

**ENHANCING ENGLISH READING SKILLS OF STUDENTS MAJORING
IN ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION,
SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS, SRIPATUM UNIVERSITY
THROUGH THE WORLD PEACE ETHICS CONTEST**

DR. THAVORN THITTHONGKHAM¹

School of Liberal Arts, Sripatum University

E-mail: thavorn.th@spu.ac

ASST. PROF. BOONLERT WONGPROM²

School of Liberal Arts, Sripatum University

E-mail: boonlert.wo@spu.ac.th

ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were: (1) to investigate the achievement in reading by attending the World Peace Ethics Contest, (2) to study the benefits of reading the book named “Family Day by Day”, and (3) to explore the opportunity perspective of the winners by attending the competition in the World Peace Ethics Contest. The sample for this research consisted of 160 students, 20 winners, and 3 coordinators of the organizers. They were obtained by purposive sampling. The instruments used were: (1) pre-test and post-test, (2) evaluation form for the oral presentation of the group work, (3) a semi-structure interview form towards benefits of reading the book named “Family Day by Day”, (4) a semi-structure interview form towards the winners’ opportunities of the World Peace Ethics Contest. The statistics used to analyze the data were (1) percentage (%), (2) means (\bar{x}), (3) standard deviation (S.D.), and (4) t-test (dependent). The research results indicated that attending the World Peace Ethics Contest help students to have better enhancement of English reading skills. The achievement in reading is statistically significant at the level of .05. The contestants won 20 prizes. They benefited from reading the book named “Family Day by Day” on a number of issues. This is consistent with the perspective on opportunities. However, the problem shows that the book named “Family Day by Day” has a lot of technical terms which took time to understand.

KEYWORDS: Dhammakaya Foundation, Enhancing English Skills, Family Day by Day, Using Family Day by Day for Enhancing Reading English, World Peace Ethics Contest

1. INTRODUCTION

English is needed and important for communication. It is also a means to study information from different sources. The rapid change, particularly, socialization of the 21st century, educators in all disciplines must consider the direction of teaching by introducing ethics for enhancing mankind. It is because human being is the major cost of both developing countries and developed countries. The individualities of the mankind must have sufficient morality, discipline, and ethics (Kumar, 2017). Considering all four English skills, reading skills are significant as a learning tool, principally for searching information and self-study. Those who can read English will be able to access the knowledge extensively and fast. Many researchers (Rupley, Blair, & Nichols, 2009; Eshghinejad, 2016; Kornwipa, 2017) have found problems in teaching reading skills that most of the English language students learn about content that comes from international backgrounds. Instructors used the teaching technique of reading English passages to students, and let the students read aloud, then the instructors translated the sentences of the contents in the reading passage, occasionally, structures are highlighted. Instructors also explain the terminology rather than enhancing reading skills (Borg, 1999). They did not emphasize or encourage students to have the opportunity to acquire and enhance their own reading skills. Students are not encouraged to learn and to enhance reading skills through real experiences or opportunities in real situations practically. Most of the contents focus on the content of foreign situations, not the universal one, making students feel that the content was incomprehensible, not interesting, lacking in reading enthusiasm, no goals, and lack of motivation. George and Paul (1995) suggested that enhancing reading skills should be integrated to build understanding to the reading purpose, requirement, and the reader's method. Juyandegan (2016) pointed out that reading skills helps to enhance self-esteem and self-enhancement. It supports students to become adult. In addition, reading skills promote each other's emotions in relation to others in the world. It can enhance us to be able to spend life in the society stably. Students should read as a process that is systematically trained because there is a step by step reading theory. The students need to cope with steps which include the presentation, the practice and the production step. The presentation step is done by instructors. The students have to practice the language in the first step. The production step is the situation that students use language for communication in real situation. It is the opportunity for students to use more language. Instructors can help students develop their reading skills by using collaborative learning activities, using SQ4R teaching methods (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review, Reflect), and assigning students to read more books. According to Aslan (2016), the enhancement of reading skills should focus on the application and relevance of the student's culture which enables students to connect with their learning and experiences in the future. Encouraging students to participate in competitive events is one of the most effective methods. This can help to cultivate

awareness of ethics that can be conveyed from one culture to another and help to inspire the interest of the students which will help them to enhance their English reading skills successfully and sustainably.

