



Effects of Extensive Reading on Thai EFL Students' Reading Comprehension and Reading Motivation

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine reading comprehension improvement and reading motivation enhancement after exposure to extensive reading for six weeks. The participants were 30 Thai EFL secondary education level students in northeastern Thailand. Participants were aged from 14 to 16 years old. The research instruments consisted of reading reports and the four-point Likert scale questionnaire of motivation for reading. Reading reports were analyzed by using the reading comprehension rubric, descriptive statistics, and the SPSS program. Moreover, the questionnaire on motivation of reading was used as the pretest and posttest to collect the quantitative data, and the data were analyzed by using descriptive and correlation statistics through SPSS. The results revealed that extensive reading positively affected participants' reading comprehension over time. The results showed a significant improvement from the first to the last week of the study: from a moderate to a high level. Additionally, the results of reading motivation questionnaires found that ER positively affected participants' reading motivation, specifically increasing their reading involvement, recognition of reading, reading for grades, and compliance while maintaining the level of their dislike of reading, without negatively impacting other aspects of their reading motivation. These findings also offered several significant implications. Other valuable recommendations for future studies and the limitations of this study were also discussed.

Keywords: Extensive Reading, Reading Comprehension, Reading Motivation, Thai EFL Junior High School Students

Introduction

For students, reading represents a lifelong learning skill that may be used both inside and outside of the classroom (Habók et al., 2024). Furthermore, reading is considered to be essential for English acquisition, as it offers more opportunities for practice than speaking (Sukyingcharoenwong & Intaraprasert, 2015). Engaging and relevant reading materials are crucial to motivate students. Research emphasizes the importance of reading for second language acquisition, vocabulary development, and language proficiency (Carrell et al., 1988; Nation, 2009). Cognitive and affective processes, such as motivation and individual choice, play a role in the reading process (Hilgard, 1980; Corno, 2021). Reading activities with diverse materials inside and outside the classroom can foster enjoyable and active reading, benefiting vocabulary, spelling, and grammar (Ahmad, 2012; Carrell & Grabe, 2010; Krashen, 2003). Despite its importance, Kitjaroonchai and Aroonrua (2019) stated that Thai students have struggled with reading due to a lack of access to high-quality reading resources. Besides, limited lexical knowledge, spelling difficulties, and complex grammar rules contribute to the difficulties faced by Thai students in acquiring English proficiency (Chakorn, 2017). Inadequate teaching methods and a lack of exposure to English materials outside the classroom exacerbate these difficulties. Therefore, Thai students have been struggling with vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and speaking due to various factors such as limited vocabulary knowledge, differences in grammar rules, and a lack of practice opportunities (Sriborisutsakul, 2019; Yimprasert, 2018; Nonthapa & Ngaosuwankul, 2020). Despite the instruction, many students feel anxious and lack confidence in effectively communicating in English. However, English proficiency is considered to be crucial for success in the global community in Thailand (Chaladmanon, 2017). Yet, the English language learning situation in Thai schools and universities presents challenges.

Reading strategies that boost students' motivation and comprehension, aid in the growth of their English reading abilities, and eventually instill a love of reading are essential for solving these problems. The association between the importance of reading for second language acquisition, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and language proficiency has been extensively researched (Oh, 2016). Cognitive and affective processes, such as motivation and individual choice, play a role in the reading process (Hilgard, 1980; Corno, 2021). Reading activities with diverse materials inside and outside the classroom can foster enjoyable and active reading, benefiting vocabulary, spelling, and grammar (Ahmad, 2012; Carrell & Grabe, 2010; Krashen, 2003). Proficiency in reading plays a crucial role for second language (L2) learners in academic settings, as it facilitates learning and task completion (Anderson, 2015; Grabe, 2009; Rosenfeld et al., 2001). Therefore, the development of L2 reading skills is a significant concern, and extensive reading (ER) has emerged as one of the highly effective approaches. ER exposes learners to meaningful input, fosters motivation, and cultivates advanced reading abilities (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Krashen, 2004, 2011). Reading holds critical value for ESL/EFL learners as it enables them to comprehend written texts, acquire knowledge, gather information, and enhance their grasp of grammar and vocabulary (Bamford & Day, 1988; Wei, 2005). At the heart of reading lies comprehension, where learners not only understand the literal meaning but also interpret the intended message of the text (Hermida, 2009). Without comprehension, the acquisition of reading skills becomes meaningless (Ameriratrini, 2017). Thus, emphasizing comprehension is vital for the development of language proficiency and overall academic success.

