

# Utilizing the QRI as a Diagnostic Assessment and Intervention Instruction: A Case of a Thai Learner

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Received: May 12, 2018 Accepted: June 13, 2018 Online Published: June 15, 2018

doi: 10.5539/elt.v11n7p101 URL: <http://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n7p101>

## Abstract

The present exploration aimed to assess a reading level of a young Thai student by using the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), and to plan reading intervention instruction targeted on the identified needs based on the assessment results. In this study, a single case study approach was employed. A seven-year old Thai learner was the focal participant. The research questions are threefold as follows: (1) What was the student's diagnostic assessment result measured by the Qualitative Reading Inventory?, (2) Did the designed QRI-based reading intervention instruction lead to student's literacy growth?, and (3) What was the student's attitude towards the self as a reader, reading, and school before the diagnostic assessment took place, and after the reading intervention? The research instruments used in this study included the QRI tests, semi-structured interviews and observations. The diagnostic assessment results revealed that the student's instructional reading level was at the pre-primer, and the QRI-based intervention instruction proved to assist the student in literacy growth. Moreover, the results from the interviews and observations showed that the student had a better attitude towards reading.

**Keywords:** diagnostic reading assessment, language assessment, the Qualitative Reading Inventory, Thai EFL young readers

## 1. Introduction

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

To be a successful English language learner, most researchers agree that learning to read is the most important and complex skill that young learners are expected to develop in early school years (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2010). Research shows that about one in three students is behind their classmates in the ability to read and understand written texts when they reach the fourth grade (Katzir et al., 2006). In the Thai EFL (English as a foreign language) context, the learning situation is worrying. That is, researchers concluded that Thai students are not successful in reading, and their reading ability is at a low level (Champaruang, 1999; Longsombun, 1999). Poor reading ability is found in students at all educational levels from primary schools to universities (Lekwilai, 2014). A lot of Thai students experience difficulty with basic literacy skills, including digit and letter reading, word reading, decoding, and reading comprehension as defined by Deeney (2010). This unsatisfactory learning outcome was mainly due to their past experience in studying English when they were young (Lekwilai, 2014). This means the English instructional practices provided for them in the primary grades do not adequately prepare them to read for comprehension in the higher levels. In addition, they do not receive enough assistance from their teachers to improve their learning.

With many underachieving students on tests in the classroom since they are at the beginning grade levels, these young students feel discouraged and unmotivated to learn to read English later in higher grades (Rinehart, 1999). Consequently, their reading problems remain when they continue their study at higher grade levels. Based on this situation, it is undeniable to say that when it comes to the assessment issue, teachers generally utilize their own assessment instruments and tests during a course to evaluate their students' ability with the focus on comprehension. That is, formative and summative types of assessment are mainly used to evaluate students' learning. Although some teachers would like to help struggling students who perform poorly in the course, they do not have technical knowledge to conduct diagnostic assessment to identify their students' reading weaknesses and design appropriate tutorial lessons for them. Because young students who struggle are expected to be

English literate in today's world and because finding the solutions to help them is very important, this research focuses on proposing a solution to help them. To illustrate, it is important for teachers to know how to administer diagnostic reading measures to indicate students' reading levels (Glazer, Searfoss, & Gentile, 1988). Teachers can use the diagnostic result as an indicator whether the students' reading proficiency is below their current grade level. The result can be used to ascertain what further teaching is necessary.

### *1.2 Diagnostic Reading Measures*

Diagnostic assessment is viewed as important amongst English language teachers and it should be seriously implemented to diagnose students who struggle (Barkesdale-Ladd & Rose, 1997). However, diagnostic assessment is rarely used, especially in Thai EFL classrooms. Gandy (2013) points out that diagnostic assessment is generally used with the main aim to identify students' strengths and needs. Diagnostic assessment of students is an indicator used for benchmarking purposes. It is also helpful so that teachers can place their students in appropriate grade levels (Pikulski & Shanahan, 1982). To illustrate, language teachers can make use of the diagnostic assessment results to appropriately design tutorial lessons to help individual students in the language areas that need improvement.

Prapphal (2008) points out that it is important to have educational quality and standards at various stages of the teaching and assessment processes. If educational professionals can achieve these common goals, teachers can prepare students to be participants in the global economy world. Therefore, Thai teachers, testers and assessors now need to find appropriate ways to assess their students' competencies at school and diagnostic assessment can serve this purpose effectively. Although there are established models of standards or benchmarks which can assist Thai teachers in setting up diagnostic assessment frameworks, quite a few number of teachers do not take them into practice. It is important that Thai teachers know how to diagnose their students' learning problems and to find out what reading needs they have in order to help them achieve their learning of English more successfully.

### *1.3 The Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI)*

The Qualitative Reading Inventory is an individually administered informal reading inventory (IRI) which provides diagnostic information about the conditions under which students can identify words and comprehend text successfully, the conditions that seem to result in unsuccessful word identification, decoding, and/or comprehension (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). The QRI provides beneficial information such as the classroom teachers can use it to estimate student reading level, groups student effectively and choose appropriate textbooks. In addition, reading and assessment specialists can use it to design and evaluate intervention instruction. The QRI is neither a norm-referenced nor standardized instrument. In fact, it provides several assessment options depending on the use. In brief, there are several differences that the QRI has when compared with other informal reading inventories. First, the QRI provides both narrative and expository texts. At the younger levels, pictures are also provided. The QRI involves the test on the student's prior topical knowledge. This helps the examiner define whether the text is familiar to the readers or not. The QRI additionally provides different measures in assessing comprehension: student unaided recall, questions with and without look-backs, which the latter allows the examiner to differentiate between comprehension and memory, and, at the higher level, think-alouds.

