An Investigation of Thai EFL Learners’ and Teachers’ Attitudes toward the Use of Extensive Reading: A Case Study of Naresuan University

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Abstract

The promotion of the Thai students’ English skills is crucial, especially after Thailand’s integration into the ASEAN Community at the end of 2015 because the ASEAN working language is English. The successful implementation of extensive reading (ER) will thus be an indispensable element for English language improvement. Indeed, many previous research studies have confirmed that the implementation of intensive reading alone may be insufficient to enhance EFL learners’ mastery of target language and that the extensive reading is one of the essential components in promoting their reading ability. The main objective of this research is to investigate the opinions of 404 Naresuan University students toward the use of extensive reading. They need to earn 10% of their total grades from their participation in ER activities, which is a part of the Developmental English Course. It also aims at the exploration of the teachers’ perceptions of how the extensive reading can be effectively implemented in current classroom setting. The data collection was conducted by means of a self-administered questionnaire and interview. The research findings are based on the quantitative and qualitative data. Their focus is paid not only to the actual use of extensive reading by language learners and teachers but also to their attitudes toward the future development of extensive reading that meet the learners’ needs. The results reveal that the lack of reading habits, low proficiency in English and freedom to select their own book genres are some of the major issues on ER implementation. Thus, the pedagogical implications for promoting ER instructions are also discussed.

Keywords: Extensive Reading, Thai students, EFL
Introduction

Undoubtedly, reading in English language learning is one of the essential skills for those people who learn and use English as a foreign or second language. Reading is yet a complex skill requiring multiple cognitive processes to decode symbols in order that readers can construct meaning, understand messages, and obtain information from a text (Nuttall, 1996). They read to meet their own purposes and use a combination of skills and sub skills in interpreting and receiving messages or contents. Consequently, reading instruction is a complex task as it requires plenty of reading strategies or skills to be taught and learned. Moreover, different reading purposes of readers has led to the breakthrough of English language teaching (ELT) approaches with the realization that the traditional reading instruction alone may not be effective for learners to successfully acquire good reading proficiency. Therefore, classroom-based intensive reading instruction may not fully meet the need in promoting the reading proficiency and comprehension, so extensive reading (ER) has become a key for both teachers and learners.

The current Thai curriculum and syllabi of secondary and higher education has paid attention to the reading skill (Ministry of Education 1978 - 2009), so Thai students are encouraged to read more for knowledge acquisition and professional/ vocational interest promotion (Tamrackitkun, 1995 cited in Tamrackitkun, 2010). However, fostering reading skills and habits for Thai students tends to be problematic because they lack reading motivation, reading materials, and proficient reading ability. The students read less either in class or out of class, while reading settings are usually controlled by their teacher. The teachers tell their students what, when and how to read. The instruction by translation procedure with the focus on intensive reading is the typical English teaching approach in Thai schools. Although the students may be able to acquire the language knowledge and reading skills through intensive reading, it is unsuccessful at improving their overall reading ability. One piece of evidence is the low reading scores of the TOEFL tests. Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL iBT shows that the reading score of Thai students is below the average (the Thai students’ score is 18, while the average is 20.1) (Educational Testing Service, 2013).
Poor reading proficiency may be a hindrance to full language learning progress resulting eventually in the ineffectiveness of L2 acquisition as a whole. Alderson and Urquhart (1984, p.1) emphasize the importance of reading ability that “a reading ability is often all that is needed by learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as well as of other foreign languages.” The students’ commitment and true interest in reading are indispensable for greater reading instruction effectiveness. Importantly, they should also read extensively in order to gain the adequate background knowledge for more successful engagement in the reading process.

In this regard, extensive reading (ER) seems to be a promising solution to the reading problem. The benefits of ER is obvious, with a large number of research results (Day & Bomford, 2002; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Nation 1997; Nuttall, 1996) revealing that students are able to develop their language knowledge given that they read extensively. ER instruction has been widely applied in ESL/EFL instruction. In Thailand, many researchers and instructors are interested in the integration of ER into classroom setting. However, the students’ opinions toward ER and the right direction of ER in Thailand are less understood. The current researcher was interested in conducting this study with the main objectives to investigate the students’ and teachers’ attitudes toward ER management within the context of the Thai classroom and to achieve a better understanding of how to effectively implement or adjust ER for future development. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What were the extensive reading behaviors of Thai students?
2. What were the teachers and students’ attitudes toward extensive reading in current classroom practice?
3. How could extensive reading instruction be organized in future classroom practice?