In conclusion, this study examines how ER influences Thai junior high school students' reading comprehension and motivation. This research will assist EFL teachers in creating successful reading lessons that inspire readers and enhance language abilities. This study employed a single-group experimental design. The purpose of the research is to compare



participants' levels of reading motivation at the beginning and end of the study using a questionnaire designed to spark that interest. (MRQ). In one experimental group, reading reports or reading diaries is used both before and after intensive reading activities to see how well students understood what they had read.

Extensive reading (ER) appears to be one of the most promising methods for enhancing students' linguistic abilities in countries like Thailand, where English literacy is significantly low. It involves students engaging in extensive and critical reading to deepen their understanding of the language and literature (Day & Bamford, 1998; Horst, 2005). Giving students the autonomy to choose their own reading materials enhances their desire to learn and their ability to comprehend required texts (Krashen, 2004). ER has proven benefits in enhancing reading comprehension skills (Aka, 2019; Bahmani & Farvadian, 2017; Nako, 2018; Shin et al., 2018; Suk, 2017). Moreover, it has been found to significantly increase students' motivation to study and learn the language (Day, 2010). By allowing students to select materials aligned with their personal interests, ER promotes a sense of ownership and initiative in their language learning journey (Mikami, 2018). ER not only exposes students to literature from various countries, but it can also be used as an instructional approach in language education (Day & Bamford, 1998). Researchers like Carrell and Carson (1997) and Harold Palmer have argued that ER prioritizes the text and contributes to its comprehension (Carrell & Carson, 1997; Palmer, cited in Carrell & Carson, 1997). In countries like Thailand, where reading is a significant concern, ER proves to be an effective strategy for enhancing linguistic proficiency (Aka, 2019; Bahmani & Farvadian, 2017; Day, 2010; Nako, 2018; Shin et al., 2018; Suk, 2017). Access to interesting and informative reading resources sparks students' interest, improves their comprehension, and enables them to apply what they have learned. As a result, numerous local, national, and international initiatives are dedicated to promoting and implementing ER as a widely recognized reading exercise worldwide.

Reading comprehension serves as a vital skill that involves understanding the psychological aspects and subtleties of a text (Buckley, 2019). It plays a crucial role in learning new vocabulary and gaining insights into various topics. According to Duke et al. (2011), reading comprehension is essential for academic and professional success. Singkum and Chinwonno (2021) emphasize the importance of grasping the complete meaning of what is read, beyond simply understanding individual words and sentences. Extensive Reading (ER) is an approach that promotes reading for pleasure using a wide range of materials to help students develop a general understanding and enjoyment of the language (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Research indicates that ER can enhance students' reading comprehension skills. Studies by Aka (2019), Bahmani and Farvadian (2017), Nako (2018), Shin et al. (2018), and Suk (2017) have shown that allowing students to choose texts they are interested in and creating a relaxed reading environment can improve comprehension. ER fosters a lifelong love of reading and the development of healthy reading habits, ultimately improving reading comprehension (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Renandya and Jacobs (2016) suggest that providing students with accessible reading materials can enhance learning and enjoyment. Teachers recognize the importance of motivating students to read and acknowledge that a wide selection of reader-friendly literature contributes to their pleasure and growth in reading comprehension (Dornyei, 2001; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016).

To promote regular reading and enhance comprehension, teaching strategies should prioritize enjoyment and comprehension. Motivated students typically spend significantly more time reading than their less motivated peers (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Boosting students' motivation can be achieved by allowing them to choose novels they find interesting, which also makes learning English more enjoyable (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012). Reading motivation is connected to individual interests and a love for the reading process. ER enables students to select texts based on personal interest, positively influencing their second-language reading



motivation (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012; Suk, 2016; Day, 2018). Enjoyment from reading leads to higher motivation and consistent long-term reading (Suk, 2016; Day, 2018). ER resources and activities contribute to sustaining students' interest and drive to read (Jacobs & Farrell, 2012). Moreover, ER is recognized for improving literacy, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and facilitating conversation (Horst, Cobb, & Meara, 1998). In conclusion, ER not only increases motivation to read but also strengthens reading comprehension. It cultivates a lifelong reading habit and supports language acquisition by granting students the freedom to choose their reading material and providing positive reading experiences.

Questions

1. To what extent does extensive reading improve reading comprehension skills among Thai junior high school students?
2. How does extensive reading promote reading motivation among Thai junior high school students?

Objectives

1. To examine whether extensive reading can improve Thai junior high school students' reading comprehension.
2. To investigate whether extensive reading can promote Thai junior high school students' reading motivation.