Thanks to the practicality and the reliability of the QRI, many researchers utilize it as a diagnostic assessment tool. In addition, the administration of the QRI is not complicated. Therefore, it should be promoted for English language teachers. The current study served as a showcase that demonstrated the detailed administration of the QRI to diagnose a young Thai student who struggled with his reading. It is hoped that it will be useful for teachers who are novice diagnostic assessors.

### *1.4 Need and Significance of the Study*

In Thailand, most research studies on language assessment focus on summative and formative assessment. Research on diagnostic reading assessment which places the importance on providing useful information of students' strengths and weaknesses is limited in number. The problem is that most teachers have no technical idea how to diagnose individual students who have reading problems. As a consequence, they often lack the baseline data that would enable them to plan appropriate tutorial lessons or interventions for their students who need help. In order to fill that void, more research studies on diagnostic reading assessment are needed because teachers will have a better technical understanding of how to diagnose their students' reading needs more systematically. Furthermore, diagnostic assessment results are useful for teachers to estimate which students are at risk of failure in reading. If teachers are able to target students' reading needs from an early age, then the greater the chance is that they will benefit.

### 1.5 Purpose Statement

The main purposes of the current research were to assess a reading level of a young Thai reader by using the QRI, and to design reading intervention instruction targeted on the identified needs across a broad range of literacy skills (e.g., word-identification, reading accuracy, reading fluency, prior knowledge, reading comprehension, and writing) based on the diagnostic assessment results. To accomplish the research objectives, a single case study approach (Stake, 1995) was utilized. Therefore, three research questions undergird this study.

- 1). What was the student's diagnostic assessment result measured by the QRI? In other words, what were the major reading problems identified?
- 2). Did the designed QRI-based reading intervention instruction lead to student's literacy growth?
- 3). What was the student's attitude towards the self as a reader, reading, and school before the diagnostic assessment took place, and after the reading intervention?

### 1.6 Literature Review

#### 1.6.1 General Descriptions of the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI)

The Qualitative Reading Inventory is the authentic assessment of young learners' reading abilities, from the very beginning readers to fluent readers, or from the pre-primer 1 through the high school levels (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). The QRI has been developed from the Informal Reading Inventory or IRI (Blanchard & Johns, 1986), with the latest version of the Qualitative Reading Inventory-6. It is originally used in L1 (first language) context and recommended by the District of Columbia Public School Office of Bilingual Education for ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers to use to determine the reading level and to identify reading difficulty for English language learners who have certain problem with English literacy acquisition.

The QRI is a reliable informal reading inventory. It was designed to provide diagnostic information for teachers. It contains word lists and passages (both narrative and expository passages) from pre-primer through high school levels. For each level, teachers can evaluate students' background or prior knowledge, word identification ability, and reading comprehension skills. Teachers can also assess students' ability in using look-backs and think-aloud strategies. To illustrate, the QRI is a diagnostic instrument that is able to measure 1) comprehension of text of students, 2) word identification and decoding ability in students, 3) student's reading level, 4) student's ability to read different type of text, 5) student's ability to comprehend different modes: oral and silent, 6) student's ability to use look-backs to locate missing or incorrect information later on, and 7) an ability to use think-alouds in students which can be varied depending on individual.

There are many different components in the QRI tests, but administering every part is not necessary, so teachers themselves should use their judgment to choose the portion to test. Teacher can give tests to students who have problems in reading and studying, and the results should benefit their design of teaching instruction to assist the students who have problems. For each grade, several narrative as well as expository reading passages are covered to conduct miscue analysis tests and reading comprehension tests.

Administering the QRI allows the examiner to indicate students' reading levels. Teachers can use this information as an indicator whether the students' reading proficiency is below their current grade level. If students are at the independent level, they read successfully without assistance. Their reading is fluent and free from finger-point habit and signs of tension. Recommended reading materials for this level are those for reading-strategy instruction, fluency practice, and pleasure. Students whose reading is at the instructional level possess a slight degree of reading difficulty and still need assistance from teachers. Reading materials at this level should be for reading and content-area instruction. The last level is the frustration level. At this level, students are unable to read the material with adequate word identification or comprehension. Signs of reading difficulty are evident. It is suggested that teachers avoid materials at this level.

#### 1.6.2 The QRI-5

In this study, the researcher mainly used the tests from the QRI-5. According to Leslie and Caldwell (2011), the QRI-5 is different from others in many aspects. Compared with the past editions of QRI 1-4, the QRI-5 added one additional narrative text for pre-primer through third grade levels. In addition, the QRI-5 also rephrased or rewrote some of questions and provided additional correct answers to questions that have continued to cause students' difficulty. Moreover, the QRI-5 also developed word identification tests as this procedure is used to facilitate direct comparison between words read in isolation and in context. This is particularly valuable for beginning readers who may recognize words in context that they are unable to recognize on word lists. Another different thing is the development of students' prior knowledge assessment tasks as the concepts were carefully

chosen and phrased as questions for the conceptual-question tasks on the basis of relationship to the comprehension questions. Also, there were three measures of comprehension: a retelling measure of what students remember from the passage, explicit questions and implicit questions. The ORI-5 also developed passages in the pre-primer through third grade passages by using leveling techniques and Leveled Readers. Finally, the QRI-5 had assessed the reliability and validity of new passages as well. These aspects make the QRI-5 different from others as it was developed to suit the need of both teachers and students.

