



A Study of English Reading Difficulties in GAT English of Thai High School Students

Jiraphat Kongcharoenkitkul^{1*}, Nuttakitta Nakum¹ and Kwanjira Chatpunnarangsee¹

¹Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University

*jiraphat.kon@dome.tu.ac.th

Abstract

English reading skill is one of the most significant skills that most Thai students are struggling with in Thai national English proficiency tests, i.e., GAT, O-NET, 9 Common Subjects. Although many studies have focused on Thai students' reading comprehension in Thai school standard curriculum, little attention has been paid to the Thai national English proficiency tests. Therefore, this study aims to investigate difficulties that Thai high school students confront on the Thai national English proficiency test by focusing only on the GAT ENGLISH (General Aptitude Test) since this test is required by many faculties in Thai university entrance exams. Data were collected from nine high school students via test scores, observations, and focus group interviews. The participants were asked to do the test, which was the reading part of GAT English. After the test session, all participants were interviewed about the issues they found during the test. The findings show that reading strategies are the most significant difficulty followed by vocabulary, reading comprehension, grammar, choice confusion, limited time examination, and background knowledge respectively.

Keywords: GAT English, Thai national English proficiency test, reading difficulties

1. Introduction

English reading is fundamentally a significant skill inside and outside school. Apart from the general benefits, English reading skill is required in many fields. According to the Cambridge English Assessment survey, employers from 12 industries across 38 countries agree that English reading is the most important language skill; it is required for developing professional knowledge. Plus, over 80% of languages in academic journals are written in English. However, despite having implemented English reading teaching techniques in the Thai education system, many Thai students are still struggling with comprehensive reading skills, especially when it comes to timed reading examinations.

According to the National Institute of Educational Testing Service (NIETS), the national average GAT English test scores of Thai students from 2016 to 2021 are approximately 55 out of 150. The statistical data have shown that more than half of Thai students have failed to achieve 50 percent of the full score. The cause of the low score can possibly come from all parts of the test: expressions,



vocabulary, reading, structure and writing. As for the reading part, which covers 15 out of 60 questions or 25 percent of the exam, many difficulties have been highlighted. The problems partly come from the limited time allowed to complete the test as well as the low proficiency of English reading comprehension skills of Thai students. [1-3] The latter one has also been confirmed by the result of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2012 that Thai students were ranked at the 50th out of 65 countries in English reading comprehension.

To date, there have been research studies on the English reading skills of Thai students. [4-7] most of which mainly focused on the Thai school standard curriculum. However, little attention has been paid to examine difficulties while students are taking national English proficiency tests, i.e., GAT, O-NET, 9 Common Subjects, whose test scores are used in order to be qualified for Thai University entrance. Therefore, the purpose of this current study is to investigate difficulties that Thai high school students confront on the Thai national English proficiency test by focusing only on the GAT ENGLISH (General Aptitude Test) since it is required by many faculties in Thai university entrance exams in hopes that the findings of this study will help us to understand reading difficulties that Thai students actually have while taking the exam. The research question that will guide this study is: What are the English reading difficulties that Thai high school students confront on the GAT ENGLISH test?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Overview of English Reading Skills

In every language, there are four fundamental skills, which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The most significant and achievable skill for EFL students is probably the reading skill [3] According to Dr. Reid Lyon [8], a research psychologist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the most important language skill is ‘reading’ because one must learn to read to be able to learn. Thus, developing reading skills will enhance both comprehensive and analytical abilities which can be applied to not only everyday usage but also during tests. Overall, according to Booth & Swartz (2004), there are two types of reading skills which are Reading Comprehension and Reading Strategies (analytical abilities).