Literature Reviews

Extensive reading allows EFL students to read better and to read enjoyable texts while enhancing students' reading skills and facilitating the target language at the same time (Hosseini, Nasri, & Afghari, 2017; Namaziandost, Nasri, & Rahimi Esfahni, 2019; Nuttal, 2000). Therefore, an ER program provides opportunities for students to read an unfamiliar reading text silently in a large quantity, reading at the right level and enjoyably with sufficient understanding (Day & Bamford, 1998). Moreover, many research on extensive reading has revealed many significant benefits in learning foreign language and developing reading ability. Through Elley and Mangubhai's (1983) Fiji Book Flood study, it has revealed that the control groups have better performance than the treatment groups in reading comprehension improvement when it comes to reading large quantity (Robb & Susser, 1989; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007). Similarly, through Karlin & Romanko (2008) and Mori (2002) research, it has resulted in a significant relation between ER and reading motivation in creating increasingly positive ideas toward reading. Although ER has many benefits as mentioned above, ER seems to be difficult to conduct ER research (Grabe, 2009).

Nevertheless, numerous studies have explored the effects of extensive reading on reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, especially in the context of foreign language learning. For instance, a meta-analysis by Chen, Yang, and Lv (2021) found that extensive reading had a positive effect on both vocabulary development and reading comprehension among Chinese EFL learners. Similarly, Akbari and Razavi (2021) reported that extensive reading improved vocabulary development and language learning strategies among Iranian EFL learners. Whereas, extensive reading has also been shown to have a positive impact on reading motivation. Jittrapirom, Niyomsean, and Suwannathachote (2020) found that extensive reading had a significant effect on increasing reading motivation and English proficiency among Thai EFL learners. Punsri (2018) also reported that extensive reading had a positive effect on Thai EFL learners' reading motivation and attitude. In addition, the use of extensive reading has been explored in various Asian countries, including Taiwan and Thailand. Kung (2020) found that Taiwanese college EFL learners who participated in extensive reading

programs had higher reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and motivation compared to those who did not participate. Lertola and Ratana-Ubol (2018) reported that Thai university students who engaged in extensive reading showed significant improvement in reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

Moreover, prior researches have checked the impacts and relationship of ER on EFL reading motivation and reading comprehension in different settings, but it is insufficient when it comes to using an extensive reading activity. Edy (2015) researched the effectiveness in improving reading comprehension through an extensive reading and the interaction between an extensive reading and reading motivation. The researcher used a quasi-factorial design with a pretest and posttest. The participant in this study is the second semester students of STAIN Curup, The English study program in the academic year 2011-2012. Their reading comprehension is measured by using multiple-choice tests and their reading motivation is measured by reading motivation questionnaire. The finding of this study from reading comprehension test is that extensive reading activities help these students improve their reading comprehension achievement whereas there is no significant interaction between their reading motivation and extensive activities.

In Thai contexts, a considerable number of studies on Thai population have demonstrated a significant and insignificant effects of extensive reading on reading comprehension and reading motivation. Even though there are some studies about Thai people do not like to spend time on reading (Ngamwittayaphong, 2010; Koonprasert, 2019), there are also many studies attempting to develop Thai students' reading skill by using ER approach. For ER and reading comprehension, starting with Pratontep & Chinwonna's (2008), it has showed that after 10 weeks, a significant improvement on Thai students has appeared through their post mean scores in both upper-level and lower-level group. For ER and reading motivation, beginning with Srimalee & Charubusp's (2018) about the effect of using Reader's Theatre (RT) in Extensive Reading (ER) to enhance reading motivation of Thai students, it has resulted in increasing reading motivation among 38 first-year students by pre- and post- reading motivation questionnaires and a semi-structured interview. In contrast, through Hayikaleng, Nair & Krishnasamy's (2016) research on Thai students' motivation on English reading comprehension without using ER, the result has demonstrated that the participants have lower level of motivation in learning the target language. Similarly, with using ER on Thai university students' reading comprehension, the result of pretest and posttest has not showed any significant differences (Partontep, 2007). On the other hand, Uraiman (2010)'s study has showed that by engaging ER, the participants' reading comprehension and reading motivation has increased. Hence, conducting ER might has failed and succeed sometimes depending on other factors, but in Thai contexts, ER still has many angles that need to be searched and find out if ER really works other contexts and other level of participants.