In the QRI-5, each word list consists of 20 words. The word lists are designed to assess the accuracy of word identification, speed and automaticity of word identification, and to determine a starting point for reading the initial passage. The passages assess the student's ability to read and comprehend different types of texts. There are six passages of increasing difficulty for varying levels of readers. Passages are put into different levels: pre-primer (1-3), primer, 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades, upper middle school and high school passages. The contents for the first levels are categorized as narrative and expository, with higher levels including more expository passages such as science and literature. They are designed to determine student's level of word identification and comprehension and to assess their ability to read and comprehend different texts. All passages contain concept questions designed to measure prior knowledge. For higher levels, the passages are designed to also assess students' ability to use look-backs and the quality of their think-alouds.

In assessing students, teachers firstly measure word-identification. In the word identification tests, counting all total miscues is the way to determine students' oral reading level. Any deviation from the printed text is counted as a total miscue, and this may include insertions, omissions, substitutions, reversals, self-corrections.

The next step is to determine students' oral reading ability by conducting reading comprehension tests. These tests include oral reading, retelling, question answering, an ability to use the strategies of look-backs and think-alouds. In retelling, after reading the passage, students are asked to retell the story and try their best to cover as many main ideas as possible. After retelling, teachers can ask the questions to measure how much they understand the passage. The information obtained from retelling and questions can be used for teacher's instruction design. Besides the retelling and question answering, teachers also assess students' reading strategies with the use of look-backs and think-aloud strategies.

### 1.6.3 Related Studies

There have been interesting related studies in the past decade exploring different components of the QRI including narrative and expository passages, prior knowledge, retelling, and comprehension. The three studies below illustrate how the QRI components have been used to discover learners' reading performance.

The study on *Assessing Narrative and Expository Reading Passages by Text and Online Presentation* by Wolpert and Vacca-Rizopoulos (2012) interestingly made a comparison between narrative and expository passages in a form of text and online presentation to analyze students' miscues and comprehension scores. The researchers employed both narrative and expository texts in a form of online reading passages and the traditional print version of the QRI-5 to analyze students' miscues and comprehension scores. Participants in the study included 30 mixed-race fourth and fifth graders from a homeless shelter in the Bronx who were tested to plan appropriate tutoring programs for them. The QRI-5 was used as a tool for reading assessment and the results revealed they were within the fourth and fifth grade reading levels. Comprehension in the study was measured by the accuracy of story retellings and answering comprehension questions. Comparisons were made between narrative and expository texts, and text presentation in print and online. Findings revealed that students' comprehension of expository passages was more sensitive to miscues than narrative passages for both graders, which could be because students might have more familiar comprehension strategies they used with narrative texts than they did with expository texts. The research findings also indicated that text presentation of passages had a slightly stronger correlation with the recall of information and comprehension questions than online presentation. The study, however, suggests teachers use alternative tools to measure students' reading levels in the digital age.

The following two studies by Clark and Kamhi (2014) and Piazza (2012) shed light on the influence of learners' schema knowledge and interest in the passages they read on comprehension performance. Clark and Kamhi (2014) examined the influence of prior knowledge and interest on fourth and fifth graders' reading comprehension. The findings indicated students' prior knowledge and interest, as measured by key concept questions on the QRI-4, had a minimal impact on comprehension performance. Such findings contradict the QRI assumption, which suggests that students' background knowledge and interest have a powerful effect on comprehension (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011).

The study on *Cultural Responsiveness and Formative Reading Assessments: Retellings, Comprehension Questions, and Student Interviews* conducted by Piazza in 2012 employed three formative reading assessments

(retellings, comprehension questions, and interviews) to investigate each measure's capacity to represent readers' understanding without being influenced by social and cultural diversity. The first two measures were adapted from the QRI-5 tests which were considered the balanced measures of comprehension because they focused on accuracy and provided quantifiable and qualitative data. The participants in this research were 10 teenage African American male readers. The findings revealed that there were discrepancies across readers in reading comprehension questions and retellings. In the retelling results, the higher interest these students had in the passages, the higher retelling scores they gained. However, their reading comprehension scores appeared lower. Such findings showed that interest was not the only factor that affected students' comprehension performance. In addition, this study revealed that interviews, retelling guides, and the text-related thinking (TRT) appeared to be more culturally responsive reading assessments than comprehension questions as they offered new perspectives on the participants' understandings and connections with texts. Comprehension questions were the least culturally responsive tool of the assessment strategies employed in this study.

This paper incorporated a sample of the related studies from different contexts. The present study utilized a single case study and analyzed the diagnostic results based on the QRI measures in predicting a young Thai learner's reading level, which aims to shed some light on the use of the QRI tests in the Thai context.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Setting

The study took place at the participant's home in Bangkok where the assessment and the reading intervention took place.