The purposes of this study were to investigate the achievement in reading by attending the World Peace Ethics Contest, to study the benefits of reading the book named “Family Day by Day”, and to explore the opportunity perspective of the winners by attending the World Peace Ethics Contest.

With these objectives in mind, the paper is structured in four sections. In the first of an introduction serves as a reference for analysis of the results. In the second part is an overview of the World Peace Ethics Contest. In the third part, the setting of the research and methodology of the research finding obtained and the data analyzed in order to answer the research questions. Finally, results, discussions, recommendations, and conclusions of the empirical work are presented.

2. Overview of World Peace Ethics Contest

The World Peace Ethics Contest (World-PEC) is a test designed and organized for students globally in English by the World Peace Ethics Club together with Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Dhammakaya Foundation and its branch centers. The contest is intended for participation in every country that Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Dhammakaya Foundation and its branch centers are located. There are 84 coordination centers in 31 countries around the world (Dhammakaya Foundation, 2018).

The contest is an annual competition that highlights that the organizers bring positive change to contestants or students’ behaviors. It is set to take place around the world in about January, and it is open to students from around the world in grades 4-12 in public and students in university and college level regardless of gender or nationality who believes that doing good deeds have the power to have good life with a theme of “World Peace through Inner Peace, Love, Togetherness, and Happiness.” One of the coolest components of the contest is that students who engage in the contest are required to read an English book and to take a written test at test center organized globally.

There are two types of the contest. One is for school students, grades 4-12. Another one is for students in university and college level. By attending the World Peace Ethics Contest, contestants or students have to read the books, students will learn how to have pure mind, morality and ethics. Their English reading skills will be improved at the same time. Students will certainly grow up to be good citizens who will lead our future nation to happiness and success. The knowledge can be applied to students’ daily lives, and they can benefit from success in both the material and spiritual aspects of their self-development. Since the World Peace Ethics Club in cooperation with Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Dhammakaya Foundation and its branch centers recognize the potential and significance of students, as a result, the Annual World Peace Ethics Contest for

students has initiated since 2009. By participating in the World Peace Ethics Contest, students are to learn moral principles from the book entitled, “Family Day By Day,” “Values Education for Peace,” and to write a “Diary of Inner Peace”, a 30-day diary of the good deeds they have performed as well as the good deeds they have witnessed. This ensures that the future of our nation will be in good hands of young people who are wise and virtuous. The objectives of the contest are to: (1) promote young people to learn basic moral principles that are universal and accessible to people of any race, religion and creed, so they have right livelihood, (2) instill creative potential in young people by encouraging positive personal qualities in daily lives, leading to a happy environment in both family and society, (3) teach young people to become well-rounded citizens in quality and morality, so they can build our society and nation to success, happiness and peace.

The process of the application for the two types of the Contest is similar. They include: submission of an application form before the announced deadlines which students can download application form from www.vir2kidz.com or complete this application form and send to [www.facebook/WorldPeaceEthicsClub](https://www.facebook.com/WorldPeaceEthicsClub), or email to vir2kidz@gmail.com. After that, the manual packages will be sent to participating schools by the World Peace Ethics Club; the book named “Values Education for Peace” for 3 students/book, “Diary of Inner Peace” for 1 student/book for school students, grades 4-12. After receiving the books, school students, grades 4-12 study by reading the book and write “Diary of Inner Peace.” Reading the book as a theory part equals 80%, and writing Diary of Inner Peace for 30 days as the practice part equals 20 %. The coordinating teacher collects Diary of Inner Peace from all students to be recorded the score in the summary scores of “Diary of Inner Peace” Form and submit only the diary of the students whose score is 100% (1,500 points) to the World Peace Ethics Club before the announced deadline.

For students in university and college level, each applicant will receive a book named “Family Day By Day.” They have to read the book and participate in the World Peace International Youth Ambassadors’ Camp which is organized at each center and take a written test. The written test is organized by the World-PEC Invigilators on the announced dates at test center organized globally. The test will take 1 hour and 40 minutes for 100 multiple choice questions and a written question as the school students, grades 4-12 do.

