

The conceptual framework underlying this study combined metacognition and framing theories. Concepts derived from these two theoretical frameworks were used to explore the nature and origin of students' reading practices. In particular, intertextual framing, extratextual framing, and knowledge of self were the foci in exploring four questions:

1. To what extent do Thai postgraduate students intertextually and extratextually frame their reading and display self-knowledge when studying in their first semester at an Australian university?
2. How do the students' home country and Australian experiences shape their reading practices in their first semester?
2. To what extent does the same cohort of Thai postgraduate students use intertextual and extratextual framing when studying during their third semester at an Australian university, and how do they display self-knowledge?
4. How do the students' home country and Australian experiences shape their reading practices in their third semester?

The data reported here came from individual interviews and pair think-aloud protocols. The texts used for the study were discipline-specific academic texts (chosen by each participant) and two general-interest texts, one for each semester (chosen by the researcher). The participants were asked to read their own discipline-specific text prior to the interview, and were advised that they would be asked questions relating to how they had approached the reading of this article. For the pair think-aloud protocols the pairs were asked to vocalize their thoughts as they read the general-interest texts. There were seven phases for the entire study: First, data from the individual interviews and the pair think-alouds were coded and categorized. Second, the interviews were grouped, compared, and re-analysed. Third, the interviews and pair think-alouds were grouped together, re-analysed, and interpreted to provide explanations of the students' reading practices. Patterns of similarities were found and differences highlighted through this three-staged process. The same process took place in the third semester, enabling a seventh phase, which was a comparison between the first and third semesters.

## Profile of the Thai Students

The six Thai participants, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2, were chosen for the study because they had only just arrived in Australia to embark on their postgraduate study. They had all completed their undergraduate study at Thai universities, and the main language they used at home was Thai. These common aspects enabled the researcher to investigate the Thai sociocultural and educational influences that might affect their reading practices when first taking up their study. The researcher was then able to identify the changes in reading practices that were taking place as they progressed through their study. Some participants left the university during the study and had to be replaced by other participants; this was not an ideal situation but the replacement students had to have been studying at the university for the same amount of time as the dropped students in order to be accepted on this study. These replacement students are designated with a subscript (e.g., B2<sub>2</sub>).

## Texts

For the pair think-alouds in semester one, I chose a piece by Brown (1994) describing contradictory claims by scientists that the parasite, *schistosoma mansoni*, could resist the drug praziquantel. The disease, according to the author, may have come about due to development projects in the Senegal river encouraging the spread of a kind of snail which harbours *S. mansoni*. In the third semester, I used an article by Crabb (1997) relating the charge against two health workers in France following allegations that they had released doses of growth hormone that had not been treated to inactivate the rogue prion thought to cause Creutzfeldt-Jacob's disease. These particular texts were chosen because they were one-page, general-interest pieces with intratextual features. The texts did not require any technical knowledge, and the participants could be expected to have some background knowledge of the topics. Furthermore, the texts did not deal with political, religious or any culturally sensitive matter. The texts each comprised approximately 750 words and could be read within the time allowance of one hour. It was equally important that participants had the time to read an entire article and not just a few paragraphs of a text. The texts were authentic in that there were no 'planted' inconsistencies or errors.

## FIRST SEMESTER READING PRACTICES

### Extratextual Framing

Readers are always able to frame extratextually, using whatever background knowledge and experiences they may possess. A1, for example, could examine and understand the formulae in her chosen academic article from her background in general chemistry. However, not all background experiences can be drawn on to expedite understandings of new content. C2, for her studies, was required to read Australian Law. She had some background knowledge of Thai law, but the law in Thailand is completely different from Australia: in Australia, the law is used to solve disputes, while in Thailand the law is used to negotiate a resolution first, because companies always wish to avoid sullyng their reputation by going to court. (She, laughing, reported that this usually involves money.) B1, who said she only had some background in computing to assist with her multimedia studies, made an important point about information from books and information learned from experience: "If I have to read a book about the engineering, [I] cannot imagine well, you cannot imagine knowledge." Asking students, then, to simply read further may not be the

whole answer to the building of conceptual knowledge. Some experiential learning may have to be considered.

