

Reading for Pleasure (RfP) and Literacy Problems in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Studies have identified that reading for pleasure (RfP) greatly influences reading behaviour and is more important for academic success than family socioeconomic status (SES) (OECD, 2010). RfP is a contested reading concept in Thai society in which reading is traditionally associated with academic benefits but it has the potential to play a significant role in promoting increased reading behaviour and reading attainment in the country. This paper is a part of a literature review for a PhD project, *Factors Affecting Reading for Pleasure Practices in Community Libraries in Thailand*, which has the following objectives: 1) to identify the factors affecting RfP reading promotion practice in community libraries (CLs) in the Northeast region of Thailand, and 2) to determine how these factors affect the RfP reading promotion practice in community libraries in the Northeast region of Thailand. This paper provides the background to literacy problems in Thailand, the Northeast, the reading behaviour of Thai people, the 2017 reading culture promotion framework, a definition of RfP, the connection between RfP and Reading for Instruction, and Krashen's Free-Voluntary Reading theory. Authors argued about RfP in the national reading policy in a conclusion and discussion.

Keywords: Reading for Pleasure, Stephen D. Krashen, Free-Voluntary Reading Theory, Reading Promotion in Thailand, Reading Behaviour

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1. Introduction

Successive Thai governments since 1940 have been concerned about inequality in education and have initiated projects to try to overcome literacy problems. However, the reading ability of Thai students remains a cause for concern. Reading for pleasure (RfP), is a possible effective mechanism for improving both reading behaviour and reading ability in people with low socioeconomic status (SES) because it was found to be more important for children's academic success than family SES (OECD, 2010; Sullivan & Brown, 2013).

Community libraries (CLs) can be one solution to the literacy problems in the country. The national reading survey in 2009 revealed that Thais in both urban and rural areas ranked CLs as one of the top three most efficient strategies to encourage reading behaviour and TK Park (2010) indicated that people with primary education and those who work in the agricultural sector used the village/CLs the most. Therefore, CLs are a channel to distribute books for the mass of Thai people who generally cannot afford. Therefore, this project investigates eight CLs with different variations of book collections, activities, and contexts to find the factors affecting RfP amongst disadvantaged families in Isan.

This paper aims to review literature using a major theoretical construct, RfP, and one factor, the current Thai reading policy in relation to CLs in a specific area of the country. The paper gives the overall background to literacy problems in Thailand and the specifically of Isan. It reviews literature on reading promotion in Thailand, the reading behaviour of Thai people and reading materials in the country, and the literature on RfP. The paper ends with some discussion. The paper opts not to discuss about other interwoven factors that prominently featured in the data collection. Those research results will be presented in separate articles.

The authors argue that the reading policy needs to consider RfP because it can be one of the keys to solving literacy problems (both reading behaviour, and reading attainment). The affective domain, specifically, enjoyment from reading non-academic books and light material will unconsciously help readers improve their vocabularies and get a better understanding of language structure, which leads to advanced reading ability and academic success (Krashen, 2014). The literature presented here suggests that RfP has considerable merit and it has been accepted worldwide as a useful way of developing a reading culture. The paper is offered as a starting point for a national debate about reading policy.

2. Background

2.1 Literacy Problems in Thailand

Studies by Thailand Knowledge Park (TK Park, 2008; 2010) have indicated that although Thai people generally highly value the ability to read (reading attainment), a lack of reading enjoyment results in Thais reading less than people in other Asian countries. The National Reading Survey also revealed that this reading behaviour problem is more pronounced in disadvantaged families (in both rural and urban-poor areas), who generally cannot afford books (Thailand. National Statistical Office, 2014).

Another related literacy problem in the country is the reading attainment problem. The lack of reading attainment is an alarming issue highlighted in the recent report from the World Bank (Lathapipat, & Sondergaard, 2015). Based on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 reading assessment data, nearly one-third (32%) of 15-year-old Thai

students (grade 9) scored below the minimum level of functional literacy. Only 8% of Vietnamese students had this problem, in comparison. On average, a grade 9 student in Vietnam was around 1.5 years ahead of the Thai student academically.

Table 1 shows that there is a severe problem in terms of reading ability of Thai students overall. The PISA 2015 results revealed Thailand had a low ranking of 54th out of 70 OECD countries and an overall drop in scores from the 2010 test. There was a sharp decline in reading scores from 441 points in 2010 to 409 points in 2015 (Table 1).