### 2.2 Participant

In using a case study approach, it is suggested to select cases that are typical or cases that are of special interest (Stake, 1995). The student in this study was pre-selected with the primary purpose to understand his reading behaviors and literacy problems. The participant in this study was a young Thai EFL student. His name is Kevin (fictitious). Kevin did not seem to like to read and write English. He often made mistakes when he read and spelled words, and that made his parents worried about his learning. They wanted Kevin to study English well and did not want him to be behind his classmates. So, they asked the researcher for assistance. After some thoughts, I decided to help Kevin, and asked them to permit me to collect data for the research purpose. Kevin's parents agreed, and that was how this research study started.

Kevin was 7 years old at the time of data collection, and in the second grade at a Christian private school in Bangkok. He is in the English program and started learning English since he was 4 years old. Kevin has one elder sister who also attended the same school. Kevin is a nice, cooperative and lively boy who showed enthusiasm and willingness to work with me and was usually well behaved. He was a little shy to speak to me at the beginning. Thus, I tried to speak to him in an informal manner and acted as I was his close relative, rather than an assessor and a tutor. After a while, he became more comfortable to talk to me and answered my questions. He was also very willing and enthusiastic to cooperate with the reading assessment that I prepared to evaluate him.

### 2.3 Research Design

The current exploration employs a case study method (Stake, 1995). This study is expected to catch the unique complexities of a single case. "Case study is the study of particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances," (Stake, 1995, *p. xi*). Because the main purposes of this study are to explore and analyze a young Thai student's reading problem based on an in-depth investigation, a single case study serves the research purposes.

### 2.4 Research Instruments

The present study incorporated reading assessment data obtained from September to December 2017, lasting four months. The diagnostic reading assessment took place in September 2017, and the tutorial intervention started from November to December 2017. Multiple research instruments were used to answer the research questions. The details of each instrument are as follows.

#### 2.4.1 The QRI Tests

The test options from the QRI were selected in this study to determine the participant's reading level. Specifically, the test of print concepts, word identification, oral reading, informal phonics survey, spelling and reading comprehension were used to assess the student. The word lists and reading passages from pre-primer to second grade levels were utilized.

#### 2.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

In this case study, a series of three semi-structured interviews (Martella, Nelson, & Marchand-Martella, 1999) were conducted in an informal setting before the diagnostic assessment was administered. The purpose of the interviews was to get acquainted with the student and to get the feeling for how the student approached the reading task. A student's interview responses could reveal feelings about reading and reading instruction he received, strategies used in reading and an overall self-assessment. The researcher tried to assure the student of confidentiality in order to establish a trusting atmosphere because the researcher believed that without the child's trust or an environment where free exchanges could take place, the interview might provide false or misleading information. Before the interviews, the researcher set a clear objective. That is the interview centered on the student's attitudes towards school, reading, and the self as a reader. It was intended that the interviews would provide insight into the student's reading world. A set of questions were piloted and prepared in advance to guide the interviews (Patton, 1990). The interview questions included:

- 1). Do you like to read? Why/why not?
- 2). Are you a good reader? Why do you think so? Or with what part of reading are you having trouble?
- 3). If I gave you something to read, how would you know you were reading it well?
- 4). What makes someone a good reader?
- 5). If you were going to read a story, what would you do first?
- 6). What do you do when you come to a word you do not know?
- 7). What do you do when you do not understand what you have read?
- 8). What is the best story or book you have ever read? Tell me about it.

#### 2.4.3 Observations

Observations were used during the intervention instruction to observe the student's reactions and learning behaviors. Anecdotal notes were taken during the observations (Becker & Geer, 1957).

#### 2.5 Data Collection Procedures

Once the permission was granted by the student's parents, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in an informal manner during the first three meetings with the student. After that, selected tests of the QRI were administered to the student at his home. The diagnostic reading assessment covered two sessions, with a total of about two hours. To determine the student's word-identification ability and reading comprehension levels, the test materials on the word lists and reading passages for pre-primers to second graders were used. After the diagnostic assessment, the intervention instruction was then designed with the aim to help the student with the reading problems identified. The individual intervention instruction lasted two months with 15 sessions. The researcher, acting as the tutor, met with the student two times a week at the student's home, and each session lasted about one hour. Observations were used during the tutoring intervention to capture the student's reaction to the lessons to observe any changes in attitudes towards reading and his reading behaviors.

#### 2.6 Data Analysis

The QRI test scores were used to determine the student's reading levels. The following criteria determine independent, instructional, or frustration levels (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011).

Table 1. Criteria for reading levels

Measures	Reading level		
	Independent	Instructional	Frustration
Word list	90% to 100%	70% to 85%	less than 70%
Oral reading in context	98% or higher	90% to 97%	less than 90%
Comprehension	90% or higher	67% to 89%	less than 67%

To illustrate the criteria above, 90% or above of accuracy in word list, and 98% or above of accuracy in oral reading represent an independent level. At this level, students should be able to answer 90% or more of the comprehension questions correctly. 70% to 85% of accuracy in word list, and 90% to 97% of accuracy in oral

reading represent an instructional level. At this level, students should be able to answer 67% to 89% of the comprehension questions correctly. Less than 70% of accuracy in word recognition, less than 90% in oral reading and less than 67% in reading comprehension lead to a frustration level.

In analyzing the interview transcriptions and the anecdotal notes from the observation, content analysis (Patton, 1990) was used. In this study, three main themes are reported to answer the research questions.