In conclusion, Grabe (2009) stated many researchers have been well aware of the importance of reading motivation in target language learning and how positive reading motivation improves reading comprehension directly among language learners. Besides, there are numerous studies proved that Extensive Reading or ER is one of the most effective strategies to help students improve their English and gain reading comprehension as well as reading motivation. All studies reviewed here support the idea that extensive reading involving with EFL students' reading motivation or reading comprehension in English reading improvement. Evidences from previous studies mentioned above investigated those higher motivated readers have high opportunity to comprehend the text better than lower motivated readers. Therefore, ER is one of the spontaneous ways in second language acquisition and it is similar to the way students acquire the first language and with a variety of easy-to-read and interesting materials, students can become better readers and students are able to deal with ability to comprehend reading texts.

Research Conceptual Framework

For the purposes of the study, the following key terms are defined. Extensive Reading (ER) in this study refers to both reading inside and outside of the classroom on English language written texts that are selected according to students' own interests. As defined by Nation (2013), extensive reading involves the practice of reading English language texts both in and out of the classroom, with a focus on selecting texts based on personal interests. In addition, extensive reading has been found to be an effective way to improve language proficiency and reading comprehension skills (Day & Bamford, 2002; Krashen, 2004). It also promoted a love for reading, which can lead to lifelong learning (Mikami, 2017). By selecting texts based on their own interests, students were more likely to engage with the material and develop a love for reading (National Literacy Trust, 2019). In this current study, there were three different levels of the books for students; the third level was lower than their background knowledge, the fourth level was comparatively matched with their level, and the fifth level was higher than their background knowledge. Students read continually both in and outside of the classroom.

Methodology

Participants and setting

This study included 30 Thai junior high school students, aged between 14-16 years old, who were studying in a high school located in a province in Northeast Thailand. Participants' native language was Thai, and no participant had stayed in an English-speaking country. They have been studying English as a foreign language for 10-13 years, and were familiar with a rudimentary understanding of English grammatical rules and limited vocabulary knowledge. That is, their English proficiency was considered to be lower than the standard.

Research instruments

Two main research instruments were employed to evaluate how the ER approach affects students' comprehension and motivation toward reading. These two instruments included the reading comprehension checklist, formed as a reading report sheet, and a motivation for reading questionnaire.

1. Reading report

After completing a reading session, the participants were required to write a reading report and allowed to answer in Thai or English. Reading report sheets as the record paper were to track the participants' evidence of their understanding in reading comprehension. A reading report was utilized to provide participants a chance to demonstrate what they have learned in their own words while also reflecting a broader view of their understanding in the way they have processed and interpreted the reading material.

2. The questionnaire of reading motivation

Before and after ER implementation, each participant was asked to complete a motivation for reading questionnaire adapted from Wigfield and Guthrie (2010) with reference to the original MRQ Wigfield and Guthrie (1995). Based on the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), the items on the questionnaire were validated and evaluated by three experts. The items were scored on a 3-point scale, where +1 indicated congruence, 0 indicated uncertainty, and -1 indicated incongruence. The motivation for reading questionnaire included 53 items to investigate participants' reading motivation, and participants were mostly able to finish the questionnaire within 15-20 minutes. To measure students' motivation toward their reading, there are four different scales, ranging from 1 = very different from me to 4 = a lot like me. The motivation for the reading question was translated into the Thai language. In the field of EFL translation, the Thai version of this questionnaire was cross-checked by experts.

Data collection procedure

Before data collection, the participants were asked to do online Oxford Graded Readers Level Tests in order to make sure the book level was the right difficulty level for the participants.

The motivation of the reading questionnaire and the reading report were provided to participants in the Thai language before the ER program. The participants were first asked to do the motivation for reading questionnaire prior to the ER implementation, while the questionnaire was asked to do again after the ER program. The pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire results were then compared to examine the participants' motivation in reading throughout the ER program. While the participants read a graded reader per week, each participant was also given six reading reports after they finished reading six graded readers.

Data analysis

To answer the first research question, the answers from open-ended literal, inferential, and critical or evaluative questions through the reading comprehension checklist formed into the reading report sheet was be transcribed, and the scores were rated and analyzed by the researcher and the interrater. By getting the appropriate mean scores, the participants' scores from the researcher and the inter-rater were calculated to determine the Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD). Secondly, participants took the motivation for reading questionnaire before and after ER implementation for six weeks and analyzed quantitatively. To investigate a statistical difference, a pair samples t-test were utilized to compare the data between pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire scores. To score the questionnaire, four Likert scales used to measure participants' reading motivation towards ER, were values as follows: ranging from 1 point = very different from me, 2 points = a little different from me, 3 points = a little like me, and 4 points = a lot like me.