Table 1 Results of PISA 2015

OECD average	Science	Mathematics	Reading
	493	490	493
1 Singapore	556	564	535
5 Finland	531	511	526
8 Viet Nam	525	495	487
10 China	518	531	494
54 Thailand	421	415	409

(Source: OECD, 2016)

The OECD Education Director commented that a crucial factor underpinning excellence in Singapore and Vietnam had been investment in teachers/teaching standards that was applied equally to the whole country (Frederickson, 2016). A Thai scholar from Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Education confirmed the notion that "the PISA results reflect serious disparities between students in well-known schools and students in rural areas. It indicates that Thailand is failing to improve equity in educational resource allocation" (Frederickson, 2016). The World Bank analysis of the PISA 2012 data (Lathapipat, & Sondergaard, 2015) showed the largest proportion of functionally illiterate students (47.2%) lived in villages, thus supporting Frederickson's argument about inequality of educational opportunities in Thailand.

2.2 Northeast Region of Thailand

As a consequence of inequality, the socio-economic status (SES) gap in society is significantly wide, particularly in Isan, the most economically and socially disadvantaged region in the country. With one-third of the country's population, the region accounted for 40% of the country's poor people in 2011, the highest in the country. Fry and Bi (2013) contended that this economic disadvantage has resulted in educational disparities and a general low SES of the people. The Reading of Population Survey by the National Statistical Office (2012; 2014) showed that the region had the lowest reading rate in the country. Therefore, this project aims to study factors affecting RfP in this region where education is a key to alleviate the low SES. Due to economic disparity, the general Thai public view Isan people as living in poverty. This does not appear to have changed from the last decade because the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2015-2016 Survey revealed that 39.8 % of Isan families fall into the poorest quintile and only 6.2 % fall into the richest quintile. This is relatively extreme compared with Bangkok and the Central regions, and it has been the reason for seasonal migration (Thailand. National Statistical Office, 2016) (Table 2).

Table 2 Distribution of the regional household population by wealth index quintile

	Wealth index quintile					Total	Number of household members
	Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest		
Total	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	100.0	92,073
Bangkok	1.7	9.0	14.0	23.7	51.6	100.0	12,517
Central	8.9	17.6	23.2	24.5	25.9	100.0	27,739
North	30.0	25.2	17.6 1	6.3	10.9	100.0	15,301
Northeast	39.8	24.6	17.2	12.3	6.2	100.0	24,242
South	12.2	21.3	27.5	25.8	13.2	100.0	12,273

(Source: Thailand. National Statistical Office, 2016, p.18)

The need for money pushes Isan people to migrate to urban areas to work and it has been a common practice among Isan people for nearly 50 years. The family structure and early literacy development are greatly affected by the migration. Leaving children with grandparents or cousins at their rural home has been prevalent in Isan. MICS 2015-2016, which focussed on the situation of children and women, reported that in Isan only 48.2 % of children live with their biological father and 60.6 % live with their biological mother, whereas in Bangkok the figures were 74.6 % and 86.6 % respectively. This was positively correlated with the wealth index quintile (Thailand. National Statistical Office, 2016).

The greatest disparity factors affecting RfP in MICS were the mother's education and wealth status, which were positively correlated with children's book ownership at home. It was around three times more likely that children in the richest wealth quintile will own three or more children's books compared to those in the poorest wealth quintile (72.6 % and 22.9 %). This is the same pattern of mothers who have no education who are more than three times less likely to provide children's books to their children compared to mothers with higher education (15.4 % and 63.4%) (Thailand. National Statistical Office, 2016).

3. Reading Promotion in Thailand

3.1 Brief History

Reading promotion was initiated by the government more than 40 years ago. The major reading initiatives in Thailand led by government agencies under the Ministry of Education have been ineffective, however, especially those involving primary school libraries under the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) (Pradit, 2006) and public libraries operated by the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE). This ineffectiveness, which were reportedly caused by personnel and budget issues, has been ignored for a long time in both types of library (Sacchanand, Prommaphan, & Sacchanand, 2008).

In 1972 ONIE established village reading centres aimed at increasing the literacy rate among the rural Thai population. The vast number established by 1999 (35,514) made it one of the most important information services for rural people (Cheunwattana, 1999).