2.1.1 Reading Comprehension

Many experts have defined the term Reading Comprehension skills, one of which is “reading comprehension is the process to analyze, interpret and understand the writer’s thoughts and ideas informed through the printed text by using reader’s own syntactic, semantic, rhetorical, and prior knowledge in order to achieve the goal of reading” [9] To clarify the definition, Reading Comprehension basically focuses on critical thinking and understanding of the text or passage. Moreover, past experience and knowledge are significant factors that relatively involve him/her Reading Comprehension. [10]

2.1.2 Reading Strategies

Reading Strategies are the cognitive tools that help readers establish and maintain the meaning of the texts when they encounter a certain reading text or passage [3] The main purpose of Reading Strategies is to help increase the comprehension skills of the readers before, during, and after they read



[10] Moreover, there are a lot of research studies that found that learning reading strategies, especially Cognitive Strategies can directly help improve reading skills [11 -12] According to the National Institute of Development Administration, Cognitive Strategies, which are the psychological ability of humans to acknowledge a certain reading text [13] are required in the process of reading in order to read well. In regard to this matter, cognitive strategies can be classified into three categories [3]

Comprehension strategies are comprehensive skills and cognitive tools generally acquired during school, such as finding the main idea, supporting details, author's purpose, author's mood and tone, summarizing ideas, analyzing contextual clues & vocabulary, and making references & inferences.

- *Memory Strategies* are the tools and techniques that help visualize reader's ideas for better memorization skills, such as underlining, note taking, visualizing, highlighting, rereading, and paraphrasing.
- *Retrieval Strategies* are the utilization and application of background knowledge, such as reader experiences, vocabulary, word stems, and grammatical rules to the reading text.

To sum up, in order to read well, two skills are required in English reading: Reading Comprehension & Reading Strategies. Reading comprehension focuses on critical thinking and understanding of the text or passage, while reading strategies are the cognitive tools that help readers establish and maintain meanings of the texts. Reading strategies can be classified into three strategies which are Comprehension strategies, Memory Strategies, and Retrieval Strategies

2.2 Reading Difficulties of Thai EFL Students

EFL is regarded as “English as a Foreign Language” which is used to describe the study of English by non-native speakers in countries where English is not the dominant language [14]. In Thailand, most English learners are considered EFL since they do not use English on a daily basis. Consequently, the English learning process and curriculum are mainly designed for EFL students which makes learning the English language more exclusive in the Thai educational system [15]

Unfortunately, many Thai EFL learners are learning English through Thai contexts, which could lead to a significant problem of enhancing language skills. Despite laying out the English teaching curricula at the national level to be more comparable to the world standard, most English classes still focus on form more than meaning [5] This, as a result, prevents the learners from truly acquiring the language. Also, Nation (2018) suggested that the problems from the limitation of vocabulary teaching can lead to extended comprehension issues in the learning of reading. Apparently, Thai students' style of studying English reading and the lack of vocabulary knowledge can prevent them from acquiring good reading comprehension.

Particularly in the field of reading skills of Thai EFL learners, the previous research [4] has shown that Thai students considered reading the most difficult skill compared to other English skills: listening, speaking, and writing, because they have difficulties trying to understand English text as the correct reading strategies could not be practically applied.



Pimsarn [6] suggested that the EFL learners that have good reading skills use more reading strategies to help simplify and visualize the comprehension of the passage. However, Thai EFL learners are not often experienced with utilizing reading strategies because they do not frequently read a lot of texts as well as are not trained on how to use reading strategies. Plus, the classroom is entirely run by a teacher-directed approach while the students only learn the lessons passively. The teacher mostly translates the passage for the students which later causes the students to rely on a dictionary, which gives no true comprehension and makes them take more time on reading [7]

According to the aforementioned studies, it is obvious that acquiring reading comprehension and utilizing reading strategies properly are crucial, but unfortunately, they seem to be the main obstacles of reading skills for Thai students.

2.3 Previous Research Regarding English Reading Difficulties among Thai EFL Students

There are many research studies that have been done to investigate the cause of difficulty in English reading among Thai students. One of the studies by Srisunakrua [17] suggested that the curriculum that has been laid out particularly for English reading class in Thai school does not support the learning process of the students as well as is not in parallel with the learner's level of language which prevents them from acquiring good comprehension in reading class.