The participants were able to demonstrate extratextual framing, however, when reading the general-interest text, as they had some knowledge and experience they could draw on from their life in Thailand. For example, regarding the text about controlling parasites, A2 related it to the situation in northeast Thailand.

Participants' childhood cartoon reading proved useful for understanding the first-semester general-interest text. As C1 and C2 explained, additional knowledge of snails came from their reading of Japanese cartoons, which, they said, are very educational for Thai children as they have sound scientific knowledge. Thai cartoons, on the other hand, are very serious, they said, because in "Thai culture, we don't want to teach the student in enjoying, in enjoyable way." Both C1 and C2 said they had to convince their parents that Japanese cartoons contributed to their education. This insight into learning as 'serious business' may account also for the participants' lack of reading in general.

### **Intertextual Framing**

Intertextual framing can be carried out through the Internet, but the participants considered this limited. A2<sub>2</sub> used the Internet, but not for extensive literature searches, he said, because it "takes a long time." The participants were aware that many of their reading strategies were time-consuming, and they reported later how they endeavoured to make changes in their reading practices to enable them to read more quickly and efficiently.

Reading newspapers was a more accessible tool for intertextual framing for the Thai students. Many of them stated that they often read the local Thai *Student Weekly* to help them with English. They were able to understand the articles, they said, because they had background knowledge of the news items and/or had seen the issues on television. In Thailand, readings in undergraduate classes were supplied by the lecturers and were usually newspaper articles. This may have been because there was, according to these students, a lack of texts in their university library. It was found, too, that English language classes mainly consisted of grammar and writing lessons. Over half of the Thai cohort stated that they did not read texts in their English classes. Participants' accounts of their English language class practices in Thailand help to explain their lack of confidence with the language and their reticence about tackling academic texts on their own during their first semester. While the participants demonstrated reading practices that related to their Thai educational and sociocultural background, some changes in their reading habits had already begun to take place.

### **Self Knowledge**

Generally, the participants were aware that they had come to Australia with limited reading experience and so it was difficult for them to link their current reading with previous readings. C2 explained that students in Thailand read to answer examination questions and there was the fear that, if they read other than the prescribed texts, information from those might not be appropriate for the examination questions. Besides, she added, lecturers in Thailand gave outlines of the examination and advised students which chapters would cover the questions.

C1, on the other hand, had done some reading in Thailand, especially on the topic of composition in art, which enabled him to frame intertextually and make meaning from his texts in Australia. He had not, however, had much experience in following up references because of the difficulty of borrowing books in Thailand. The process, he said, was long and

complex. For example, both C1 and A2 explained that, even if they visited the prestigious Chulalongkorn university library, it could take a whole day, or they might not be able to borrow at all, if the university chose to admit only its own students.

B2<sub>2</sub> pointed out another difficulty. She had been accustomed to step-by-step guidance, she said, during her undergraduate studies; the lecturers in Australia, in contrast, she said, did not state precisely what they wanted. She explained the mismatch in expectations between her lecturers and herself: “They [Australian lecturers] do not say, ‘I want the issue, I want the problem’; we have to think about that [ourselves].”

There is another aspect, particularly for the participants who were studying non-language areas. One participant put it this way: “I have never been interested in language; it makes me feel afraid. I must now give attention to language – [I] find it very tiring.” This is an aspect that lecturers need to be more aware of, that students who are not studying languages still have to study English in order to complete their discipline courses, and without the interest or confidence in studying a language, this is an additional burden.

C2 found that reading the unit guidelines and some other brief reading from the reserved texts in the library was sufficient reading for her course; she hardly used the textbooks bought. It may be that students’ understandings are delayed if course requirements are such that they do not demand much reading. There is a need for more research regarding the effects of course reading requirements on foreign students’ reading development.