Cheunwattana (1999) studied library services in rural Thailand and recommended that for better provision for the majority of Thais, the public library system needed organizational restructuring. Alternatively, rural development policy needed to be added to the current public library goals. She mentioned both the functional and recreational purposes of public libraries and emphasized that there was a need for appropriate reading materials in learning centres and village reading centres. ONIE transformed them into “Smart Book House” in 2013 but due to duplication of newspaper subscriptions with the local government organization, the budget was cut in 2015. The name then was changed to “Community Book House” and ONIE needed to rely on donated books in the “Book Voyage” project (PUBAT, 2015b).

3.2 The National Learning and Reading Frameworks 2017- 2020

In August 2015 the Department of Cultural Promotion within the Ministry of Culture drafted the National Learning and Reading Frameworks 2017-2020, which were submitted to the Cabinet in late 2015 (Thailand. Department of Cultural Promotion, 2015). Table 3 indicates the four strategies and their goals.

Table 3 Reading Culture Promotion for Thai Learning Society Framework 2017- 2021

Strategy	Goals
1. Building strong reading behavior for people of all ages.	Thai people of all ages have a positive attitude toward reading and acknowledge the benefits of reading. Thai people increase reading and knowledge seeking behavior.
2. Facilitating access to reading materials in both urban and regional communities.	Thailand has rich learning resources for the promotion of reading, with an increased number and variety of reading materials; this will result in convenient, wide, and thorough access to both learning resources and reading materials.
3. Enhancing the quality of learning resources and reading materials for learning.	Learning and reading resources for learning in Thailand are high quality, modern, and serviceable for all the people.
4. Creating an environment conducive to promoting reading culture.	The community and social environment are improved so that there is enduring participation in a Thai reading culture, thus building Thai society into a learning society.

(Thailand. Department of Cultural Promotion, 2015)

In August 2016, the name was changed to the Reading Culture Promotion for Thai Learning Society Framework 2017-2021 (แผนแม่บทส่งเสริมวัฒนธรรมการอ่านสู่สังคมแห่งการเรียนรู้ของไทย พ.ศ. 2560-2564) and related projects were accumulated from authorities/organizations, for example MOE, Ministry of Culture (MOC), Ministry of the Interior, local administrative organizations, and Happy Reading to draft the action plan for the framework (Rohitsatein, 2017).

This framework is rather close to a formal reading promotion context that is knowledge-oriented in its focus on informational learning resources and materials. It was aligned with the Guidelines released by OBEC (2011), the major authority responsible for school libraries in the country. It can be noted that the framework does not mention the leisure reading concept and the word “pleasure” or “enjoyment” in reading promotion.

3.3 Reading Behaviour of Thai people

During the last decade reading behaviour has been extensively studied as a critical problem on a large scale, covering the whole country. This section reviews the key literature on the topic. The conflict between the expressed values and actual behaviour of Thai people was revealed by a study on Thai reading behaviour and reading index (TK Park, 2010). The reading outcome index being as high as 69.413 but the reading behaviour index at only 41.938, which is lower than the reading ability index (63.654). The reading outcome statistics indicated that Thai people highly value reading outcomes, composed of five indicators, arranged by the most to the least important: life skills, academic achievement, career achievement, adjusting ability (57.7-74.3 %), and pleasure (22.9 %). As they do not view reading as an activity that brings pleasure, they tend to read less than people in countries who perceive it in a different way (TK Park, 2008; 2010). The reading ability index also confirmed the low reading ability amongst Thai students in the PISA test (OECD, 2014).

The most recent study by the PUBAT (2015a) revealed results relating to education and RfP; an important segment of the population, youth under 20 years of age, indicated that they mostly read for pleasure while people aged over 50 participated in RfP the least. This finding complements that from the TK Park (2010) study that people with high school education reported reading for pleasure the most, while people with only primary education participated in it the least. In addition, whereas 88% of Thais do read, when considering the reading of books in leisure time (both print and electronic formats) with the exclusion of textbooks, newspapers, magazines and websites, only 40.2% regularly read (for pleasure) while 39.7% of Thais did not read in this way.

Generally, Thai people have a more favourable attitude toward reading than in the past because individual knowledge is now considered to be more important. This perception is due to a change from the traditional interdependent life style to a more self-contained one (TK Park, 2010). However, this functional awareness of reading as a “living necessity” without RfP is a significant factor contributing to the lower reading rate in Thai people compared with other Asian countries. As a result, the encouragement of RfP by parents and teachers has been identified as a strategy to promote reading behaviour (TK Park, 2010).