Another study by Chawwang [4], *an investigation of English reading problems of Thai 12th grade students in Nakhon Ratchasima educational regions 1, 2, 3, and 7*, revealed that over 70 percent of students were at a low level of reading comprehension and had problems in all three areas of the reading test: sentence structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The research also compared between the science and arts students, and found that there were no differences in reading ability between students in the science and the arts programs [4]

Considering the research studies mentioned above, one of them points out the unparalleled difference between the school English reading materials and the English language competence of Thai students [16] Another one by Chawwang focuses only on the English Reading difficulties among Thai students at the school level, such as the English reading curriculum in particular schools and the English reading test in schools. However, there remains a gap in the existing research which is the research that focused on the root of difficulties occurring in the reading part of the GAT ENGLISH test which is considered as one of the most important Thai National English Tests for Thai students who are preparing for Thai university entrance exam. Hence, this research is conducted to investigate the English reading difficulties that Thai high school students confront on the GAT ENGLISH test for a better guideline of reading skill in the English national test.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

Purposive sampling was used in this study. The researchers selected the participants from a group of high school students from private English tutoring classes. The details of the research were first



informed to the participants for them to consider whether they were willing to be involved in the research study. A total of nine students agreed to participate in this study. Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 show the demographic data of the participants. The participant names were pseudonyms in order to keep their identity confidential. Their information was presented in four Tables based on their schools.

Table 1 Students' Demographic Data, School A

Name	Program	Year	Gender	Age	School (Province)	English Proficiency	Grade
Mook	Math-Arts	Grade 12	Female	17	Private school (Bangkok)	Fair	4.0
Pea	Math-Arts	Grade 12	Female	17	Private school (Bangkok)	Fair	3.5
Kate	Math-Arts	Grade 12	Female	17	Private school (Bangkok)	Fair	4.0
Judie	Math-Arts	Grade 12	Female	18	Private school (Bangkok)	Fair	4.0
Lilly	Math-Arts	Grade 12	Female	17	Private school (Bangkok)	Fair	4.0

Table 2 Students' Demographic Data, School B

Name	Program	Year	Gender	Age	School (Province)	English Proficiency	Grade
Fahsai	Arts-Home	Grade 12	Female	18	Public school (Phitsanulok)	Good	3.5
Laurie	Arts-Home	Grade 12	Female	18	Public school (Phitsanulok)	Fair	3.0

Table 3 Students' Demographic Data, School C

Name	Program	Year	Gender	Age	School (Province)	English Proficiency	Grade
Plaifah	Sci-Math	Grade 10	Female	15	Private school (Bangkok)	Fair	4.0

Table 4 Students' Demographic Data, School B

Name	Program	Year	Gender	Age	School (Province)	English Proficiency	Grade
Ling	Sci-Math	Grade 10	Female	15	Private school (Chiangrai)	Fair	2.5

Note: The students' GPA data were collected based on only Reading English class (Additional English subject), and English proficiency was rated by the students themselves



3.2 Research Instruments

The instruments were the GAT English tests and the interview questions. The GAT English test consisted of only the reading part from year 2018 to 2020. The researchers selected one passage from each year that contains five questions in order to meet the standard fifteen questions as in the actual test (see detail in appendix A) to simulate the most possible realistic scenario similar to when students taking a real test. The interview was held right after the test to probe into their opinions towards the difficulties during the test (see detail in appendix B).