The results will be announced to schools, colleges and universities, and posted on www.vir2kidz.com or [www.facebook/WorldPeaceEthicsClub](https://www.facebook.com/WorldPeaceEthicsClub). The Awards Ceremony is organized after that on Vesak Day. Finally, announcement of contest results and the Award Ceremony are the last procedure. Scholarships and certificates are awarded to winners and participating students. Certificates of Appreciation for Support given of World-PEC are awarded to the school principal and coordinating teachers.

For this study, the researchers focused on the contestants in university and college level who have to read a book named “Family Day by Day”, to attend the World Peace International Youth Ambassadors’ Camp,

and to take the written test. The researchers would like to study: firstly, whether attending the World Peace Ethics Contest would help contestants improve their English reading skills or not. Secondly, what are the benefits of reading the book named Family Day by Day, and finally, the researchers would like to explore whether the winners of the World Peace Ethics Contest will have any other opportunities besides scholarships and certificates. Researchers had experimented with students who had similar interests with the sample without gender identification and Cumulated Grade Point Average (CGPA) and other aspects.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research were to:

- 3.1 investigate level of the achievement in reading by attending the World Peace Ethics Contest.
- 3.2 study the benefits of reading the book named “Family Day by Day”.
- 3.3 explore the opportunity perspective of the winners by attending the World Peace Ethics Contest.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 4.1 Is attending the World Peace Ethics Contest help contestants improve their English reading skills?
- 4.2 What are the benefits of reading the book named “Family Day by Day”?
- 4.3 What are any other opportunities the winners of the World Peace Ethics Contest will have besides scholarships and certificates?

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 The sample for this research consisted of 160 students majoring in English for Business Communication, School of Liberal Arts, Sripatum University for answering the first research question, 20 winners for answering the second research question, and 3 coordinators of the organizers. They were obtained by purposive sampling.

4.2 The instruments used were as follows:

4.2.1 Pre-test and Post-test: 100 item-multiple-choice, one written question. Both tests have a 0.86 confidence level indicating that the reliability of the test was high.

4.2.2 Evaluation form for the oral presentation of the group work; the reliability of the evaluation form is 0.91 which indicates that the reliability of the evaluation form is high.

4.2.3 A semi-structure interview form towards benefits of reading the book named “Family Day by Day” which was considered by the experts.

4.2.4 A semi-structure interview form towards the winners' opportunity of the World Peace Ethics Contest which was considered by the experts.

4.3 Data collection for the research was as follows.

4.3.1 The researchers used the Pre-test which indicates the reliability of the test with 160 contestants.

4.3.2 The contestants read the book named "Family Day By Day", attended the World Peace International Youth Ambassadors' Camp, and took the World Peace Ethics Contest.

4.3.3 The researchers used the Post-test, which was the same test as the pre-test with the 160 contestants after attending the World Peace Ethics Contest.

4.3.4 The researchers used the evaluation form for the oral presentation of the group work to collect the data at the World Peace International Youth Ambassadors' Camp.

4.3.5 The researchers used the semi-structure interview form towards benefits of reading the book named "Family Day by Day" which was considered by the experts to collect the data from the winners.

4.3.6 The researchers took the semi-structure interview form towards the winners' opportunity of the World Peace Ethics Contest which was considered by the experts to collect the data from 3 coordinators of the organizers.

4.3.7 The researchers took the data from the Pre-test and Post-test to analyze using computer program, and the data from the evaluation form for the oral presentation of the group work, the data from the semi-structure interview forms analyze qualitative information and in the form of description.

4.4 The statistics used to analyze the data were (1) percentage (%), (2) means (\bar{x}), (3) standard deviation (S.D.), and (4) t-test (dependent).

5. RESULTS

5.1 The results of the pre-test and post-test tests

The results of the pre-test and post-test tests of the sample of 160 samples showed the achievement of English reading skills. The achievement of English reading skills after attending the World Peace Ethics Contest was significantly correlated at 51.50% . This can conclude that attending the World Peace Ethics Contest help students to have better enhancement of English reading skills. The achievement in reading is statistically significant at the level of .05.

A comparison of reading achievement by attending the World Peace Ethics Contest, the achievement before the contest was 45.50 (Total scores of 100). After attending the World Peace Ethics Contest, the sample achieved 51.50 scores on the test. When the difference between the pre-test and the post-test results using T-

test, the score is -2.784, which is less than .001. This can conclude that attending the World Peace Ethics Contest helps contestants better improve their English reading skills.