### 3. Research Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Result 1: Diagnostic Assessment Results

The diagnostic reading assessment with the QRI tests covered two sessions—September 25 and 30, 2017. The summary of Kevin's diagnostic report is shown below.

##### 3.1.1 Test of Print Concepts

Kevin had developed most of the print concepts measured by this test. When asked which page tells the story, Kevin pointed to the picture. He was able to identify a word or the end of the story. He needed direct instruction on the concept of words and continued exposure to print.

##### 3.1.2 Word Identification

The word identification section of the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) contains word lists, with 20 words in each word list except for the pre-primer 1 which contains only 17 words. The word lists begin with a pre-primer readability level and end with a junior high readability level. To determine a starting point, I began with the administration of a graded word list by using the QRI tests designed for pre-primers (1-3), primer, grades 1 and 2. The reason I administered the tests of these levels was because I did not know Kevin's literacy actual level, and this was my first time to assess him. As a result, it would be a good idea to get the overall picture of his word recognition ability by using several tests. I started testing him with the second-grade list first. After the test administration, I discovered that Kevin's word recognition on grades 1 and 2 materials was at the frustration level. His comprehension was also at the frustration level. He was completely frustrated in both word recognition and comprehension at the grade 2 level. To determine his independent level and his instructional comprehension level, lower-grade level passages were subsequently administered. Based on the information in the table, Kevin should probably be placed initially in pre-primer materials for instruction.

Table 2. Diagnostic result of word list

Test administered	Test descriptions		
	Grade level	Score obtained	Readability level
Word list	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade word list	6/20 = 30%	frustration
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade word list	8/20 = 40%	frustration
	Primer word list	10/20 = 50%	frustration
	Pre-primers 2-3	15/20 = 75%	instructional
	Pre-primer 1	17/17 = 100%	independent

Kevin was able to read 15 from 20 words on the pre-primers 2-3 list automatically or one second a word, putting him at the instructional level. He misread four words, which were *just*, *were*, *write*, and *other*, and could not read the word *same*. From the primer list, he read 10 from 20 words correctly. He was at frustration level—that is, the level at which he would become frustrated if reading independently. He was also at frustration level when he read the word lists from the first and second grades.

##### 3.1.3 Oral Reading

The oral reading section of QRI consists of both narrative and expository passages ranging in readability levels from pre-primer, primer, and first-grade passages through junior high level. Grades scores are derived from the number of total miscues (any deviations from the text) as well as the student's ability to answer comprehension questions. Some comprehension questions have answers that can be found directly in the text, and some have answers that require the student to infer information from the text.

At first, I used two readings, one narrative and one expository texts to assess his oral reading. Both texts were designed to assess grade 1 students. Kevin could answer the concept questions of the first text, *The Bear and the*

*Rabbit*, quite satisfactorily, but he read it with a lot of miscues (86 miscues out of 181 words). Moreover, he could not retell the story and answer any comprehension questions at all. The result revealed the same with the second text, *Air*. He made 35 miscues out of 85 words. To sum up, on the grade 1 passages, Kevin was clearly frustrated in word recognition and comprehension.

Therefore, I used less difficult texts of lower levels, pre-primer 3. The narrative text was titled *Spring and Fall*, and the expository text was on *People at Work*. Most of Kevin's errors from reading the texts consisted of guesses based on the first letter of a word. For instance, he read *work* for "write," *where* for "why," *walk* for "work," and *same* for "some". He read *sing* for "spring," and *tree* for "train." Some substitutions showed more awareness of the end of the word: *bell* for "sell," and *ball* for "fall." Kevin made 3 miscues out of 84 words in reading the narrative text, and 4 miscues out of 49 words in reading the expository text. He could answer 4 comprehension questions from both passages. This means in reading the passages at pre-primer 3, Kevin was at instructional level.

Then, I tried to have him read the primer passages, both narrative and expository titled *Fox and Mouse* and *Who Lives Near Lakes?* Kevin made 36 miscues out of 122 words from the narrative passage, and 22 miscues out of 62 words from the expository passage. The result disclosed that when reading the primer passages, Kevin made a lot of miscues such as excessive substitutions, which did not make sense in the sentence and the story being read. However, the substitution was graphically and phonemically similar to the text word. To illustrate, the substitution/mispronunciation contained the same first letter, and sometimes both first and last letters as the text word. This indicated that he used visual and phonic clues. He could answer only 2 comprehension questions. This revealed that he was at the frustration level when he read the primer passages. From the oral reading test, Kevin could be placed in pre-primer 3 level.

Table 3. Diagnostic results of oral reading and comprehension

Test administered	Test descriptions		
	Grade level	Miscues	Readability level
Oral reading in context	1 <sup>st</sup> grade level	- Narrative text = 86 miscues (52.48%) - Expository text = 35 miscues (58.82%)	Frustration
	Primer	- Narrative text = 36 miscues (70.49%) - Expository text = 22 miscues (64.51%)	Frustration
	pre-primer 3	- Narrative text = 3 miscues (96.42%) - Expository text = 35 miscues (91.83%)	Instructional
Comprehension	1 <sup>st</sup> grade level	- Narrative text = 0% - Expository text = 0%	Frustration
	Primer	- Narrative text = 33.33% - Expository text = 33.33%	Frustration
	pre-primer 3	- Narrative text = 80% - Expository text = 80%	Instructional

### 3.1.4 Informal Phonics Survey

Informal phonics survey is a criterion-referenced measure intended to assess the child's knowledge of letter sounds in isolation and in words. The QRI Word Analysis Test indicated that Kevin knew beginning and ending sounds

but had considerable difficulty with consonant blends, vowel digraphs, vowel diphthongs, and silent *e* words. Kevin knew most consonant sounds except *v*, which he was confused with *n*. He did quite well on the consonant digraphs except the sound of *ch*, and could read most short vowel words. He had difficulty with consonant blends: “sick” for *slick*, “tick” for *trick*, “she” for *stash*, “trish” for *trash*, “tin” for *twin*.