3.3 Data Collection

The data were collected from the students' test score in the reading test and their opinions towards the problems that occur during the test. Consequently, the researcher selected nine participants from English tutoring classes and divided them into groups based on their schools. The information of the research was first informed to the participants to allow them to decide whether they were willing to be involved in the study. After the participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, the date and time of each group were arranged beforehand. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the data collection was conducted via an online conference application (Zoom Meeting). Each group was invited to a Zoom meeting and was informed the process of the interview in Thai. The researchers asked for permission from the participants to video record the sessions to be used in the data analysis process. The test was sent to each of the participants in a PDF file and the participants opened the file from their device. They had 50 minutes to complete the test. After the test, the participants were interviewed to reveal their opinion towards the test. After the interview sessions, the researchers transcribed the interviews and sent the transcriptions to the participants for member checking. Finally, the two data sources, the test scores and interview transcriptions, were used in the data analysis process.

3.4 Data Analysis

Because the data sources came from both quantitative and qualitative data, the data analysis was divided into two strategies. The test score, which is the quantitative data, was analyzed using descriptive statistic. While the interview transcriptions, which are the qualitative data, were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers transcribed each interview and recheck to ensure that it was correct. Then all transcriptions were combined and color-coded into themes of difficulties that the participants reported that they had during the test taking time. One difficulty was coded with one color. To ensure the congruency of emerging themes from the data, the researchers cross checked the themes with one another. Disagreements were resolved by discussion to ascertain the themes which emerged.

4. Results

The research question focuses on the English reading difficulties that Thai high school students confront on the GAT English Test. To answer the question, both quantitative and qualitative data are



conducted through two methods: the excerpt from the GAT English reading test given to the focus group generates test score, while the interview session was arranged to collect interviewee's opinion towards reading difficulties found in the test.

4.1 Test Score

The test questions were classified into reading strategies, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar. The total of all questions is 15. Under reading strategies, there were three strategies: main idea, inference and reference questions. Table 5 shows each participant's test score. Four out of nine students received less than 50% of the total test score. It is apparent that participants scored lowest on reading strategy questions, followed by vocabulary and grammar. They scored noticeable better on reading comprehension questions.

Table 5 The participants' test scores

Test questions (Total)	Mook	Pea	Judie	Lilly	Kate	Fahsai	Laurie	Tina	Ling	
Reading Strategies (5)	0	1	3	1	2	2	2	2	3	16/45=35.5%
<i>Main idea (1)</i>	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3/9=33.3%
<i>Inference (3)</i>	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	9/27=33.3%
<i>Reference (1)</i>	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	4/9=44.4%
Reading Comprehension (7)	4	4	3	6	5	6	3	6	2	39/63=61.9%
Vocabulary (2)	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	7/18=38.8%
Grammar (1)	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	5/9=55.5%
Total (15)	4 26.6%	5 33.3%	7 46.6%	9 60%	8 53.3%	10 66.6%	8 53.3%	10 66.6%	6 40%	

4.2 Focus Group Interview

Table 6 reports the data of English reading difficulty derived from interview transcription. The data shown in Table 6 indicates the frequency of each reading difficulty in the GAT English reading test reported by the participants, sequentially ranged from the most frequently mentioned difficulty to the least. The results show that *reading strategies* are the most mentioned issue followed by vocabulary, reading comprehension, choice confusion, grammar, timed examination, and background knowledge.



Table 6 Results of reading difficulties mentioned by the interviewees

Reading Difficulty	Frequency
Reading Strategies	32
Vocabulary	21
Reading Comprehension	17
Choice confusion	9
Grammar	8
Timed examination	7
Background knowledge	4
Total	98

As we can see from Table 6, most participants reported that they had difficulties with reading strategies questions. They were aware of reading strategies, especially main idea and supporting details; however, they were unaware of the other two reading strategies: inference and reference. Some participants reported that they did the test based on their comprehension rather than applying knowledge of reading strategies to answer the questions in the test

The second most reported difficulty was vocabulary questions. However, some students stated that they felt they could understand the passage even they did not know some words as shown in the excerpt below.

I don't know some vocabularies in the first passage but still can get through it somehow.

Kate, October 25, 2021

This positivity might be partly from the use of ready strategy called context clue. A few participants reported that they applied a reading strategy, *context clues*, during the test as revealed by a participant in the next excerpt.