3.4 Reading Materials in Thailand

This section discusses some key factors on reading materials in Thailand that tend to affect reading behaviours, especially people in low SES.

3.4.1 Book Prices

The first factor is book prices which relates to other book access issues. The governments of countries where books are affordable for the general public, for example Sweden, Japan, and Vietnam, established mechanisms to control book prices (TK Park, 2009). Thailand's unique book distribution has been a problem for the publishing industry because book selling is based on the consignment system (Yutisri, 2015). In addition, Chongsatitwatana's (2011) survey revealed that in 2011 major bookstores were located only in urban areas, and 1 bookstore in Thailand served 32,953 people. The most striking number was the average price for a book was 168.15 baht (USD 5.60) while a daily wage was approximately 250 baht. Therefore, rural people generally cannot afford to own books, it had been remained a luxury item for most of them.

High book prices greatly contribute to the purchasing power and urban-rural divide. There were several pieces of evidence in the TK Park (2010) study suggesting that Thai people generally want to read for pleasure, if there is a supply of materials. A study in an Isan province by Wech-o-sotsakda (2014) revealed that even though there was no village reading centre in the village studied, participants were eager to read for pleasure, they borrowed reading materials from neighbours, village school, temples, and local hair salons.

3.4.2 Children's Book Access

As reading is a contextual and complex skill, the family and home environment influences a young child from the beginning (Fletcher, 2017). Evidence from around the world shows that SES and the parent's education greatly affect RfP (Dickenson, 2014). An important UN agenda - A World Fit for Children, proposed that there should be at least three children's books at every home that has young children (United Nations, 2002). However, MICS 2012 and MICS 2015-2016 revealed the stable yet inadequate percentage of children's book ownership in Thai homes and the great disparity between rural and urban areas, and regions. In Isan areas, the presence of children's books was the lowest with 33.8 % of households having three or more children's books (nearly two times less than Bangkok - 62.4 %) and only 8.6 % of households having 10 or more children's books at home (nearly three times less than Bangkok - 23.2 %) (Thailand. National Statistical Office, 2012). MICS 2016 reveal the pattern of book access similar to that of 2012 both in terms of urban-rural divide and the low access in Isan. The presence of 3 or more children's books in Isan household was the lowest with 33.8 %, exactly the same percentage survey in 2012 (Thailand. National Statistical Office, 2016).

3.4.3 Book Donations

Book donations to CLs, village reading centres, and schools, which are often considered a form of philanthropy among Thai people, are not the answer to the inadequacy of reading materials. It had been criticised as an ineffective way to promote reading in rural villagers and a reading culture overall by the former President of PUBAT. He asserted that in order to attract people to read, the mind-set of book donation needs to change radically: "The culture of donating books to rural libraries and schools must be reviewed or stopped" and "In order to improve the reading culture, the government needs to invest money in buying content, buying updated books, those that can lure readers" (Kongrut, 2014). Therefore, the provision of quality books is likely to be the key to alleviate reading activities in deprived areas. The reading culture in Japan which developed after WWII focused on equally providing access to quality reading material to local communities (village level) both in the form of subsidies to school libraries and CLs. This is similar to Vietnam, where the socialist government supported reading facilities not only in the major urban areas but also equally spread book access to village level (TK Park, 2009).

3.4.4 Mobile Reading

Another alternative to books to read for pleasure is internet access via smart phone. It can bring both positive and negative effects on reading behaviour, however. A study of mobile reading in developing countries by UNESCO (2014) found that mobile reading was a tool to remove unequal book access in rural area in the five African countries and two Asian countries studied. The study revealed that people enjoy reading more when they read via mobile devices hence it is an economical way to support RfP. Thailand smartphone users were among the most active in Southeast Asia and in 2016 the smartphone was a major device Thai people use to access the internet (90.4 % of respondents) (Kressmann, 2017). The National Reading

Survey 2014 (Thailand. National Statistical Office, 2014) reported that the majority of time people spent on reading they read social media content (45.5 %). Greater internet access and cheaper smartphones mean children are exposed to a greater amount of online media. However, very little information on the effects of internet use on children's literacy development were available in Thailand. In Europe, Hollowa, Green, and Livingstone (2013) found that younger children exposed to online media helped address the insufficiency of information.