**Extensive Reading (ER)**

Extensive Reading (ER) puts an emphasis on reading pleasure through the engagement in reading activities in which the readers learn to read by reading a large number of preferred books for the achievement of general text understanding and of improved reading skills. ER is regarded as an effective method to develop vocabulary knowledge (Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Renandya & Jacobs, 2001; Yamazaki, 1996), reading comprehension (Bell, 2001; Elley, 1991; Flahive & Bailey 1993; Sheu, 2003), reading fluency (Iwahori, 2008; Nation, 1997; Robb & Susser, 1989), spelling (Polak & Krashen, 1988), writing performance (Elley, 1991; Hafiz & Tudor 1990; Lai, 1993; Mason & Krashen, 1997), speaking ability (Cho & Krashen, 1994), listening comprehension (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983), grammatical competence (Elley, 1991; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Mason, 2003). Besides, ER incorporates another far-reaching role in the classroom. The students in ER programs, for example, are highly motivated to read on their own so their positive attitude toward
reading in L2 and learner autonomy may also be developed (Bell, 1998; Channuan & Wasanasomsithi, 2012; Takase, 2003; Ueda, 2005 cited in Nakanishi & Ueda, 2011).

How to Organize ER

The nature of ER is to read a large number of books with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material. Ono, Day and Harsch (2004) suggest some tips for ER such as to read for general understanding, avoid using dictionaries, skip unknown or difficult words and continue reading. This means that the readers are able to grasp the overall flow of stories and focus on the main ideas of the texts without struggling over every detail and the exact meaning of every words or phrase. In this way, the readers become confident, fluent, and independent in L2 reading (Day & Bamford, 1998).

How many books are suitable for students to read extensively? There is no exact answer for this particular question but the recommended number of books per week for the maximization of the benefits of extensive reading can be found in the studies of Day and Bamford (2002) on general benefits for establishing reading habits and of Nation and Wang (1999) on vocabulary acquisition.

Day and Bamford (2002) provide a good guideline for conceptualizing ER in a teaching/learning process: the reading material is easy; a variety of reading on a wide range of topics must be available; learners choose what they want to read; learners read as much as possible; the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding; reading is its own reward; reading speed is usually faster rather than slower; reading is individual and silent; teachers orient and guide their students; and the teacher is a role model for readers.

Current Situation for Teaching and Learning Reading in Thai Universities

The crucial role of English language as a medium for the international economic world, especially after the accession to the ASEAN community in 2015, has led the Thai government to strengthen its national educational curricula in light of English language instruction. According to the University English Curriculum Requirements issued by the Office of the Higher Education Commission in 2009, undergraduate students are required to enroll in twelve credits of English courses. In the case of Naresuan University (NU hereafter), a great emphasis is laid on the development of students’ listening and speaking skills but the role of reading and writing skills is reduced. The compulsory English courses at NU involve three courses of Foundation of English (general English focusing on four skills) and three more communicative English courses (focusing on listening, speaking, and English presentation skills).

Regarding the reading instruction in the Thai universities, most textbooks used in the university English classes are mainly designed for the intensive approach. There are short and authentic texts with exercises requiring the students to learn or memorize the vocabulary and grammar in order to pass the examinations. The teachers control
the conditions of the learning process by instructing, explaining and illustrating vocabulary, grammar and sentence formation in the hope of helping students learn English. Meanwhile, students assume a passive role and have neither active interaction nor contribution to the learning processes. They fail to take responsibility and to truly learn to develop and improve their individual English skills on their own.

Though the students are required to memorize vocabulary and grammatical rules, they cannot proficiently read for information or for pleasure. They are able to decode only at the sentence level. Meanwhile, the extensive reading approach, which is a part of the EFL curricula, receives little attention in spite of numerous studies revealing useful examples of effective ER implementation and successful stories of ER integration for the improvement of students’ performance. A brief report of the inclusion of ER integrated in basic English required courses for Thai university students in the subsequent part offers an example, as well as some guidelines, of how to manage effective ER with EFL learners. Research findings and some suggestions on how ER can be improved or implemented in similar contexts are also elaborated on.