## CHANGING READING PRACTICES

Overall, these Thai participants were aware, even in the first semester, that their reading practices did not meet the more demanding reading requirements of an Australian university. They described a range of difficulties they had with reading: lack of vocabulary, lack of knowledge of meaning, and lack of grammar and structure. One poignant comment said it all: “I can reading but I no meanings.” They soon noted that their background and experiences from their home country inhibited their ability to read a range of texts with full understanding, that Thai teaching methods, reading practices, purposes and expectations influenced their reading in a way which was not necessarily appropriate in the Australian environment.

Memorization was a strategy often used in Thailand, and one that the participants realized was not effective. The participants realized that they could not remember the large amount of material incorporating unfamiliar vocabulary, and as a result, they were gradually putting different reading practices into place; they started to speak of reading for understanding rather than for acquiring vocabulary or memorizing facts. They mentioned a different sequence important for their postgraduate study: reading for understanding *followed* by memorization. A study by Marton, Dall’Alba, and Kun (1996), with 17 Chinese mainland teacher-educators identified various relationships between memorization and understanding, and among them was the notion that “we more readily memorize or remember what we understand” (p. 76). Also identified in this study was the concept of understanding *through* memorization.

Linked to memorization is translation, which was another common Thai strategy. Again, because of the large amounts of reading, the difficulty of finding appropriate meanings and the time it took to translate meant this was no longer a satisfactory strategy. In line with O’Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo, and Kupper’s (1985) study, as second language skill improves, translation declines over time. The use of translation was indeed declining, and the participants were taking notes in English when possible, using English/English dictionaries and reading Australian newspapers to help them ‘think in

English.’ However, in order to overcome this problem of text complexity many of the participants used translation to confirm meanings. C1 explained that their difficulties were related to the Thai system of teaching by translation: “We study English by translation in Thai, in Thai sentence; we don’t study by understanding... some sentence [in English] is long sentence and have sub sentence inside it; is difference from Thai sentence.” Although causing difficulties, the participants explained that translation could not be abandoned altogether, as it had to be used to ‘find meaning.’

The participants (except for A2<sub>2</sub>) were still content to read single, simple texts rather than try to compare texts and author views or question the presented material. More evaluation of texts might have been possible if there had been more opportunity to engage in discussion. The participants’ perception of reading at an Australian university was that it was a solitary activity as can be seen from this statement of B2: “No-one going to tell you how to do that; no-one care; you have to do it [the reading] yourself—quite private.”

There was some evidence of extratextual framing in the first semester, but little intertextual framing. Despite having had limited reading experience (apart from compulsory texts at university), all the participants were anxious to engage in self-directed learning. The students were aware they would have to time-manage the large amount of reading now required; they would have to have some of the concepts explained by supervisors, and they would have to memorize for understanding rather than for acquiring vocabulary or memorizing facts. The most important shift was to the reading-for-understanding, followed by memorization.

### THIRD SEMESTER READING PRACTICES

As in first semester, the analysis was based on two main sources of data: individual interviews and pair think-alouds, but also included the researcher’s observations and students’ self-reports. Once again, for the individual interview, each participant chose a discipline-specific text and read it prior to the interview. To enable comparison, the general-interest article for the third semester was of a similar structure and style to the one used in the first semester. It was a brief general-interest article which incorporated a picture as well as a table, both of which could be used as intratextual cues, information *within* the body of the text which could be used by the reader to aid interpretation. The first semester text also had two photographs as intratextual cues.

#### Extratextual Framing

Extratextual framing was still used only to a limited extent and, at times, it hindered understanding. Nevertheless, some of the participants attempted to use background knowledge to guess vocabulary items, evaluate texts, generate inferences, and make moral judgments. One method of filling in knowledge gaps is through attendance at lectures. However, A1 and others stated that they found it difficult to follow lectures and ‘catch the words.’ She spoke of how this felt: “We are not sure that we learn anything from some classes like... she just talk and talk and talk and we watch each other—you know anything, no!”

Another problem with texts was their cultural content. B2<sub>3</sub> found that compulsory texts in her discipline had content that was unsuitable for her work in Thailand. One text, for example, discussed management with ‘vision,’ drawing on staff initiatives. She could not apply the concepts in her own workplace in Thailand. Her office, she explained, focussed on



staff development. This meant, she said, “giving information to staff, not giving opportunities to initiate change.”