4. Reading for Pleasure

Reading for pleasure (RfP), an academic term for leisure reading, has been identified as a tool to overcome low SES (Krashen, 2011a; OECD, 2010; Sullivan & Brown, 2013). Clark and Rumbold (2006) aggregated extensive research on RfP, a popular approach in the United Kingdom, where literacy development is of major concern for poverty eradication. They defined it as "reading that we do with our free will anticipating the satisfaction that one will get from the act of reading... It typically involves materials that reflect our own choice, at a time and place that suits us" (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p.5).

The use of RfP can be found in reading promotion contexts, for example, the National Library of New Zealand (2017) set one of its strategic directions to 2030 that "Our aspiration is for a prosperous nation that [1] ensures New Zealanders everywhere have easy access to knowledge, that [2] engages everyone in reading for pleasure, and that [3] celebrates words as a valued part of our diverse heritage." This direction clearly identified knowledge access, and reading for pleasure as two separate concepts.

As reading is generally treated as an academic skill at school, teachers tend to teach students to read for instruction (RfI), RfP is a term needed to differentiate these two orientations. RfP is different from RfI because RfP aims to nurture the personal will to read, which means the person engages in reading voluntarily. In addition, The United Kingdom Literacy Association (2008) explained the differences between RfP and RfI saying that RfP is oriented towards: 1) The will, 2) Engagement and response, 3) Lifelong readers, 4) Child direction, 5) Child ownership, 6) Achievement, and 7) The maximum entitlement (A reader for life) while RfI is oriented towards: 1) The skills, 2) Decoding and comprehension, 3) System readers, 4) Teacher direction, 5) Teacher ownership, and 6) Attainment, and 7) The minimum entitlement (A Level 4).

The desired reading attainment (RfI) originates primarily from enjoyment gained from RfP. A quantitative study of the relationships between reading enjoyment, reading attitudes, behaviour and attainment, indicated that reading enjoyment is twice as effective as reading attitudes in positively influencing reading behaviour (Clarke & De Zoysa, 2011). This finding was supported by an in-depth study confirming that reading enjoyment strongly affected reading attainment (Clark & Douglas, 2011).

Understanding of RfI and RfP orientations and model is important because reading enjoyment is the "root" of reading attainment, not vice versa. To create lifelong readers, adults need to support RfP and focus on nurturing positive attitudes and reading enjoyment from a young age. However, there are two inappropriate literacy practices in early childhood development that have been practiced for a long time in Thailand. A prominent paediatrician (MGR Online, 2015) and the Drafting Committee for Early Childhood Development (2017) contended that two major factors contributed to the low literacy development for children ages 0-5 were: 1) Thai parents generally do not read to young children because they believed that

young children cannot understand language, and 2) many parents and kindergarten inappropriately force children at this young age to achieve reading attainment and writing sentences, which is not supported by cognitive psychology and can be the cause of reading problems both in terms of reading behaviours and reading attainment.

5. Free-Voluntary Reading

Stephen Krashen coined the term “Free Voluntary Reading” or FVR in 1993 and defined FVR as “reading because you want to, self-selected reading for pleasure” (Krashen, 2014). Based on the Comprehension Hypothesis, the hypothesis that humans learn language by understanding it, his theory challenged the traditional skill-building approach (phonics, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling to reading). A key principle in Krashen’s theory is the accessibility of understandable and interesting text in a low-anxiety situation (Krashen, 2011a). He supports light reading as a conduit to heavier, more academic reading.

Krashen (2011a) proposed four hypotheses about FVR that focus on; 1) forgetting, 2) effortless reading, 3) unawareness of acquisition, and 4) the omission of comprehension checking. Based on these hypotheses, reading materials need to be easy and interesting so that readers feel no obstacle to reading and concentrate only on the message. The readers will feel flow or become “lost in the book” so that they forget that the materials contain new grammar and vocabulary. As a result, readers will be unaware of language acquisition. The last hypothesis is crucial, as comprehension checking will force readers to memorise the text, so that they do not “forget”, and therefore their minds not flow with the text. Thus, they will be less engaged in reading and will not enjoy it.

In schools in the U.S.A. FVR was known as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). Krashen (2011a) provided guidelines for SSR as follows: 1) provide access to books and other materials that have great variety, put minimum censorship on materials, and make it legitimate to acquire comic books, magazines, easy books, hard books, and books written for language students of different levels, 2) give students control over their book choices and freedom to stop reading, and, 3) use minimum accountability, do not require book reports and tests, and do not use rewards for reading but direct encouragement instead.