Result and Discussion

Result

1. To what extent does extensive reading improve reading comprehension skills among Thai junior high school students?

The data were obtained from the participants' reading reports for the six weeks since the beginning of the research study. The full score of reading comprehension questions in each reading report was 20 points according to the reading comprehension rubric, rated by the researcher and inter-rater. In each week, according to participants' reading reports, the raw scores from the researcher and the inter-rater were both calculated to determine the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD).

Furthermore, the Pearson correlation between the participants' six reading report scores from the researcher and the inter-rater was 0.963 ($p = 0.02$) which mean there was positive significant correlation between these two variables at the significance level of 0.01. The more the participants' reading report scores from the researcher increased, the more participants' reading report scores from the inter-rater increased.

The total mean score of the first week of reading graded readers was 15.6 out of 20 with SD 1.563, which represents a moderate level, whereas the total mean score of the last week was a little higher than the total mean score of the first week at 1.1 ($M = 16.7$, SD 2.303), which means a very high level. Results from the six reading reports from six weeks of reading extensively indicated the most participants in this study could answer the five main questions in the reading reports better than in the first week of reading. Interestingly, the mean scores of the 5th week of reading a graded reader increased with the highest mean score at 17.1 with SD 1.522. Finally, it can be said that all the participants from the first week to the last week of reading could manage to read extensively and managed to do better than the first week, when

compared to the last week; (1st week $M = 15.6$, $SD 1.56$; 6th week $M = 16.7$, $SD 2.30$); from a moderate level to a very high level, respectively.

To sum up, the findings of Research Question 1 suggested that extensive reading can significantly enhance learners' reading comprehension skills. The results showed a statistically significant positive improvement in reading comprehension for questions 1, 3, 4, and 5, which pertained to main ideas and details, sequence of events, summarizing, and drawing conclusions. However, no statistically significant difference was observed for question 2, which focused on reading for detail. Nonetheless, the majority of participants demonstrated improvement in their scores, particularly from the first to the fifth week of reading. Notably, the findings revealed that extensive reading was especially effective in improving students' comprehension skills in questions that require an understanding of the main idea and details, the sequence of events, and then a summary and conclusion. This highlighted the critical role of extensive reading in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills, particularly in the areas of questions 1, 3, 4, and 5.

Overall, both ER reading reports and the reading comprehension rubric showed that the overall reading comprehension in this ER study improved at the significance level of 0.01. It is indicated the correlation between the researcher's score and the inter-rater's score together showed the values increasing respectively. In other words, the participants' reading comprehension score from the researcher largely correlated with the participants' reading comprehension score from the inter-rater in the ER reading reports. The data from the reading reports revealed that extensive reading of the chosen materials enabled the ER effect towards participants' reading comprehension, which in turn affected their reading comprehension improvement from the first week to the last week of reading.

2. How does extensive reading promote reading motivation among Thai junior high school students?

This section explored EFL Thai junior high school students' motivation towards reading by analyzing the data obtained from the pretest and posttest motivation of reading questionnaire administered at the beginning and at the end of this research study. The participants were asked to rate a 53-item questionnaire to measure their four reading motivation variables from 'very different from me' which equals 1 point, a little different from me' for 2 points, 'a little like me' for 3 points, and 'a lot like me' for 4 points. However, items 13, 24, 32, 34, and 40 of dislikes in the field of reading are presented in different tables as dislikes are shown as negative sentiments towards some items or are considered as negative variables in this questionnaire.

The total mean score of the pretest was 2.19 with $SD 0.45$ which means a moderate level, whereas the posttest total mean score was a little higher than the total mean score of the pretest at 0.19 ($M = 2.38$, $SD 0.49$). Results from both pretest and posttest motivation of reading questionnaires indicated the same highest rated item, which was item 53 of the practical value (pretest = 3.13, $SD 1.20$; posttest = 3.20, $SD 1.03$). Interestingly, the mean scores of items 3 and 50 of the reading for grades value increased from 2.97 – 3.03 and 2.33 – 2.80 respectively in the posttest, which indicated that the mean score of item 3 remained at a moderate level whereas the mean score of item 50 changed from a moderate level to a high level. Furthermore,

the posttest mean scores of items 23 and 36 of the compliance value were higher than the pretest mean scores at 0.54 and 0.23 respectively; from a moderate level to a high level.