C1 displayed evaluative language (thereby demonstrating extratextual framing) when he described his impression of the situation discussed in the general-interest text, the allegations that health workers had released contaminated growth hormone. He said that a few French people ‘do something tricky, not try to do the right thing.’ C1 demonstrated his ability to analyze the situation, drawing on his knowledge of an occurrence in Thailand. A friend of his father’s decided to donate his organs at death, but when he died they were useless, C1 said, because the organs were destroyed ‘from inside.’ Therefore, C1 concluded, because the natural growth hormone could be contaminated, the synthetic growth hormone should be used:

I don’t think a dead body can create something that when we alive it work, but then we die it maybe out of operation already, so how can we make sure that after we die that organ is not poisoning or spoilt already?

An aspect of extratextual framing is inferencing. In the following example, statements of uncertainty were followed by an inference using the table in the text. A1, having confirmed that nearly 50% of the people contracting the disease CJD were from France, stated that she was confused. She referred to the table that showed the number of CJD cases linked to the growth hormone treatment. Then A2<sub>2</sub> inferred a link between the growth hormone and CJD:

A1: Nearly 50% are France, oh, confused, 50 are France, another 40 are other nations.

A2<sub>2</sub>: This one according to the... 50 of the 90 plus people are French so the most of this lot sent to France.

A1: More than 50%

A2<sub>2</sub>: Yes, French people contract so the main problem is in France; is there any record for another country? Yes, it is France, 50, Britain, 22, another is 3, another is 4; CJD is linked to growth hormone treatment so this is...

A1: From this table I am not sure I understand clearly—50 persons from France suffer from CJD.

A2<sub>2</sub>: Yes.

A1: It mean people in France, there are many people got sick, more than other countries.

A2<sub>2</sub>: Yes, so many people, there one, two, three, four, five country, France, Britain, United States, New Zealand and others; total is 94, 50 person who contracted CJD were in France so the main problem is in France.

A1: So from this table we think the investigator thinks CJD caused by the growth hormone, I think maybe.

C1 displayed moral judgement and inference when he surmised that the untreated growth hormone had either been used because the pharmacists “do not care about this,” or maybe because of “high demand.” Later, in the retrospective interview, C1 explained the Thai cultural expectation that the growth hormone would be in high demand was due to the

wish of many Thais to be as tall as Europeans. This demand also meant that the hormone was very expensive.

Although most of the participants had limited specific background knowledge, they showed that, with sufficient interest and motivation, they could still frame extratextually to a certain degree.

### **Self-Knowledge**

The participants, in the third semester, demonstrated awareness of the need to acquire cultural knowledge (as well as linguistic and discipline-specific knowledge) by consciously using television and film. In addition, all of the participants reported increased academic reading which arose from the necessity to fill the knowledge gap (which they had identified in first semester) for their chosen academic disciplines. Of particular note, was the reading of journal articles. A reason for increased journal reading was participants' greater confidence in accessing library and internet sources. All the participants had realized that with increased reading came increased understanding.

In the third semester argument by analogy and comparison was demonstrated to a greater degree than it had been in the first semester. Framing extratextually, A1, for example, recalled the thalidomide tragedy where thousands of babies (around 8,000 according to Time magazine February 23, 1962) were born deformed because their mothers used a sleeping-pill-tranquilizer called thalidomide. She inferred that the discovery of the cause of these events related to the situation described in the text she had read: "Maybe this case, CJD, they found what is the cause of this disease after – after, they find out this come from growth hormone."

### **Intertextual Framing**

Intertextual framing involves reading of other texts not only to make connections between them, but also to following up on references, which is critical for academic study. C1 reported that finding texts, however, was still a laborious task. He still found library searches very time-consuming, but that he needed to visit the library now to find books in order to explain terms he did not understand in his current reading. Nevertheless, he was also finding, like the other participants, that the increased reading led to better understanding. The time element inhibited C1 from following up references; he preferred to find texts specific to his needs at random, as he stated, "Some [references] is very interesting but if I stop my reading to find out I lost my time... Thai people we don't give importance to reference so much." Several participants in the third semester were accessing the internet for their referencing needs, but some participants were finding this still difficult as C2 explained: "Oh, is too much, it overwhelm me, overload like you find one word, they give you one thousand record, oh God..."