Method and Design

A mix of the quantitative and qualitative methodology was used in this research due to its respective usefulness in a specific situation or phase of the research process (Rossman & Wilson, 1985 cited in Tamrackitkun, 2010). On the one hand, this study relied primarily on the quantitative questionnaire survey to elicit the effectiveness of ER implemented in the context of NU students. On the other hand, qualitative interviews were also conducted with the English language instructors in order to achieve a fuller view of ER implementation in the current classroom practice and the possibilities for future development.

Setting

The data collection was conducted at NU in the last week of the second semester of the academic year 2013. Basic English Foundation courses, consisting of Fundamental English (001211) and Developmental English (001212), are compulsory subjects for NU freshman students of all faculties. Their objectives were to equip the students with the basic English language skills – reading, writing, listening, and writing. In order to enhance the students’ English reading ability, extensive reading (ER) was incorporated as part of each course. Students also earn 10% of their total grades from taking a test pertinent to ER stories. The class duration was fifteen weeks, excluding two weeks of midterm and final examinations. It met four hours a week divided into a two-hour lecture and a two-hour laboratory session. During the lecture hours, the instructors mainly used a skill-based approach to develop students’ skills, while the laboratory periods were the students’ opportunity to further practice and reinforce their language skills they had learned through the lecture. Therefore, the students were required to do independent work in the Naresuan University Language Centre (NULC) to complete
the learning supplements. The students were allowed to attend NULC at any time they wished (during the weekday office hours) outside their class hours. Their teacher may or may not be present in the NULC to give them assistance. After they finished their own work, they could check the answer keys on their own and they recorded the date, time, and duration of their participation. Besides, they were also required to read a graded reader book which was selected by the course manager for the whole class. In this regard, they could enjoy ER either in NULC or in any other places at any convenient time they preferred.

Participants
The participants of this study were 404 NU first-year students enrolled in the Developmental English course (001212) in the second semester of the academic year of 2013. There were approximately 4,000 students, most of whom were first-year students, registered in 90 sections of this course. Each section ranged in size from 40 to 50 students. To ensure the confidence of risk level at 95% of the true population value, the sample size of this study was targeted at 10% of the total number of students (Yamane, 1967).

Because of the large number of students, a multistage cluster sampling method was used for the quantitative data collection in the first phase of the study. Students were grouped into three clusters based on their majors: Social Sciences (1,460 students), Sciences and Technology (1,180 students), and Health Sciences (1,400). Then, each cluster was calculated to find the ration number of sample based on the total number of students in each group. Finally, 404 copies of completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher for subsequent data analysis.

For the qualitative data analysis, a semi-structured interview was conducted with ten English language instructors in the second phase of the study. They were recruited by means of convenience sampling. In particular, the researcher also asked for cooperation from the teachers who were acquainted with the researcher on a voluntary basis.

Research Instruments
There were two main research instruments: a survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

A self-administered questionnaire was based on elements of students’ perceptions and practice of ER as part of the English course. The questionnaire consisted of 29 questions which could be grouped into four main sections: students’ general information, students’ reading habits, current ER management and expectations toward ER in future practices. The questionnaire was submitted to three experts of EFL reading instruction for examination of content validity and language appropriateness. Then, some ambiguity and redundancy of the questionnaire was revised according to the experts’ suggestions. After their confirmation of content validity, the questionnaire was then translated into Thai to prevent misinterpretation among students. In order to
find the reliability of the questionnaire, the survey was piloted with fifty students who were not a target group. The questionnaire’s reliability based on the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient was 0.931 (k=47) so the questionnaire was applicable for the main study.

A semi-structured interview format was used. The interview mainly comprised of four questions. During the meeting, the researcher asked more emerging questions relevant to the main questions. This was to gain deeper understanding of how ER could be organized and implemented to help students to achieve better reading performance and whether it could encourage them to become avid readers. The questions were translated from English into Thai for better understanding between interviewer and informants. Both English and Thai versions of the interview questions were then submitted to three experts for evaluation. Some ambiguous questions were revised according to their comments. The content validity (IOC – the Index of Item-Objective Congruence) of the interview questions was 0.86.

