

Challenges in Implementing Extensive Reading in Thailand

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Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 19 Aug 2023 Accepted: 15 Jun 2024 Available online: 10 Jul 2024	<i>This study explores the key challenges encountered in the implementation of extensive reading in the Thai context. The samples were 400 Thai students and teachers who were already familiar with the concept of ER. The participants' opinions, thoughts, and beliefs about the implementation of ER were also gathered through surveys and semi-structured interviews. The results reveal that these challenges include teachers' beliefs about ER; insufficient support from schools and educational authorities; teachers' workload and lack of training; and students' motivation and reading habits. Overcoming these challenges requires collaborative efforts between educational institutions, administrators, teachers, and students to provide adequate resources, training, and a supportive environment to promote a reading culture in the EFL classroom in Thailand. Extensive reading programs (ERP) can be effectively implemented in Thailand by recognizing and resolving these issues, which will improve language learning outcomes and a lifelong motivation for reading among students.</i>
Keywords: Extensive reading (ER) Implementing extensive reading	

INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, reading is taught as an independent subject or as a component of other English subjects. Rather than asking students to read extensively, most reading classrooms rely heavily on intensive reading (IR), in which students read short passages from school textbooks and then complete reading comprehension tasks and homework (Maipoka & Soontornwipast, 2021). Moreover, most teachers are forced to carefully stick to the curriculum due to time constraints and Thailand's exam-focused learning atmosphere (Saengboon, 2019). As a result, most Thai students have minimal opportunities and freedom to select their books or sample a variety of literature.

Over the last few decades, extensive reading (ER) has been introduced as an approach in all ESL and EFL countries. With the support of the Extensive Reading Foundation, ER associations have been set up in many countries in Asia such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Mongolia, Indonesia, and Thailand (Extensive Reading Foundation, n.d.). These organizations seek to promote extensive reading including activities that assist the use of ER in language learning. They assist teachers and administrators in understanding ER, and how to implement it in their environment.

Studies have shown that ER programs have been used in Thai schools and universities (Chanthap & Wasanasomsithi, 2019; Charumanee, 2014; Puripunyanich, 2021; Satitporn, 1995; Uraiman, 2011). Despite evidence showing that ER improves vocabulary and grammar, builds confidence, provides enjoyment, and nurtures a love of reading, ER is not widely recognized in Thailand. Thus, this study seeks to investigate the factors that may affect the successful implementation of an ER program. By addressing the specific challenges faced by teachers and students, this study aspires to contribute not only to the implementation of ER but also to enhance language education practices in Thailand.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ER: Background and theory

According to Palmer (1964), the term ER in one's first language refers to the fluent reading of many books, with an emphasis on understanding the meaning of the text rather than learning language items. Palmer (1964) argued that foreign language students should read a large number of texts for practical purposes, such as acquiring knowledge and pleasure. He posited that for students to enjoy reading, the texts should be slightly easier than the level they would normally study. Nation and Waring (2020) confirm that allowing students to select simple reading material leads to improvements in reading fluency and vocabulary development.

In developing reading skills, there are two primary approaches: intensive reading (IR) and extensive reading (ER) (Day & Bamford, 1998). IR involves reading short texts to develop language ability, using the text to intentionally teach new words and grammar, develop reading strategies, and test comprehension. Typically, students reading intensively do so slowly, at a pace as low as 20-30 words per minute, stopping frequently to look up new words or carefully consider the meaning of sentences. This method allows for a deep understanding of the text and examination of specific details. In contrast, ER focuses on reading large amounts of material with high levels of comprehension at the reader's fluency level, without stopping frequently to look up unknown words. The term extensive reading was introduced by Michael West and included in the Syllabus of Minima in Modern Foreign Languages by West and the New York City Board of Education in 1931 (Day & Bamford, 1998). The syllabus stated that the purpose of ER was to enhance learners' enjoyment and respect the uniqueness of each learner while promoting reading ability.

Today, ER is seen as a straightforward method where students read extensively with high comprehension at their level of fluency. According to Nation and Waring (2020) and Waring and McLean (2015), ER aims to improve reading speed and fluency while providing enjoyment, helping students read as naturally and fluently as possible. For ER to be effective, students should read material that is simple enough to improve their reading speed, requiring approximately 98% of the words to be known and part of the reader's vocabulary. The goal of ER is to expand knowledge of previously encountered language to enhance and reinforce it.