Table 1 A comparison of reading achievement before and after attending the World Peace Ethics Contest

Description	N	Pre-		Post-		t-test	df	P-value
		\bar{x}	S.D.	\bar{x}	S.D.			
Reading achievement	160	45.50	0.83	51.50	0.61	-2.784	160	<.001

5.2 The results from the semi-structure interview form towards benefits of reading the book named “Family Day by Day” collected from the winners.

The winners stated that they gained more knowledge from reading the book because the book named “Family Day By Day” is a food for thought which is a guideline for having successful family life. The winners learned how to create love which is the force behind a family. They learned about togetherness which is the source of warmth. They learned how to have happiness which is surrounding family 24 hours a day. Moreover, the winners also learned new ideas for expressing themselves in words, how to think critically, and how to develop their habits. Another benefit is about mental stimulation which keep the winners’ brain active and involved prevents it from losing power. They emphasized that when they read the book, they paid attention on the story or chapter. This means that they improved focus and concentration. Reading the book named “Family Day By Day” also supports the ability to speak about Dhamma well. This is because the winners got information about the mindset, and they enrich the vocabulary. In addition, the winners pointed out that they also found out that reading the book named “Family Day By Day” helped them to have better writing skills because they learned writing style from the book. Interestingly, reading the book named “Family Day By Day” has been shown to help the winners better understand an interact with other people, keeps their brains sharp, expand their world view and grow as individuals. Importantly, reading this book makes the winners think. In other words, the winners thought how to improve one’s self and their relationships within the family. They thought how to give up bad habits, how to perform good deeds, and how to meditate to purify the mind. They realized that the better deeds they perform, the better energy they store inside of themselves and the more it will attract goodness, purity, stability, and comfort into their lives. However, the book has a lot of technical terms, the Pali and Sanskrit language. Many words in the book also refers to the mind and spirit which took time to understand.

In conclusion, the winners understood that they gained numerous benefits by reading the book named “Family Day By Day”, not only for it is a book that aim to stimulate young people to learn the knowledge and

apply it in their daily life but also lead the winners to generate inner peace preliminary from the tiniest element, themselves and families, and they can convey peace to the society, nation and the world.

3. The results from the semi-structure interview form towards the winners' opportunity of the World Peace Ethics Contest.

The data collected from the organizers revealed that there are some other opportunities for the winners and contestants of the World Peace Ethics Contest besides scholarships and certificates. Delightfully, the organizers have shown that the winners and the contestants with proper behavior, observing the Five Precepts (Sila), having a moral and volunteer spirit, and aiming to work for non-profit organizations also have the opportunity to participate in Cooperative Education Program with the World Peace Ethics Club, Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Dhammakaya Foundation and its branch centers both in Thailand and 84 coordination centers in 31 countries around the world where qualified winners and contestants will have chance to use their language skills. It depends on the winners and contestants' intentions, uncompromising life goal, and requesting from related parties.

6. DISCUSSION

A study found out that attending the World Peace Ethics Contest helps contestants better improve their English reading skills. In other words, the achievement of English reading skills after attending the World Peace Ethics Contest was statistically significant at the level of .05. This is due to the fact that attending the World Peace Ethics Contest, the contestants have chance to learn new words by themselves. When the contestants participated in the World Peace International Youth Ambassadors' Camp, and took the written test, they have the opportunity to acquire and enhance their own reading skills. They are encouraged to learn and to enhance English reading skills through real experiences or opportunities in real situations practically. This is consistent with the concept of Borg (1999) that learning new words by oneself enhances English reading skills. Correspondingly, reading the book named "Family Day By Day" in groups at the camp made contestants feel that the contents were comprehensible and interesting. The contestants are enthusiastic and motivated because they read with goals. This is consistent with the idea of George and Paul (1995) who suggested that enhancing reading skills should be integrated to build understanding to the reading purpose, requirement, and the reader's method. It also supports the idea of Aslan (2016) when he expressed that encouraging students to participate in competitive events is one of the most effective approaches. Attending the World Peace Ethics Contest, the contestants had chance to read the book named "Family Day By Day" as a process that is systematically trained in accordance with the reading theory. The contestants cope with steps: the presentation, the practice and the production, in particular, when the contestants attended the World Peace International Youth Ambassadors'

Camp which was a part of the contest. At the camp, contestants develop their reading skills through collaborative learning activities.