The Findings
Quantitative Results

The quantitative results were from the students’ responses to the questionnaire. Their answers would reflect their opinions in three main areas: ER reading habits, current ER management, and expectations toward ER in future practices. The results can be summarized as follow:

- **ER reading habits**
  Results of the data analysis showed that the majority of the participants (68.81%) spent only one or two hours a week for ER. The students also reported that they read and translated the assigned graded readers by themselves (41.21%) and some students (23.92%) preferred retelling of stories by their friends. Moreover, over half of the students (60.89%) had some trouble regarding text understanding while engaging in ER and most of them (34.62%) chose to consult a dictionary or to google the information to enhance their understanding (34.15%).

- **Current ER Management System**
  This section was concerned with the students’ opinions towards ER management system of the Division of General Education (GE), and ER assessment criteria which accounted for 10% of Fundamental English courses. In addition, the benefits of ER were also presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: ER Management System</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is appropriate to assign certain ER for students.</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. It is appropriate to assign one graded reader per semester for students.</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
According to Table 1, the students’ opinions toward the ER management system were at a moderate level (Mean = 3.40, SD = 0.58). The most striking findings were found in Item 7: the students agreed that the assigning of the same reading assignment to the entire class was appropriate (Mean = 4.02, SD = 0.84). In addition, they thought that it was suitable to have teachers or TAs help them when they needed (Item 8: Mean = 3.66, SD = 0.92) and it was proper to assign one graded reader per semester (Item 2: Mean = 3.58, SD = 0.89). On the contrary, they have no interests whether the contents of graded readers are relevant to the lessons (Item 5: Mean = 2.68, SD = 0.84).

Table 2: ER measurement and assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. The time frame for the measurement and assessment of ER performance is clearly determined.</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. At least one assessment is determined in an appropriate manner.</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The scores rated from ER have a suitable portion.</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>404</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
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(1.00-1.05 = very low; 1.51-2.50 = low; 2.51-3.50 = moderate; 3.51-4.50 = high; 4.51-5.00 = very high)

For the management of ER assessment, the students had a highly positive attitude (Mean = 3.64, SD = 0.69). They shared the same opinions that at least one assessment for ER (Item 10: Mean = 3.70, SD = 0.82) and the portion of scores (Item 11: Mean = 3.65, SD = 0.86) were suitable. Moreover, the time frame for the measurement and assessment of ER performance was clearly determined (Mean = 3.57, SD = 0.83).
Table 3: Perceived Benefits of ER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. English reading contributes to the improvement of the students’ reading skills.</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. ER enhances the students’ interest to read the next English book.</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The engagement in ER promotes the students’ confidence in reading English texts.</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The engagement in ER increases the students’ vocabulary knowledge.</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Overall, the students like or enjoy the outside reading.</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>404</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1.00-1.05 = very low; 1.51-2.50 = low; 2.51-3.50 = moderate; 3.51-4.50 = high; 4.51-5.00 = very high)

Overall, the students realized the benefits of ER at a high level (Mean = 3.51, SD = 0.76). They indicated that ER increased their vocabulary knowledge (Item 15: Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.82) and simultaneously improved their reading skills (Item 12: Mean 3.84, SD = 0.85).

**The Expectations toward the Future of ER Management System**

In relation to the students’ view toward the adjustment of ER, most of the participants (75.74%) predominantly indicated that the organizational structure of ER should be adjusted to better suit students’ needs. However, nearly a quarter of them (23.76%) were satisfied with the current ER management system. Their needs for ER implementation could be summarized as follows:

- Some adjustments of ER were needed. The students, for example, should be able to select the books on their own, while the entire class was assigned the same book (41.34%).
- They indicated that only one book per semester should be sufficient (78.71%).
- Romance (15.35%), humor (14.60%), and adventure (11.39%) were their favorite book genres.
- For the assessment, the students preferred to take a test based on the reading story (39.11%) and a score proportion of 10% of the total grade was suitable (56.93%).
- They viewed that teachers or TAs should arrange the pre-exam session providing a summary of ER, and they needed someone to help them when needed (30.78%).