If I don't know the meaning of some vocabulary, I will continue reading and guess the meaning from the text until I get the answer.

Fahsai, October 26, 2021

One additional issue mentioned by the participants was choice confusion. For instance, Tina expressed that

I feel that many times the sentences in answer choices were taken right out of the passage and made small changes to trick test takers, and most of us struggle to find the right answer because we are confused by the choices that seem similar to the text.

Tina, October 24, 2021



Another unexpected result emerged from the interview data is that most participants had difficulty answering question number 34 (see detail in appendix A). Most of them failed to choose the correct meaning of the word 'handful'. Although everyone reports that they did not know the meaning of this word, they all chose to answer 'many', which was a wrong answer. They chose "many" because they misunderstood the suffix 'ful' to 'full' which means 'many'.

Although less frequent, other issues on reading difficulties such as *grammar*, *timed examination*, and *background knowledge* were also reported in every interview session. Most participants mentioned that they applied very little grammar knowledge to the reading, e.g., tenses, punctuation, conjunction.

To summarize, the data from test scores show that participants failed on the questions that evaluated reading strategies the most and vocabulary the second most. The data from the interview notably reveal that reading strategies were the most reported difficulty followed by vocabulary. Therefore, the two parts of the data confirm the same difficulties which are difficulties on using reading strategies and vocabulary in the GAT English test. For reading comprehension which was substantially mentioned by the participants in the interviews, the test scores show better performance of the participants. Other difficulties such as *grammar*, *timed examination*, and *background knowledge* were also reported in the interview sessions.

5. Discussion

In this research study, through the use of English reading test and interview, many difficulties have been reported and found, such as reading strategies, vocabulary, reading comprehension, background knowledge, grammar, timed examination, and choice confusion. Reading strategies ranked first among all difficulties. Despite having been reported by all participants that they were all aware of reading strategies, they only knew a few reading strategies. Main idea was the reading strategy participants were aware of and mentioned during the interview; however, the test score indicates that only a few participants could choose the right answer for the main idea question. This could be the result of the lack of analytical skill in a complex sentence. Moreover, inference and reference are reading strategies that participants were unaware of in spite of the fact that they had been explicitly asked in many test questions. Consequently, most participants failed to answer the questions that measure inference and reference in reading strategies. These findings are in line with previous research studies [5-6] which reported that one cause of difficulties found in Thai EFL learners was the application of reading strategies to the texts.

The next difficulty found and reported is vocabulary. Many participants reported that vocabulary affects their reading comprehension as they did not know the meaning of the words they found in the text or the choices. However, after having a chance to talk about this difficulty in the interviews, many of them revealed that it was not a major issue because they continued reading and guessed the meaning of the unknown word from the context. This, surprisingly, implies that participants were applying contextual clues, which is considered one of the cognitive tools in comprehension strategy skills [3] to help with vocabulary issues in reading. Another issue found under the umbrella of



vocabulary is word stems confusion in GAT 2019 question 34 (see detail in appendix A). The fact that most participants chose “many” to be the answer for the word “handful” considering the suffix “ful” shows that they were confused by the homophonic sound of “-ful” and “full”. In other words, it could be said that homophone words could be perceived as one difficulty of vocabulary while taking the reading test for the participants.

Reading comprehension is the next difficulty that has been reported. Almost all participants had encountered the same comprehension issue. They agreed that the first reading passage was the most difficult one (see detail in appendix A). Therefore, some of them had skipped the reading passage that they did not understand and started with the easiest one. Whereas there were some participants who did not skip the passage reporting that they spent too much time on the passage they did not understand, which later affected their time management. This links to the previous research studies [5-6] which found that reading comprehension was one of the main obstacles of reading skills for Thai students. Furthermore, many participants also reported one cause of that difficulty which was the lack of vocabulary knowledge. This links to the previous research study [5] which reported that the lack of vocabulary knowledge can prevent Thai EFL learners from acquiring good reading comprehension.