All of the motivation of reading questionnaire items were used to explore 11 variables of reading motivation which consisted of reading efficacy (items 7, 15, 21), reading challenges (items 2, 5, 8, 16, 20), reading curiosity (items 4, 14, 19, 25, 29), reading involvement (items 6, 10, 12, 22, 30, 33, 35), importance of reading (items 17 and 27), reading work avoidance (items 13, 24, 32, 40 which reversed scores because of having negative sentiments toward reading motivation), competition in reading (items 1, 9, 41, 44, 49, 52), recognition of reading (items 18, 28, 37, 43, 47), reading for grades (items 3, 38, 50, 53), social reasons for reading (items 11, 26, 31, 39, 42, 45, 48), and compliance (items 23, 36, 46, 51, and item 34 which reversed scores because of having negative sentiments toward reading motivation). A pair sample t-test was run to compare the data from the pretest and posttest of the motivation of reading questionnaires.

Moreover, the statistical differences between the pretest and posttest mean scores of the four reading motivational variables of reading motivation, namely reading involvement, recognition of reading, reading for grades, and compliance at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$), but not for reading efficacy, reading challenges, reading curiosity, importance of reading, competition in reading, and social reasons for reading. This reveals that the participants' evaluative belief towards reading efficacy, reading challenges, reading curiosity, importance of reading, competition in reading, and social reasons for reading across two periods were at a similar baseline prior to the study. Moreover, compliance was the reading motivational variable with the highest mean scores difference.

The total mean score of the dislikes pretest was 2.27 with SD 0.36, which mean a moderate level, whereas the dislikes posttest total mean score was 0.14 higher than the pretest ($M = 2.41$, SD 0.46), which is at a moderate level. Even though the pretest and posttest mean scores are at the same level, which is a moderate level, this is considered to be good as dislikes is a negative variable, even though the posttest mean score of dislikes is a little higher than the pretest mean score. Therefore, the lower the posttest mean scores of dislikes, the better the positive effect of ER. In conclusion, the mean scores of item 13 of the posttest were slightly higher than the pretest; from a moderate level to a moderate level.

A pair sample t-test was run to compare the data from the pretest and posttest of participants' dislikes. Table 13 indicated that students' dislikes which were involved in the area of reading were statistically different at the 0.05 significance level ($p<0.05$). Therefore, the students' motivation of reading indicates significant differences between the pretest and the posttest for reading motivation, namely reading involvement, recognition of reading, reading for grades, compliance, and dislikes at the 0.05 level ($p<0.05$), but there is no difference for reading efficacy, reading challenges, reading curiosity, importance of reading, competition in reading, and social reasons for reading. Therefore, the statistical result indicated that students' motivation of reading improved as the posttest mean scores were higher than the scores from the pretest at the significance level of 0.05.

To sum up, the findings of Research Question 2 showed that six weeks of conducting ER in English affected the participants' motivation towards reading at the significance level of 0.05 since ER could increase their reading involvement, recognition of reading, reading for grades,

and compliance, and decreased their dislike of reading. They were also satisfied and had positive motivation towards reading as they could manage their motivation of reading without affecting reading efficacy, reading challenges, reading curiosity, importance of reading, competition in reading, and social reasons for reading.

Discussion

1. Improving students' reading comprehension through extensive reading activities

The present study explored the effect of extensive reading on the improvement of reading comprehension among Thai EFL junior school students in relation to their English reading skills. Firstly, the quantitative analysis first revealed that a significant positive correlation between the researcher's score and the inter-rater's score. It could be concluded that the more participants' scores that were evaluated by the researcher increased, the more their scores from the inter rater increased. Thus, the scores from the researcher and the inter-rater were consistent. Besides, the analysis of the quantitative data revealed that, following 6 weeks ER implementation, students' reading comprehension was improved. ER offers the participants the opportunity to choose their own graded readers that they prefer to read. The availability of simplified materials (graded readers) could make participants more motivated to read. These findings supported previous findings on the constructive effect of ER, which revealed that ER improved learner's reading comprehension. Therefore, it seems that ER develop Thai junior high school students' reading comprehension skills as the difficulty of reading materials were at the right level as their English proficiency. Also, the pictures in the graded readers could guide students to understand the main point of each story. These findings are consistent with previous studies that positive outcomes in terms of reading comprehension through extensive reading (Aka, 2019; Bahmani and Farvadian, 2017; Nako, 2018; Shin et al., 2018; Suk, 2017).