## **CONCLUSION AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the third semester, it is clear the participants had made significant changes because they had increased the use of extratextual framing with the general-interest text. When the participants had background knowledge relevant to a text, as was demonstrated with the general-interest texts, they used strategies that were more difficult with their academic texts: making analogies, recalling events from their background knowledge and experience, making connections between these events and the text, extending the text by suggesting solutions to problems in their own countries, or discussing peripheral issues or future possibilities such as

government officials apologizing for past mistakes with reference to the misuse of some drugs.

More significantly, there was more use of intertextual framing, reflecting the students' increased metacognition: greater awareness of postgraduate-study expectations, greater confidence in their reading practices as well as in accessing the library and the internet, and ability to negotiate meaning from a variety of texts. More reading of English texts, discussion with supervisors and sourcing the internet were strategies that were gradually replacing translation.

There was also increased self-knowledge, not only of their increasing abilities but also of where they lacked efficient strategies. For example, A1 mentioned that, although she was reading more, she still found it difficult to discuss her research with her supervisor: "I only answer the questions that supervisor ask me; I don't dare to tell, to ask him first or to argue some points, you know."

A1's confidence was also undermined by the teaching style of her supervisor. Her purpose in reading academic texts was to gain knowledge of crystallography and, specifically, to find an appropriate method for her own experiments. Her supervisor, however, felt it was important for her 'to read and learn by error.' This did not feel 'safe' to A1, and Thai people generally like to feel safe, she said. She was not comfortable, she explained, carrying out experiments without knowing "theory to explain." Because of her inhibitions in terms of expressing herself orally, she said, "I can't tell him what I feel." Forced outside her 'comfort zone,' she was possibly challenged further, but too much discomfort could upset her newly-found confidence and be detrimental to her academic progress.

C1 demonstrated new awareness in his realization that he could not feel the emotion in an English text as well as he could with a Thai text. The written word, especially literary texts, can generate strong emotions. C1, increasingly self aware, explained:

When I speak English, it is something like pretending; it is not my word, it is something like unreal, but when speaking Thai I can put any emotion... when I read about Picasso work, Picasso's work about the Korean massacre, the queuing group of people, something like that, I got the feeling of why horrible but when I read in Thai word it mean more strong, the feeling is different.

The participants suggested that some form of experiential learning prior to the first semester would be valuable; they needed new reading practices for a new environment. This could include guidance on library sourcing and internet use, thus enabling greater extratextual and intertextual framing to occur. Discussion of varying interpretations of carefully chosen texts would also be important as students are often unaware of competing discourses and, therefore, find it difficult to understand that there may be alternative interpretations to a text they are studying (Smith, 1999).

Some of the participants mentioned culturally inappropriate content. Inserting more culturally appropriate content or at least familiar content into courses would help international students to develop a greater interest and confidence. As Volet (1997) states, the benefits of including an intercultural dimension to the curriculum should not be underestimated as "it may be one of the most crucial factors of success in the internationalisation of higher education" (p. 4).

An important area for supervisors to be aware of is citation in writing. In the first semester, C2 had not known she would have to cite in-text. In Thailand, she explained, "you wrote from the head or from your understanding" without citing the works of others. B2<sub>2</sub> also

mentioned that in Thailand, lecturers “did not pay attention to quoting,” and she had had to seek advice on plagiarism from her supervisor as a result.

One final point to note is that international students, like local students, are individuals. A study by Shen in 2008 with 85 university students doing extensive reading showed the importance of the attitudes of staff and teachers, and the importance of nurturing positive attitudes for reading. Her study also highlighted the individuality of learning.

The findings here indicate that while all the participants used the strategy of translation, there were small differences in the extent to which this strategy was used in the first semester, and greater differences in translation use by the third semester. It would seem important, therefore, to consider these individual differences when designing programs of study for all our postgraduate students.

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