Regarding the students’ responses concerning the use of ER, most of them knew about the benefits of ER. However, they had low English proficiency and poor
reading habits. They also lacked the ability to manage their own time and learning. It can be said that they could not perform ER on their own without the assistance of their teachers or classmates. Seemingly, the intensive reading was their preferred option, not the extensive one, because they could read with their friends and teachers. In addition, the students would engage in ER if they were awarded some scores. Indeed, the research findings also indicated that the need for reform of ER for better suitability with the Thai EFL students should be carried out.

**Qualitative Results**

The results from this part were derived from the teacher's interviews on their attitudes toward the current ER practice and its management. They also gave suggestions for improvement of ER. The results were presented according to the interview questions as shown below.

**# Question 1: In your opinion, is the integration of extensive reading as part of the classroom's lesson good or not? How?**

Not surprisingly, the results indicated that all of the teachers agreed unanimously with the integration of ER into classrooms. They described the benefits of ER such as increase in vocabulary understanding, improvement of better reading skills, a means to practice reading in English, and promotion of the independent study, etc. Some interview responses are quoted below:

-  *It is good for the students to read other books apart from the textbooks. The students learn about vocabulary, grammatical structures, expressions, written language and the language used by the characters, which is actually used in the daily life.*

-  *The integration of ER in English language instruction is very beneficial. The university's policy puts an emphasis on the development of the students' English skills and autonomous learning so ER is a means to enhance their reading skill, which is an indispensable skill for higher education. Besides, ER also promotes autonomous learning, while the teacher only gives advice or guidance. Personally, I believe that if the students could continue reading until their graduation, their language skills would be developed obviously.*

**# Question 2: How do you manage ER formats for your students? (such as the arrangement of reading promotion activities, the teacher's role and the measurement and assessment)**

The overall results from the interview indicated that most teachers were satisfied with ER management due to their tight workload and the large number of students who enrolled in Foundation of English courses. The teachers encouraged their students to read ER, taught reading techniques, and arranged reading activities. However, some of the teachers admitted that there was insufficient time for the extra-curriculum
activities to help the students engage in ER activities and that the assessment required by the Division of General Education (GE) was enough. The following statements are taken from the participants’ reflections:

- In the first year, each group of students read differently. The teachers have the duty to prepare the exam questions and to conduct the measurement and assessment. One advantage is that the teacher is able to encourage the students to read by doing several small tests or giving advice regarding the important parts of the book. However, disadvantages are also found. It increases the teachers’ burden because they need to prepare different sets of exam questions if they teach several groups of students. Then, in the second year, the Division of General Education reduced the teachers’ burden by assigning all groups of students to read the same book. Despite the fact that it facilitates the measurement and assessment, some teachers fail to monitor whether the students actually read the book. Some students do not read at all.

- I recommend certain books to the students and teach them the techniques of reading for main ideas and word guessing. The class discussion of the book they read is also arranged along with Q & A sessions.

- No additional activities are arranged. Mostly, the students are reminded to read because the class time alone is insufficient to cover all contents of the textbook.

- There is additional assessment. The students need to retell the story to their classmates. If they can do so, it means that they have read it or, at least, they have worked on the search for relevant information.

# Question 3: In your opinion, is the implementation of ER and its management successful? Is there any trouble?

The teachers were asked to express their opinions about the success of current ER implementation and also identify any emerging problems during the practices. Based on the interview results, Most of the teachers were somewhat satisfied with ER management; however, all of them claimed that the most significant problem was that some of the students did not read at all. If they read, they read for the exam, not for their own pleasure. This may distort the main purpose of ER. Some responses to the interview are shown below:

- Overall, it is not quite successful. The management is good but problem is the students themselves. Some of the students do not read at all because they may not recognize the importance of reading. They view that reading English books is difficult so they read the Thai version or ask their friends to relate the story instead.

- It is only 50% successful. It is successful in terms of the opportunity for the students to try to read but it fails to imbue the students with reading habits and the ability to read autonomously.
# Question 4: Do you have any recommendations or advice regarding ER management for greater success of ER implementation?