The current study also showed that as Thai junior high school students read more graded readers, the recurrently encounter the right difficulty of their English proficiency and the easy-to-understand pictures. As such, this could help Thai junior high school readers are incrementally able to comprehend to the story that they prefer to read. For example, the results of questions 1, which was asking about main ideas and details showed that most of the participants scored highly since the first week of ER implementation and remained the highest scores among other 4 questions in the last week. For questions 2, the question was involved with what, where, when, why of the main character and the participants' results revealed that their ability to comprehend the text. Similarly, the question 3 was about the participants' the most enjoyable part in each graded reader they have read. Even though the results of all question were improved at the end of ER course, there were some questions which included question 4 (writing summary) and 5 (drawing conclusions) that need participants' effort to think more critical than other questions demonstrated the lower score than other questions. Interestingly, rather than not answering the question 4 and 5, they started to respond by writing one word or short answers at the first week. However, they proceeded gradually over time. Overall, the results showed that students significantly develop their ability to comprehend after reading by answering the literal, inferential and critical reading comprehension from the reading report. Students may have become familiar with the questions as they read, they predicted the meaning by guessing meanings of unknown words, asking peers, and looking at pictures depend on their preferred learning styles and characters.

In conclusion, in this study, the participants were taught to select English reading materials that were appropriate for their reading comprehension abilities before reporting their final outcomes on each reading. This approach led to positive outcomes in English reading comprehension, as it allowed the participants to read for general understanding and enjoyment, resulting in smoother reading experiences (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004).

2. Influences of extensive reading on students' reading motivation

The present study investigated the effect of extensive reading on enhancing reading motivation among Thai EFL junior school students in relation to their English reading skills. The results showed that average students' attitudes towards ER were reasonably positive. Specifically, the quantitative result analysis indicated a significant increase in Thai EFL junior school students' motivation in reading toward ER. Whereas, the negative variable named dislikes in reading remained the moderate level at the end of ER implementation as the same level as the first week. These findings are consistent with previous studies that ER promotes positive feelings and promoting learner autonomy and reading enjoyment in a learning context (Hagley, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Porkaew & Fongpaiboon, 2018; Yamashita, 2013).

Using ER to motivate students to read and change their reading attitudes is a successful strategy. Numerous research studies have noted the beneficial impacts of ER on the growth of students' attitudes about reading and their motivation to read (Hagley, 2017; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Hayashi, 1999; Day & Bamford, 1998). Furthermore, Takase (2007) research demonstrated that extensive reading boosted students' drive to read English extensively with passion, and that this feeling remained throughout the course of the entire year as they continued to read in the L2. To encourage reading enjoyment and reading independence, ER provides students access to a wide range of reading materials. By selecting the books, they prefer to read and reading outside of class at any time and place of their choosing, students are taught to take ownership of their reading. If the book is uninteresting or not what they had anticipated, they can quit reading. Additionally, after being exposed to a variety of reading materials and given training in learning strategies, students' English reading abilities significantly improve, which gives them more confidence as they continue to learn the language. Students develop their reading skills and show increased interest in books written in foreign languages (Day & Bamford, 1998; Mason & Krashen, 1997).

Nevertheless, in the current study, the reading motivation which was more outstanding than self-selected materials and the right difficulty of reading materials was an extrinsic motivation. It was when students prefer the rewards or something that influences them to learn. As the ER was presented the classroom first, some students might understand that participating ER course was involved with their grades. As a result, students develop a positive attitude toward learning and a perception of themselves as learners with the capacity to learn and regulate their own learning in the most efficient way. The following extracts derived from Thai EFL junior school students' motivation of reading questionnaire could provide evidence to support this claim:

“I have favorite subjects that I like to read.” (Question 10)

“I read to learn new information about topics that interest me.” (Question 19)

“I read stories about fantasy and make me believe.” (Question 22)

“I like mysteries.” (Question 30)

According the results of motivation of reading questionnaires, these above questions were positive signs of promoting students' reading comprehension due to self-selecting materials. These findings were at the moderate level at the pre-questionnaire and increased to the high level at the post-questionnaire. However, as it mentioned earlier, another motivational reading variable which was reading for grades also increased significantly as well.

Implementing ER instruction can offer students a valuable opportunity to enhance their reading proficiency. Students are allowed to choose for their own reading materials according to their personal interests and ability, thereby enabling them to select books that align with their individual proficiency level. They were motivated to manage their own reading time and take responsibility for their own reading outside the classroom. They gradually became active readers who enjoyed reading extensively, shifting from learning-to-read to a reading-to-learn.

The development of reading skills and competency among students is expedited when they engage in reading self-selected books, as it allows for a level of flexibility that caters to their unique needs and interests.

In conclusion, as mentioned in section 2.1.2, Day & Bamford (2002) listed ten characteristics of ER. However, Yamashita (2015) argues that the most important characteristic of ER is reading in large quantity. According to Yamashita, when students need to complete a large amount of ER materials, they should choose easy ones to read quickly and enjoyably, which will help them develop their reading fluency. Students may also try different types of materials to find the ones that they enjoy the most, leading to a sense of pleasure in reading.