*Spelling.* Kevin was given a list of words to spell. This list was used to evaluate the child’s level of invented spelling. The developmental sequence in invented spelling starts with pre-phonemic stage to an early phonemic stage, to a letter-name stage, and finally to a transitional stage (Morris & Nelson, 1992). Pre-phonemic writing refers to the writing that does not reflect sounds in words. The writing stage in which students use an initial consonant to represent a word is called an early phonemic stage. A letter-name stage is the stage in which they use letter names to represent their sounds and often omit vowels, and a transitional stage is the one in which their spellings reflect all phonemic features. Some examples of Kevin’s spellings are shown below.

run >> run (correct)

thought >> toup (early phonemic stage)

read >> read (correct)

book >> book (correct)

see >> ce (letter-name stage)

play >> piule (early phonemic stage)

were >> wer (letter-name stage)

brain >> bren (early phonemic stage)

The analysis of Kevin’s spellings showed that most of Kevin’s words were at early phonemic spelling. His spelling represented the discovery of the alphabetic principle. That is, letters were used to represent some of the sounds in words. His writing commonly featured the use of consonants to represent initial sounds; sometimes final sounds were represented too, but the spellings were incomplete. His writing showed his discovery that letters in print represent sound in spoken words and indicated that beginning of the ability to segment phonemes.

In summary, Kevin seemed to apply basic phonic principles while decoding unknown words. On the initial observation, Kevin appeared to use context clues to decode unfamiliar words. This was, obviously, one of Kevin’s strengths. However, Kevin did not stay on task and frequently asked for help. This behavior had not improved on the second observation. Kevin needed to work on developing independent reading habits and he should be provided with more opportunities for reading with high-interest reading materials.

Kevin did not make many repetitions as a self-correct strategy or to aid in word recognition. He sometimes made many omissions in oral reading. He misread, mispronounced, and refused to pronounce some frequently used words. It showed that Kevin did not know many words on the basic sight word list. He demonstrated relatively poor knowledge in sight vocabulary words, and might lack visual discrimination skills. Kevin’s oral reading was characterized by incorrect phrasing and a lack of fluency. Kevin also ignored punctuation marks. This could have contributed to the improper phrasing. Kevin did not self-correct his errors. On the second observation, Kevin was attending more to punctuation, and his phrasing had shown improvement.

In addition, Kevin read word by word rather than in phrases. He also had difficulty with word meanings, and lack of vocabulary knowledge caused comprehension questions to be missed. He could not answer most of comprehension questions, but he answered some prior knowledge questions.

Thus, based on the three diagnostic reading measures from the QRI, Kevin’s test scores fell within a range of limited proficiency with reading in English. Kevin’s comprehension and word recognition were found to be at a frustration level when he was tested with the primer to grade 2 materials. He could be initially placed in pre-primer 3 reading materials for instruction and given more difficult materials if he was successful. Thus, I placed Kevin at an instructional reading level in both word recognition and comprehension on pre-primer 3 material.

### 3.2 Result 2: Effect of the QRI-based Reading Intervention on Literacy Growth

#### 3.2.1 Descriptions of the Reading Intervention

I realized that once I had developed a working philosophy of education, I had to determine specific means for helping my student accomplish the goals. In this reading intervention, I had developed a definition of reading as well as determined the teaching strategies I believed best facilitate teaching a child to read and write. After I had collected some general understanding of my student’s literacy ability, I found that the student I work with was like students in most pre-primary grades. I began planning and developing the QRI-based reading intervention by

considering general student interests and needs in order to determine the topics I hoped to use with my student.

Tutoring sessions occurred approximately two times a week. Each session lasted approximately one hour. The tutoring took place after school hours, from November through December 2017, to allow for 15 sessions of tutoring. In the tutoring intervention that I designed for Kevin, I followed the goals and activities specially designed for him.

*Word Recognition.* I promoted early literacy through a range of activities. I encouraged storytelling and sequencing, along with the teaching of phonic awareness and visual discrimination. All the activities centered around meaningful, interesting encounters with print and stories. I realized that Kevin needed to have acquired the following areas: concept about print, phonic awareness and word building (indicated by the ability to segment words phonemically), an ability to sequence a story, an ability to concentrate, and an ability to match pictures, picture to word and word to word. This led on to more refined understanding that a word is composed of constituent sounds and can be represented graphically.

In my tutoring program, phonological development was supported by making explicit the grapheme/phoneme association when reading and writing, listening to dominant phonemes (including consonant digraphs *ch*, *sh*), identifying words that rhyme with familiar sight vocabulary, and using analogy to help to write new words from known ones, e.g. *shook* from *look*. Orthographic awareness (print processing/word recognition) was developed by practicing sight vocabulary with games and context sentence cards, helping the child drawing attention to use of word banks, key word lists, etc.