Choice confusion is another reading difficulty reported by most participants. They revealed that they understood some idea of the text; however, when reading the answer choices, they got confused because the sentences in the choices were quite similar to one another. Moreover, some sentences in the choices were similar to some sentences in the text which could trick the participants’ decision-making and possibly increased the chance of choosing the wrong answer (see detail in appendix A: Q.41, GAT 2018; Q.33, GAT 2020).

Grammar is perceived as a trivial issue by participants; however, according to test score data, it shows that four out of nine participants failed in this question which evaluates the conjunction knowledge (see detail in appendix A: Q.39, Gat 2018). Thus, it should be concluded that grammar knowledge can possibly help reduce the reading difficulty and increase the chance of choosing correct answers as mentioned by [3] that the utilization and application of grammatical rules can help EFL learners in reading the text.

Finally, timed examination is also reported by the participants. They mentioned that having seen the time on the screen while doing the test can give them more anxiety and stress. Some participants also reported that the fact that they got nervous when they knew they did not have much time left weaken their performance in doing the test. This means that the limited time provided during the test could affect participants’ overall performance.

6. Conclusion, limitations, and suggestions for future research

This study aims to find out the reading difficulties that Thai EFL learners often confronted in a timed English reading test. The finding reveals that questions that required test takers to use reading strategies are the most difficult for this group of learners. The questions that required test takers to use their vocabulary and reading comprehension skills are frequently mentioned as difficult. However, the



test scores for the reading comprehension questions show better performance of the participants than other questions indicating that the participants had less difficulty in this part than all other parts, especially the reading strategies part. Some minor issues have also been found and reported to be the difficulties. Among them are grammar knowledge, choice confusion, and limited time allowed for the test. The latter affected the participants' performance as they partly interfere with their assurance and anxiety during taking the test.

Nevertheless, this research study also has some limitations. First, the sample size was quite small; further study might recruit more participants to extend the sample size in order to generate stronger results. Moreover, this research study only focuses on the difficulties found in GAT English reading test; however, there are many more tests that are qualified for Thai university entrance. Consequently, future research might look into those tests. Furthermore, while the research was being conducted, the participants occasionally mentioned useful techniques that could be used in taking English reading tests. It will be useful for future research to focus on techniques that could enhance Thai EFL students' ability in doing English reading tests.

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Appendix A

Passage 3 (Items 37-41) Gat 3/Feb/2018

1 The Committee of Advertising Practice or CAP - the code-setting committee for all advertising in the UK that appears in any media except on TV and radio (broadcast media) - has begun a public discussion on limiting where ads promoting products high in fat, salt, and sugar can appear in media including the press, posters, billboards, magazines, and online.

2 CAP is exploring specifically whether junk food ads should be banned from media targeted at children under the age of 12 or 16. "Advertising is just one small factor in a very complex equation but we believe we can play a positive part in addressing obesity in children. In proposing new rules, our aim is to strike the right balance between protecting children and enabling businesses to continue advertising their products responsibly," said the chairman of CAP.

3 There is already a total ban on junk food TV advertising around all children's programming and all shows that have a 20% higher proportion of under 16-year-old viewers than the UK average.

4 CAP is also looking to relax rules that ban the use of licensed characters, such as Elmo from Sesame Street, and celebrities popular with children in campaigns aimed directly at pre-school or primary school children. The new rules will ban them solely from being used to promote junk food, but open them up to being used to advertise healthier foods to children. 5

Available evidence shows that advertising has a modest effect on children's food preference, but other factors like parental influence, opportunities for physical exercise, education, etc., play greater roles in the causes of – and solutions to – childhood obesity," said CAP. " _____, CAP believes a relatively



small positive impact from new advertising restrictions could make a meaningful contribution to tackling this important health issue.”

37. What is the main idea of the passage?

1. CAP is responsible for writing the UK Advertising Codes.
2. CAP is exploring where junk food can be advertised.
3. Junk food is set to be banned from schools.
4. Advertising plays a very important role in children’s food choices.
5. Incidences of obesity in school-age children are on the rise.