This question intended to obtain the opinions from the teachers’ perspective on how to improve ER for future classroom practice. Some recommendations are shown below:

- Naturally, the Thai students do not really have reading habits because they do not recognize the importance of reading. Therefore, they may be encouraged to read by means of the score. The score proportion of ER may be increased while reducing the score of other sections. Some of them view that ER has a small score proportion so they do not pay attention for it. Alternatively, there may be several small exams to encourage the students to read more. It should not rely on the mid-term and final exam alone.

- The Division of General Education should provide training for the instructors in light of supplementary activities of ER in order to encourage the students to read. Normally, the Division of General Education devises the policy determining the books for the teachers to manage on their own. However, the teachers do not know what they should do.

- The university's policy to use graded readers is good but the policy is incongruent because the communicative English is more focused today. The reading subject is omitted and the communicative English course is added instead. However, the reading is integrated within the Foundation of English course, which is loaded with several contents. Therefore, it becomes difficult for the students to practice their reading skill seriously. The reading course should be arranged so that the students are able to practice both intensive and extensive reading.

- The book purchase budget is supported by the university. The places where the students can enjoy reading are also available e.g. the library, self-access center and Naresuan University Language Center (NULC). Nonetheless, it lacks reading promotion activities so activities like English Reading Club, Reading of Graded Reader Competition and Reading Tutorial, etc. should be arranged.

In addition to the above responses in light of the integration of ER in the Thai classroom settings at NU, all of the interviewees suggested that the score was the best incentive for students to read books, while the teachers also played a crucial role in supporting and encouraging them. In addition, the administrators of the university should provide sufficient English books, reading activities, and teacher training. Lastly, the reading courses should be integrated as part of the university’s curriculum requirement.
Table 4 summarizes the findings based on the students’ and teachers’ perspective toward the use of ER program in the classroom and the future development as follows.

**Table 4: The Summary of the Students’ and Teachers’ Attitudes toward ER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Attitudes</th>
<th>Teachers’ Attitudes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The ER behaviors of Thai EFL students</td>
<td>Most of the students did not read because they believed that the English books were difficult to read. Moreover, if they read, they read for the exam, not for their own pleasure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students spent a small amount of time on ER activities. They also had some troubles in text understanding due to their low English proficiency. Some of them relied on dictionary, googled the websites, and asked their friends to retell the story.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Current ER Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 ER Management System</td>
<td>All the teachers agreed with the integration of ER program into the classroom due to its numerous benefits. With respect to ER management system, most of the teachers were satisfied with it in spite of their tight workload and the large number of students who enrolled in the Foundation English course. They believed that the integration of ER program into the classroom was successful because it provided students with an opportunity to read English books and manage their own reading time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students indicated that it was suitable to assign one graded reader per semester and to assign the same book for the entire class. They also realized that ER program enhanced their vocabulary knowledge and improved their reading skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2 ER Measurement and Assessment</td>
<td>The teachers believed that it was unsuccessful because they failed to monitor whether the students actually read the books and there were no ER activities to encourage them to read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students were satisfied with the current assessment (as a part of the midterm and final exams) and the portion of scores (10% of total grades).</td>
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Discussion and Implications

According to the research findings, the discussions and implications are to be presented based on the important trends which emerged from the survey and interview data. The students’ responses to the questionnaire focus on the trends and help raise awareness of key issues related to the uses of ER, as well as interesting findings from what the teachers had voiced in the interview.

1. Articulating Reading Motivation and Habits

It was clear that the students indeed realize the benefits of ER in helping them increase their vocabulary knowledge and improve their reading skills. However, they were reluctant to read extensively. They said that they spent only one or two hours a week for reading and that they agreed to read only one graded reader for a whole semester. This was insufficient for gaining the true advantage of ER. Although they were assigned to read, most of them were unwilling to read and waited for their teacher or friends to recount the story for them. They did not want to read books of any genre, either for recreation or for pleasure. Strauss (2008), argued that most Thai students were reluctant to read due to the lack of ‘reading culture’ in Thailand. In other words, they are not independent readers because reading was an uncommon activity in the Thai culture.