Based on the results from the semi-structure interview form towards benefits of reading the book named “Family Day by Day” collected from 20 winners, they stated that there are many benefits. For examples, reading the book helped them to have a guideline for having successful family life. They learned how to create love within their families, learned about togetherness, learned how to have happiness, learned new ideas for expressing themselves in words, learned how to think critically, learned how to develop their habits, and other countless benefits. The results support the perspective of Juyandegan (2016) when they pointed out that reading skills helps readers to enhance self-esteem and self-enhancement, and leads readers become adult. This is because the winners learned moral principles. They were encouraged, and they become well-rounded citizens in quality and morality when they read the book. They certainly can build our society and nation to success, happiness and peace. However, the book named “Family Day By Day” has its own terminology, Pali and Sanskrit, and the words refer to the mind and spirit. It is normal for a book of moral ethics. The readers will need to take more time to gain a deeper insight. Understanding the contents, readers may use other reading techniques for better understanding.

For the results from the semi-structure interview form towards the winners’ opportunity of the World Peace Ethics Contest, the findings revealed that there are some other opportunities for the qualified winners and contestants of the World Peace Ethics Contest besides scholarships and certificates. This includes having the opportunity to participate as a cooperative education student. If students are willing to improve the English language, there are some divisions such as the World Peace Ethics Club, the AEC Foreign Bureau of Wat Phra Dhammakaya, Dhammakaya Open University California (DOUC), Azusa, USA., Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Dhammakaya Foundation and its branch centers both in Thailand and 84 coordination centers in 31 countries around the world. A cooperative education student will have chance to use language skills and is responsible for coordinating with divisions in foreign countries. However, choosing Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Dhammakaya Foundation and its branch centers as a choice for the cooperative education program, the qualified winners and contestants must be true devotees. Cooperative education students have jobs or work like an employee.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Suggestions for the use of the research results.

7.1.1 The research found that attending the World Peace Ethics Contest help students to have better enhancement of English reading skills. There are several benefits by reading the book named “Family Day by

Day”, and winners of the contest have numerous opportunities by attending the World Peace Ethics Contest. Therefore, teachers or instructors should encourage students to participate in the annual contest.

7.1.2 Applicants must be interested in attending the event.

7.2 Suggestions for the next research.

7.2.1 Researchers should further study their satisfaction with the World Peace Ethics Contest of more samples.

7.2.2 Researchers should study the use of language and writing strategies in the book named “Family Day By Day”.

8. REFERENCES

- Aslan, Yasin. (2016). “The Effect of Cross-curricular Instruction on Reading Comprehension,” **Universal Journal of Educational Research**, 4(8): 1797-1801.
- Borg, Simon. (1999). “The Use of Grammatical Terminology in the Second Language Classroom: A Qualitative Study of Teachers’ Practices and Cognitions,” **Applied Linguistics**, (20)1: 95-126.
- Dhammakaya Foundation. (2018). “Worldwide Mediation Centers,” **Dhammakaya Foundation: About Us**, Retrieved 19 September 2018, from <https://en.dhammadownload.com/contact/worldwide-centers/>
- Eshghinejad, Shahrzad. (2016). “EFL Students’ Attitudes toward Learning English Language: The Case Study of Kashan University Students,” **Cogent Education**, 3(1): 1-8.
- George D. Spache & Paul C. Berg. (1995). **The Art of Efficient Reading**. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Juyandegan, Mohammad. (2016). “The Relationship Between Self-esteem and Reading Comprehension of EFL Iranian Pre-University Learners,” **International Journal of Asian Social Science**, 6(5): 303-313.
- Kumar, Ravindra. (2017). “Value Education for Ethics and Global Peace,” **Global Peace International Journal**, Special Issue-6(July): 4-5.
- Kornwipa, Poonpon,. (2017). “Enhancing English Skills Through Project-based Learning,” **The English Teacher**, 11(1): 1-10.
- Rupley, William H., Blair, Timothy R. & Nichols, William D. (2009). “Effective Reading Instruction for Struggling Readers: The Role of Direct/Explicit Teaching,” **Reading & Writing Quarterly Overcoming Learning Difficulties**, 25(2-3): 125-138.