38. The pronoun them in paragraph 4 refers to _____.

1. licensed characters and celebrities
2. viewers under 16
3. TV and radio shows
4. all children’s programmes
5. campaigns aimed at pre-schoolers

39. It can be inferred from the passage that celebrities _____.

1. have greater influence on children’s food habits than their parents do
2. will be facing stricter regulations under the new rules set by CAP
3. can have a double-edged effect on children’s food preferences
4. can appear freely in broadcast and non-broadcast media ads
5. will continue to be banned from appearing in any ads directed at children

40. Which of the following can best complete the blank in the last paragraph?

1. In other words
2. In addition
3. However
4. Therefore
5. Moreover

41. It can be inferred that _____.

1. all ads in the UK are under the supervision of CAP
2. CAP’s objective is only to protect teenage viewers from harmful ads
3. CAP thinks that parents should do more to prevent obesity in children
4. not all TV programmes are subject to restrictions on ads promoting junk foods
5. CAP has no power to put restrictions on ads aimed at adults

Passage 1 (Items 31-35) Gat 26/Jan/2019

(1) Located at a distance of 90 km from the state capital of Shillong; in the state of Meghalaya is the village of Mawlynnong. This village has been dubbed as God's own garden because of its stunning natural beauty and cleanliness. Mawlynnong was awarded the cleanest village in Asia for the sanitation in and around it, a few years ago.



(2) The village of Mawlynnong is situated at an altitude of around 4906 feet above sea level. The best way to reach Mawlynnong is to hire a taxi either private or shared. The road leading to Mawlynnong has endless greenery along the road with paddy fields and waterfalls. The road is also very bumpy; and is not the easiest of road trips for a rookie traveller.

(3) Mawlynnong is a very beautiful village and looks extremely pretty during the monsoon, when there is lush greenery all around with numerous waterfalls paving the way to small streams and abundance of flowers that add to the beauty of this small village.

(4) The main occupation of the villagers in Mawlynnong is farming and the betel nut plant is their chief crop. The village consists of around 80 houses. Keeping the village clean has been an age old practice where in each and every person from Mawlynnong takes responsibility for their village sanitation. It is a common sight to see villagers sweeping the roads, picking up dried leaves and throwing garbage in the cute hand-made bamboo dustbins. These bins can be found, placed at every nook and corner of the village.

(5) Apart from the village, there are a handful of other interesting things which are surely worth seeing. The first is a huge boulder which is around 8-9 feet long and around three feet wide and weighs over a ton. This the villagers claim has been balancing on a single rock at the entrance of the woods near Mawlynnong for more than a thousand years.

(6) Another major tourist attraction in the village of Mawlynnong, is the 85 feet high Sky Watch made out of bamboo and natural ropes which offer a splendid view of the Bangladeshi plains. The sky watch has a small entry fee and is connected to a tree house, which has a couple of rooms for rent. The tree house rooms are very pretty and cosy but not very economical.

31. What is the village the most famous for?

1. Its taxi
2. Its beauty
3. Its distance
4. Its cleanliness
5. Its greenery

32. Most of the villagers in Mawlynnong village earn their living as _____.

1. farmers
2. travellers
3. inventors
4. taxi drivers
5. waste collectors

33. The sentence "These bins can be found, placed at every nook and corner of the village." (paragraph 4) means _____.



1. you can find garbage discarded in every bamboo bin of the village
 2. the use of plastic is banned completely inside the village
 3. bamboo bins are installed at every part of the village
 4. people can be seen collecting garbage to discard them into bamboo bins
 5. picking up leaves and throwing garbage in the bin is a very common sight
34. The word “a handful” in paragraph 5 means _____.
1. many
 2. a few
 3. every
 4. each
 5. a large number
35. According to the passage, what do you need to do if you want to visit the sky watch?
1. Rent a room
 2. Pay a fee
 3. Collect trash
 4. Offer a splendid view
 5. Pick up dried leaves