*Oral Reading.* There were many types of reading taking place during the intervention. I read to Kevin; he read to me. I engaged him in shared reading, where we took turns reading the same material, and we read text together in unison. Moreover, I tried Repeated Reading, and independent reading with the student. Kevin and I sat side by side and reading independently for pleasure. Repetition of the reading passages was an important part of my instruction. I felt that repeated readings helped my student improve in word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. I could see him take control of his reading with practice of this type. Increases in confidence were obvious as Kevin embedded expression, intonation, and phrasing in his reading. At first, I thought he might not like repeated readings. However, just the opposite had occurred. He saw the value in it and enjoyed practicing and performing his reading.

*Writing.* I had come to view writing as a key part of the tutoring program for Kevin. Kevin was given opportunities to write as much as possible. It was important for him to practice writing the words to help him learn how to spell them correctly. Books that I shared with him offered chances for learning new words as I encouraged him to learn new words from those books. However, writing was not as much a part of the tutoring as reading due to the time limitation, and motivation constraints. I applied decoding strategies and spelling very often to help my student with writing. I helped him spell individual words. Questions about letter names or their sounds were posed to encourage him to spell words more independently.

*Strategies.* Word analysis was used a great deal during the tutoring. The most common type of assistance was my telling my student a word when he was having trouble. I often encouraged him to look at the pictures in the text to help him get the words. I encouraged him to sound out words often and asked him to read the rest of the sentence to figure out from its meaning or context what a word was. I would repeat words that he had difficulty with after it was figured out. I discussed word meaning within the context of stories read. Comprehension strategies used most often were questions. These questions were mainly within the literal level of thinking. Pre-reading discussion centered on pointing out the title, and illustrator in the book. My student was often asked to retell stories for sequence and inclusion of story structure elements after reading a story. Those that were asked focused on what he liked about the stories and predicting what he thought would happen. Some questions asked the student to relate stories read to real-life experiences.

### 3.2.2 The Effect of the Reading Intervention: The Student's Literacy Growth

I was successful in helping Kevin read and write better. Kevin was not scoring well on the assessment done before the tutoring program. He was placed in the pre-primer 3 level. The assessment scores indicated that his overall literacy knowledge needed systematic instruction. However, he made progress after some time of the intervention. Particularly impressive was his growth in spoken vocabulary. After the end of the intervention instruction, the post-test was administered. The test result revealed that Kevin's scores in word recognition and oral reading have been shifted from pre-primer 3 instructional to first grade instructional. He had advanced in all literacy-related measures and would probably be reading well enough to score on a reading test at his school. Moreover, Kevin started to show awareness of mismatch by self-correcting, and spelling becomes more conventional.

In assessing the word recognition skills, the word lists from four levels were used: pre-primer, primer, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The result showed that Kevin's word recognition was at the instructional on 1<sup>st</sup> grade word list. For the oral reading and comprehension tests, Kevin could read the texts and answer comprehension questions for the primer level independently. The narrative passage on *A Night in the City*, and the expository passage on *Living and Not Living* were used to test him. However, he was frustrated when he read the passages on 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level. He made 40 miscues out of 304 words when he read a narrative passage on *The Family's First Trip*, and he made 30 miscues out of 197 words when he read an expository passage on *Whales and Fish*. He could score only 50% on the comprehension questions of the two passages.

When tested with 1<sup>st</sup> grade material, Kevin could be placed at the instructional level. That is, he read a narrative passage on *Mouse in a House* with 20 miscues out of 250 words, and he could answer five questions out of six correctly. He made five miscues out of 76 words when he read an expository passage on *The Brain and the Five Senses*, and he could answer five questions out of six correctly.

Table 4. Post-test result of word list

Test administered	Test descriptions		
	Grade level	Score obtained	Readability level
Word list	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade word list	11/20 = 55%	frustration
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade word list	15/20 = 75%	instructional
	Primer word list	19/20 = 95%	independent
	Pre-primers 2-3	20/20 = 100%	independent

Table 5. Post-test results of oral reading and comprehension

Test administered	Test descriptions		
	Grade level	Miscues	Readability level
Oral reading	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade level	- Narrative text = 40 miscues (86.84%) - Expository text = 30 miscues (84.77%)	frustration
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade level	- Narrative text = 20 miscues (92%) - Expository text = 5 miscues (93.42%)	Instructional
	Primer	- Narrative text = 3 miscues (97.67%) - Expository text = 1 miscue (98.43%)	Independent
Comprehension	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade level	- Narrative text = 50% - Expository text = 50%	Frustration
	1 <sup>st</sup> grade level	- Narrative text = 83.33% - Expository text = 83.33%	Instructional
	Primer	- Narrative text = 100% - Expository text = 100%	Independent

### 3.3 Result 3: The Student'S Attitudes Towards Reading

The interview result revealed that Kevin did not enjoy reading that occurred in school. He struggled with some

basic English words. He said, "I like to watch cartoons a lot, but I can't read the words in the book." When asked to rate himself as a reader, he said he was not good at spelling and pronouncing words. This was consistent with the response from his teacher and parents who saw him as a deficient. Kevin commented, "If people read a lot, they are good readers." His reading strategies were somewhat limited, according to the interview. He said he did not understand everything he read and would not do anything or ask anyone if he didn't know a word. "I will not read it again if I don't understand it," he said. This, in fact, was confirmed with the additional observation. He was having considerable difficulty with decoding words and making sense of the stories he read at the time of the interview.