Other factor that hinders the students from reading is their English proficiency. This seems to be the major problem for Thai students. The Students confessed that they faced some difficulty while performing ER. They chose to consult the dictionary

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<tr>
<th>3. The Expectations toward the Future ER Management System</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some adjustments of the ER program were needed. For example, the students should be able to select their own book genres and the teachers or TA should be available to help them when they needed it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Teacher trainings on ER activities should be arranged.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The reading course should be arranged separately so that students and teachers could focus more on the intensive and extensive reading activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The university should provide students with all genres of English books to meet their needs and preferences. Also, reading promotion activities such as Reading Club, Reading competitions should be arranged.</td>
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</table>
or to google to enhance their understanding. This may interrupt the reading process and its pleasure so they may become discouraged and stop reading. However, the students’ regular used of English language may be a means for the development of reading skill; therefore, it can be assumed that ER which promotes the students’ active engagement in language use may be the key for the achievement of higher English proficiency.

Robb and Kano (2013) claim that there are no other methods which might be able to force a large number of students who are generally unmotivated to study English to spend the requisite amount of ‘quality time’ with the language outside of class rather than ER. They also mentioned that motivated students will gladly do whatever they can to improve their language proficiency; other students will normally not do outside work unless there is a means for their teachers to verify that the work has been done.

### 2. Promoting Reader Autonomy

Autonomy, which is defined as the extent to which learners take charge of and become responsible for their own learning, is recognized by many researchers for its benefits in increasing students’ motivation to learn leading to greater learning effectiveness. The fact that Thai university students are passive, obedient, uncritical, irresponsible and over-dependent on their teachers in EFL learning is one of the major holdbacks of the development of their learning process. In addition, Thai teachers who are familiar with the expository mode may likely find it difficult to change their role from being a knowledge transmitter to a counselor or a learning resource manager (Sanprasert, 2010). Consequently, the most preferred learning style in Thailand is often seen as the rote memorization, attention to details, and precise, linear and logical analysis without critical thinking (Adamson, 2003; Champagne & Walter, 2000; Thadphoothon and Jones, 2004 cited in Sanprasert, 2010). It is believed that this mode of learning and teaching is unlikely to be a process in which learners can engage deeply with the ideas in order to generate profound knowledge.

To promote learner autonomy through ER, Imrie (2007) has reported a successful implementation of extensive reading program at Tokai University in Japan. It used a delivery system library of graded readers to foster individualization and learner autonomy across the English curriculum. The study proved that students who practiced extensive reading were able to be independent learners because they can select what they want to read, at a level that suits their proficiency, out of the classroom at the desired time and place. In addition, they can progress through a library of books at their own rate, and they can assume some measure of responsibility for their own learning. Along the same lines, Channuan and Wasanasomsithi (2012) investigated Thai university students’ learner autonomy and their English reading ability in an ER program. The results indicated that ER enhanced their reading ability and promoted learner autonomy enabling them to become more autonomous readers.
Undoubtedly, teachers and educational administrators should promote an independent active learning mode by fostering learner autonomy through ER. Students will gain benefit both in the ability to manage their own learning and in the improvement of their English proficiency as a whole.

To foster the autonomous learning approach in ER, students should be guided on how to select the right books that satisfy their interest because the students’ reading enjoyment and regular reading habit could be enhanced by allowing the students to choose their own preferred books. Besides, they should also be encouraged to take their own learning responsibility, for example, keeping reading records and monitoring reading progress along with the self-evaluation of reading performance.

3. Providing the Teachers’ Support

Kirin and Wasanasomsithi (2010) claim that a teacher needs to take the reading sessions seriously and to be ready to help whenever a reader encounters a reading problem. One important notion emerged from this study is that the success of ER depends first and foremost on the initiative taken by the teachers. To elaborate, the students cannot perform outside class reading alone for long periods without being facilitated by a teacher due to the lack of responsibility, autonomy, language proficiency, and time management. Macalister (2010, p. 169) acknowledges this quandary, “students are ‘not keen on doing work in their own time, many don’t read in their first language. If this is seen as an issue, then it is reasonable to suggest that teachers should be considering solutions, with one solution being, clearly, the devotion of at least some in-class time to actually reading for pleasure.”

The teacher’s support in the ER process can be done by helping students with their reading, organizing conferences during or after class hours, and checking and commenting on students’ oral or written summaries of their reading (see Susser & Robb, 1989). Additionally, giving moral support is also important to encourage students to keep on reading and, at the same time, build their confidence. It is needful task of teachers to give suggestions to help students to overcome their problems.