New knowledge

The new empirical insights occurred in this study into the relationship between extensive reading (ER) and improvements in both reading comprehension and motivation among Thai EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students. ER also provides contextual relevance as Thai students who are not exposed to English outside of the classroom benefit greatly from the input-rich approach. Particularly in educational settings with little exposure to English, the study showed that prolonged ER greatly improves students' comprehension of texts and cultivates motivation, such as delight and interest. The results provide a culturally relevant addition to EFL teaching in Thailand by demonstrating that an input-rich technique may be successfully modified for use in contexts other than English-speaking ones. In terms of psycholinguistics, ER encourages fluency in reading and the acquisition of natural language, while in terms of affect, it lessens reading anxiety and increases learner autonomy. According to the report, ER programs can enhance national English proficiency, foster lifetime reading habits, and advance educational equity, all of which will support Thailand's social mobility and human capital development.



Figure 1: The relationship between Extensive Reading (ER), reading comprehension, and reading motivation

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, it was found that the present study provided clarification of the effects of extensive reading on Thai EFL junior high school students' both reading comprehension and reading motivation. The findings from the current study revealed that extensive reading effected Thai EFL junior high school students on improving reading comprehension in a positive influence according to the results of each student's score in their reading reports. Whereas, the results of second question research showed that extensive reading effected Thai EFL junior high school students' on enhancing reading motivation as the students' mean scores of the reading motivation also increased after the pretest questionnaire compared to the posttest questionnaire as well. These results indicated that ER can be used in EFL classroom contexts to improve the students' motivation to read. There are recommendations for applying the research results and for future research as follows:

Recommendations for Applying the Research Findings

Integrating extensive reading (ER) into the Thai classroom context is recommended for stand-alone activities or as in-class reading exercises. Reading instructors ought to develop a course of study that fosters reading proficiency in younger learners, thereby inculcating positive reading practices at the outset of their educational journey. In addition, it is recommended that students be offered a variety of graded readers to promote their active involvement in the reading process and sustain their motivation to read. It is recommended that, alongside extensive reading (ER), student reading strategies should also be encouraged to enhance students' learning outcomes. The proposed approach would facilitate the students in establishing a specific objective and devising a strategy to achieve it before engaging in the reading process. Additionally, the students could assess their comprehension by implementing diverse strategies. The students can assess their own performance by analyzing their reading and recognizing the techniques that have led to their achievements or failures.

Additionally, this investigation indicates that the success of extensive reading (ER) primarily depends on the guidance provided by educators. It is recommended that the teacher provide guidance to students during the experiential learning process. As an illustration, it is recommended that educators maintain a comprehensive log of their pupils' reading advancements and their responses to the literary materials. It is recommended that educators promote extensive reading among their students and tailor the ER activity to their individual proficiency levels to optimize its advantages. One potential strategy for educators is to motivate advanced-level learners to select and peruse marginally more complex texts than their current English language proficiency level. This approach can serve as a means of stimulating intellectual growth and development among these students.

Finally, it is recommended that educators develop an active learning environment that fosters student engagement and encourages boosted reading habits. Implementing collaborative group discussions that enable students to share and discuss their reading experiences can help achieve it. Students with lower proficiency levels will require additional assistance from their instructors in reading tactics and encouragement. The students could begin their reading journey with books that align with their current proficiency level and gradually progress to more challenging texts as their language competence develops over the course of the semester. This measure will guarantee that the students perceive reading as a pleasurable pursuit rather than a cumbersome obligation. Students' motivation to read in their second language can be improved by offering them captivating materials that are appropriately challenging (Hidi & Renninger, 2006).

Recommendations for Future Research

For future studies, it is recommended to expand the participant pool and consider other locations within Thailand, such as the north, east, and south regions. Besides, the participants in this current study showed homogeneity in terms of to their educational background, age,



academic language exposure, and level of language proficiency. In addition, the size of the sample was limited. Therefore, it is possible that the generalizability of these findings may be limited. Further studies could potentially include diverse groups or a larger population of pupils to enhance the generalizability of the findings. The current study was carried out within the context of a junior high school environment over a short amount of time. Thus, the assessment of the long-term impact of ER instruction remains inconclusive. Future studies could consider examining the effect of ER instruction across diverse reading classes, involving students from alternative secondary schools, and extending the duration of the teaching intervention to encompass a complete academic year in order to evaluate the prospective educational benefits of ER more comprehensively. The present study exclusively concentrated on the English language reading proficiencies of students. Hence, forthcoming research endeavors may consider exploring additional English competencies, such as conversational fluency or writing proficiency.

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