Passage 1 (Items 31-35) Gat 25/Jan/2020

On 26 December 2004, Tilly Smith, a 10-year-old British schoolgirl, was vacationing in Thailand with her family for the Christmas holidays. Walking along the Mai Khao beach at Phuket, she noticed the waves suddenly began to move back, and the sea was bubbling. Remembering the signs of a tsunami from a geography class two weeks prior, Smith insisted her family turn around and return to their hotel. “Tsunami, there’s going to be a tsunami,” she yelled at her family. Her parents were not convinced; while her father headed back to the hotel to calm her younger sister down, Tilly’s mother continued to walk further down the beach, away from the hotel. Smith continued to insist that her mother turn back. “I was screaming, ‘Please mum, please come back with me...if you don’t...you won’t survive’” before finally leaving her mother and running back to the hotel alone.

When she reached her father, they alerted a security guard, who evacuated people from the beach to the hotel lobby. One of the members of staff, who was Japanese, understood the word tsunami, and ordered everyone to leave the beach. Tilly’s mother was one of the last people off the beach just before a wall of water slammed ashore. Once in the lobby, Tilly urged people to higher levels of the hotel, where they rode out a total of three tidal waves.

Over 230,000 died in the Boxing Day Tsunami, but not one person died on the beach where Tilly Smith was vacationing. “What if we hadn’t listened to you,” Tilly’s father questioned days later. At 10 years old, Smith was credited with saving hundreds of lives, and referred to as the “Angel of the Beach.”



31. What can be inferred from the passage?
1. Tilly's parents evacuated a number of people from the beach.
 2. Tilly Smith could make full use of her knowledge from class.
 3. Tilly Smith visited Thailand by boat with her parents.
 4. People died from the tsunami in the hotel where Tilly Smith was vacationing.
 5. Tilly's mother believed her at first when she told her about the tsunami.
32. The word "convinced" means _____.
1. killed
 2. blamed
 3. taught
 4. dismissed
 5. persuaded
33. According to the Tilly Smith's knowledge, when there is a tsunami, _____.
1. the sea water will begin to look dirty
 2. the sea water will not be clear
 3. the sea water will make great noise
 4. the sea will be bubbling when moving back
 5. the sea will be bubbling when moving forward
34. The sentence "If you don't...you won't survive " means _____.
1. Tilly's mother will lose her life in the tsunami unless she comes back to the hotel
 2. Tilly does not want her mother to walk alone on the Mai Khao beach
 3. Tilly's mother will not be alive if she insists on coming back with Tilly
 4. if Tilly's parents walk further down the beach, they will probably survive
 5. a number of people will not survive if Tilly's mother helps her warn them
35. Why was Tilly Smith dubbed the "Angel of the Beach"?
1. She was on holiday in Thailand with her parents and sister.
 2. She picked up the rubbish along the Mai Khao beach after the tsunami.
 3. She tried to learn about earthquakes and giant waves at school.
 4. She saved her family and about a hundred lives from the tsunami.
 5. She alerted a security guard to take care of her mother and the hotel lobby.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. During taking the test, how did you feel? Could you do the test? (Were they easy or difficult?)
2. Did you understand the overall idea of each passage? How? (Probing Questions)
3. Did you find any difficulties while doing the test? What are they?



- 3.1 Did English reading strategies that you learned affect how you read? Can you explain what strategies you used in this test?
- 3.2 Do you think knowing English vocabulary affect how you read?
- 3.3 Do you think the knowledge of English grammar affect how you read?
- 3.4 Is there any background knowledge needed when doing each passage?
5. Did timed examination affect the overall performance of your reading?
6. Are there any specific reading questions and answer choices that obstruct your understanding?
How did they affect your performance?
7. Do you have difficulties understanding the questions and multiple choices in the test?