Krashen’s guidelines for information resources and activities are unconventional; nonetheless, he is strict in the last aspect of reading promotion, accountability and rewards. He explains that accountability will send messages of memorisation and distrustfulness, while rewards send the message that reading is not pleasurable and that we need to be bribed to do it (Krashen, 2013).

Krashen FRV hypothesis is selected as one of lenses to use to investigate the literacy problem in Thailand because it focuses on reading enjoyment, the vital missing component in reading behaviour among the Thai population, (TK Park. 2008; 2010) as discussed in section 2.1. Moreover, he is a linguist who clearly advocates the promotion of RfP by libraries in children from low SES backgrounds, which is the core of the Ph.D. study.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

Reading behaviour problem, and reading attainment problem introduce here are interwoven with SES, attitude on reading, and reading policy. Literacy development of low SES families in Isan, the most disadvantaged region of the country, greatly affected from ability

to access book. As reading behaviour need to start at young age, the most important factor affecting reading behaviour and reading attainment in this largest region of the country presented are SES, parent's migration, mother's education, and children's book access. As less educated mother and poor families were three times less likely to provide children's books to their children, the government needs to improve equity in educational resource allocation as discussed by Frederickson (2016).

The literature review shows that the RfP concept has been widely accepted as a way of encouraging reading behaviour. In Thailand, however, it has not been officially discussed by government as a potential approach to address the low-reading habits of Thai people. However, RfP has been implicitly accepted as a desirable habit in Thailand's reading surveys for a long time, as the Thailand National Statistical Office (2010; 2012; 2014) defined reading as "the reading of all material out of studying and working hours including digital reading but excluding short messages (SMS) or e-mails." This suggests that when "reading" is mentioned in an informal reading promotion context in Thailand it refers to RfP. The perception is similar to the everyday life context in a literate society that reading generally means RfP. Moreover, in the past 10 years the Happy Reading programme focusing on promoting reading among underprivileged people at community level, has been based upon the RfP concept. It has actively coordinated with the Ministry of Public Health, ONIE, and its network to enhance public awareness of RfP and to find mechanisms that support children's book access.

At the national policy level and in a formal reading promotion context, however, the knowledge-oriented mind-set, the traditional value that associates reading with serious study and knowledge still exists and it can inhibit RfP. The new reading culture promotion framework (2017) and OBEC reading policy 2011 presented in section 2.2 tend to confirm the attitude. Authors suggest that the 2017 reading culture promotion framework, the first written national reading policy in the country, should add some RfP perspective to reading promotion.

The authors argue that first strategy in the framework that is focused on a "positive attitude toward reading and acknowledging the benefits of reading" is not necessary, for evidence showed that it is traditionally instilled in Thai education and culture (TK Park, 2010). The framework should consider RfP and support literacy development in young children by, for example, providing access to picture books, and encouraging parents and caregivers to spend more time reading picture books to children before the age of 6.

The second and third strategies in the framework focusing on learning resources and reading materials in both urban and regional areas are not only crucial element for RfP but also a reflection of the longstanding book quality and book access problems. While these problems point to the need for radical book distribution and budget allocation restructuring, the "quality of learning resources and reading materials for learning" identified in the strategies needs to be carefully interpreted. If "quality" and "learning" narrowly means academic related materials, teacher/adult orientation and top-down selection that may not responsive to local reading needs, it will not support RfP, desirable reading behaviour, and reading attainment.

At least a hint of RfP in national reading policy can widen perspectives of relevant educators and lessen the wrong practices in early childhood literacy development of the new generation in Thailand. Krashen clearly identified that the start of literacy development and later reading behaviour needs to be done in a low anxiety, pleasurable, child-oriented manner, and not in a forceful, teacher-oriented, and demanding manner. The evidence is that the prevailing attitude among a majority of Thai people to reading attainment has not helped Thais academically or economically. RfP has been suggested as an alternative to a narrower skill-

based approach. To create lifelong readers, reading policy needs to support RfP because reading enjoyment is the “root” of reading attainment.

To conclude, RfP is a crucial yet contested concept to explore as a potential basis for more successful reading promotion in Thai society. The current literature revealed that on the one hand RfP natives and reading promotion experts accept leisure reading as a common concept. On the other hand, RfP non-natives such as the MOE and MOC have not engaged with RfP in their reading promotion strategies, resulting in the cycle of classic literacy problems in the country. We advocate the much wider application of Reading for Pleasure in reading promotion in Thailand.

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