4. Setting ER Evaluation

ER experts agree that there should be no assessment of ER because testing may negatively affect students’ L2 reading attitudes (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 2004; Waring, 1997). Day and Bamford (1998) point out that reading assessment may slow down students’ progress toward becoming independent and self-motivated readers.

Although experts insists that post-reading evaluation of ER may have undesirable effects on the affective benefits of ER, some studies have proved that the evaluation does not always detract from those benefits. For example, Read and Goldberg (2008) examined Japanese university students who took weekly ER quizzes for one semester and found that L2 reading attitude of these students did not differ from those students who did not take the quizzes. Likewise, Stoeckel, Reagan and Hann (2012) provided
support for Read and Goldberg’s work, but suggested that the students who took those quizzes may slightly gain greater intellectual benefit from the reading tasks.

In case of the ER situation in Thailand, it is difficult to manage since the nature of Thai students requires more stimulation on L2 reading. Incentives such as scores and grades seem to be the best motivation for them. Once students go through the process of reading for tests to the reading for pleasure, then assessment can be performed in a manner that is relatively stress-free for the learners (e.g., more informal measures such as book reviews, posters, presentations, etc.). Mathewson (2004, p. 1437) argues, “Reading behavior initiated by external incentives would have a chance to become functionally autonomous and personally rewarding with the passage of time.”

5. Organizing Reading Course and Integrating ER into Reading Course

The teacher’s perspective indicates an excellent policy of NU to integrate ER into its Foundation of English courses, but the emphasis of this particular policy is paid more on communicative English. The role of reading course is diminished, while more communicative English courses are added to the university curriculum. However, the reading session in the Foundation of English courses is shared with the other contents. Consequently, it becomes difficult for the students to practice their reading skills seriously. Therefore, educational institutes should consider the arrangement of more reading courses so that students are able to practice both intensive and extensive reading.

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), intensive reading is related to further progress in language learning under the teacher’s guidance. It provides a basis for explaining difficulties of structure and for extending knowledge of vocabulary and idioms. On the contrary, extensive reading means reading in quantity in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build the knowledge of vocabulary and structure and to encourage the enjoyment of reading.

Thus, an intensive reading course is still crucial for students because it reinforces their reading skills and strategies which help them to do better on outside reading class if there is no teacher’s support. On the other hand, ER can also be integrated as part of the intensive reading course (e.g., extra credit, homework) or a stand-alone course, depending on how each educational institute puts emphasis on it.

6. Providing Reading Resources and Facilities

The primary resources required for ER are the sufficient collection of books, newspapers, and magazines. According to Kirin and Wasanasomsithi (2010), books are the main material that effectively attracts and subsequently motivates readers to read extensively. In order to serve the readers’ various interests and abilities, the collection should contain books, magazines, and other materials with different genres and levels (from the beginner to advanced). Choosing the right books can solve reading problems such as text-difficulty, comprehension, and boredom.
Strauss (2008) argues that Thai schools and universities possess a dearth of reading materials available in their libraries. Therefore, educational institutes should have sufficient budgets to acquire and stock books to meet the students’ demand. However, merely providing books is not sufficient. The places where students can access and enjoy reading are also important. Libraries, self-access centers, or language centers should be available with a proper reading environment.

Conclusion

Many studies have claimed that ER is an effective pedagogy for helping Thai EFL learners to improve their L2 skills enjoyably and effectively. However, this study has ascertained that ER implementation should be based on Thai EFL contexts in order to ensure its success.

In summary, an ER program in an additive mode can be successfully organized if all of the following conditions are met: the promotion of students’ reading motivation and reader autonomy, the availability of teachers’ necessary supports and advice, the provision by the educational institutes of English books according to the students’ preferences, and the appropriate use of the score incentive in ER assessment.

The findings of the present study have highlighted a range of issues related to Thai undergraduates’ reading habits and the current and future practices of ER implementation. The challenge for teachers and educational administers is, then, to find ways to encourage individual students to engage in ER. Students need to practice reading at their own pace in order to achieve the target language development so that they are not only motivated but also eventually imbue their inner reading habits. This is to reach the ultimate goal of becoming lifelong readers.

References