From my observation, after the intervention instruction, Kevin sometimes used English words to speak with his elder brother and parents. In other words, he was happy to speak some English when he could, especially with his family. He enjoyed watching Cartoon Network in English Channel. That means, he started to develop bilingualism. Kevin's parents also noticed that phenomenon and supported him by providing him with English books, including cartoon books, which he had an interest in.

#### 4. Conclusion

This case study was conducted with a seven-year old Thai EFL learner to assess his reading level by using the Qualitative Reading Inventory, and to design an appropriate reading intervention based on the assessment results to help him read better. The research instruments used in this study were the QRI tests, semi-structured interviews and observations. The diagnostic assessment results revealed that the student's instructional reading level was at the pre-primer, and the QRI-based intervention instruction proved to assist the student in literacy growth. Moreover, the results from the interviews and observations showed that the student had a better attitude towards reading. I felt that this tutoring intervention was rewarding. At least, Kevin improved his performance in reading and writing, as well as his attitude toward himself and his schoolwork. Three main conclusions could be drawn from this study. First, by using the QRI, I was able to place my student in appropriate instructional-level reading materials, and shifted the types of word recognition strategies I prompted my child to use. Second, it was clear that learning about teaching reading was a complex and time-consuming process. The tutoring sessions contained a large number of essential features that most reading specialists would consider desirable characteristics of high-quality reading lessons. Third, I made more improvements in my teaching than before.

As a note of caution, it should be pointed out that all of the assessments Kevin took were normed on native speakers, therefore, the scores were not necessarily appropriate for English language learners. A professionally developed, well-researched, and rigorously reliable valid QRI-Thailand is a proposal that has significant merit. In the absence of any similar diagnostic reading assessment, it stands to fill a huge gap that currently exists in the Thai ELT education system. It would take considerable time and effort to introduce, yet the potential positive impact it may have in understanding Thai EFL learners' reading behavior and on the teaching practices that might emerge to enhance their learning experience should serve as a powerful motivating force to undertake such a valuable innovation.

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## Appendices: Sample research instruments

### Appendix A: Sample QRI word lists

#### Level: Pre-Primer 1

- |         |        |        |         |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| 1. Can  | 2. I   | 3. Of  | 4. Me   |
| 5. The  | 6. In  | 7. At  | 8. With |
| 9. A    | 10. He | 11. Go | 12. To  |
| 13. See | 14. Do | 15. On | 16. Was |
| 17. She |        |        |         |

#### Level: Primer

- |             |             |          |          |
|-------------|-------------|----------|----------|
| 1. Keep     | 2. Need     | 3. Going | 4. What  |
| 5. Children | 6. Thing    | 7. Why   | 8. Again |
| 9. Want     | 10. Animals | 11. Sing | 12. Went |

- |           |          |           |           |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 13. Jump  | 14. Read | 15. Said  | 16. Live  |
| 17. There | 18. One  | 19. Great | 20. Every |

Level: One

- |            |             |            |          |
|------------|-------------|------------|----------|
| 1. Bear    | 2. Father   | 3. Find    | 4. Sound |
| 5. Friend  | 6. Song     | 7. Thought | 8. Run   |
| 9. Enough  | 10. Brain   | 11. Air    | 12. Knew |
| 13. Put    | 14. Heard   | 15. Afraid | 16. Wind |
| 17. Choose | 18. Without | 19. Move   | 20. Then |

Appendix B: Sample QRI reading texts

Level: Pre-Primer (Expository)

People at Work

Some people work at home.

Other people go to work.

Why do people work?

People work to make money.

People work at many things.

Some people write at work.

Other people read at work.

Some people make things at work.

Other people sell things at work.

People work together. (49 words)

Level: Primer (Narrative)

Fox and Mouse

Fox wanted to plant a garden.

Mouse helped him.

They put these seeds in the ground.

They watered the seeds.

Then they waited.

One night Mouse went to the garden.

He dug up one of the seeds.

He wanted to see if it was growing.

The seeds looked good to eat.

“It is only one seed,” thought Mouse.

“Fox will not know who ate the seed.”

The next night Mouse went to the garden again.

He dug up one seed and ate it.

He did this every night.

After a few weeks all the seeds were gone.

“I wonder why the seeds didn’t grow,” said Fox.

Mouse didn't say a word.

So Fox planted more seeds.

And Mouse helped him. (122 words)

Level: One (Narrative)

#### The Bear and the Rabbit

Once there was a very big bear. He lived in the woods. He was sad because he didn't have anyone to play with. He said to his father, "How can I find a friend?" His father said, "By being you." But all the animals are afraid of me," said the bear. "I can't even get near them."

But one day the bear was sitting by a river. He was singing softly to himself. A rabbit lived near the river. He looked out of his hole when he heard the bear's song. He thought, "Anyone who sings like that must be nice. Maybe I don't need to be afraid of him. It would be nice to have a friend." The rabbit went and got his horn. Very softly he began to play. His music went well with the bear's song. The bear looked around. He didn't see the rabbit walked up to the bear. He kept playing and the bear kept singing. They were both happy that they had found a friend. And a bird joined in the song. (181 words)

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