Day and Bamford (1998) identified key factors for the efficacy of ER programs, stating that self-selection of reading material and the absence of follow-up activities are crucial because

these factors promote learner independence, develop good reading habits, and boost motivation. Additionally, Nation and Waring (2020) suggested that ER should be implemented in a silent reading setting, eventually encouraging students to read around 200 words per minute (wpm), which is faster than reading aloud (100-150 wpm).

Advantages and challenges of extensive reading

The development of vocabulary knowledge through extensive reading is the consequence of frequent encounters with words, word families, and lexical phrases in context. Many studies have shown that ER can enhance students' vocabulary learning. For example, Suk's (2017) study investigated reading speed, comprehension, and vocabulary learning. The participants in the ERP were required to read 200,000 words over the course of the semester and take online MReader (mreader.org) quizzes. The researcher employed a number of methods to ensure that the out-of-class assignments were completed. As evidenced by post-assessments, everyone had improved in every aspect she measured. McLean and Rouault (2017) investigated the positive effects of extensive reading on fluency development of Japanese university freshmen studying English as a foreign language. The students who engaged in extensive reading were compared to those who engaged in intensive reading. The results revealed that the extensive reading group's reading speed increased from just under 100 swpm (standard words per minute) to just over 130 swpm, an increase of 33.74 words or 30.96 swpm. Zhou and Day (2021) explored the effects of online extensive reading in an EAP course in which the students read around 1000 books from the Xreading.com online library. The results indicated that, in general, they believed that online ER enhanced their reading rates, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, writing, and speaking. After reading graded readers online, their L2 students' reading attitudes improved significantly. These studies demonstrate that extensive reading is an efficient and effective method of reading development.

However, some studies reveal difficulties in applying extensive reading. Mikami (2017) found that the most often mentioned reason for resisting extensive reading was text difficulty. Students said that some books were too difficult to understand, and they believed that their English was poor. Huang (2015) also found that students appreciated extensive reading, they found it time-consuming and ineffective for exam preparation. Graded readers are often used as entry points for learners at different proficiency levels, however they have been critiqued for their inadequate learning environments (Bowman, 2017; Yano et al., 1994). Some researchers believed that students' output might be of lower quality if they read graded readings that were geared below their level. Moreover, they point out that eliminating challenging vocabulary prevented students from learning certain necessary skills such as inferring from context and using a dictionary. However, it seems that these studies do not distinguish between ER and IR because the researcher assumes that the only function of reading is to learn new material.

Extensive reading in Thailand

In Thailand, reading is usually taught on its own or as part of other English subjects. Instead of encouraging students to read a lot, most classes focus on intensive reading. Due to time limits and the exam-focused education system, teachers must stick closely to the curriculum

(Saengboon, 2019). As a result, most Thai students have little chance to choose their own books, read at their own level, or explore different types of literature.

While extensive reading is widely accepted in countries such as, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, it is not yet a common practice in Thailand. There are many factors that affect the implementation of ER in the Thai classroom such as the time needed to set up a library. According to Day and Bamford (1998), teachers should prepare a variety of reading materials, guide students to read, and be a role model of a reader to students. In addition, in Thailand, teachers encounter many problems which hinder creativity and cause them more stress, such as excessive workload, long hours, restricted content, and classroom size (Ratanasiripong et al., 2022). However, as we have seen, numerous studies have demonstrated that an ER program has a major impact on students' English acquisition, therefore many Thai teachers are beginning to integrate ER into their English instruction, which suggests that an ER program can be implemented in Thai classrooms. This is especially true when teachers realize that an ER program promotes independent learning, during which there are no tests to mark and no lesson plans to make which in fact reduces a teacher's workload compared to traditional methods of instruction.

Recent research on extensive reading in Thailand highlights its significant impact on improving students' English reading abilities and fostering a positive reading culture. Nutalak (2019) study investigated the effects of extensive reading on English reading ability on a group of students who studied business English at a university in Thailand. The results from the post-test showed that students performed better on comprehension of general topics, finding main ideas and important details, and looking for specific information as well as promoting the students' autonomous learning.

In a study by Samitayothin and Tapinta (2018), the use of graded readers in an ERP at a Thai secondary school was explored. The results showed that teachers applied eight reading strategies: building background knowledge, vocabulary building, skimming and identifying main ideas, generating questions, scanning and identifying supporting details, inferring meaning/interpreting, summarizing, and brainstorming to support students' use of graded readers. In addition, the survey found that the teachers agreed that graded readers were beneficial for developing reading habits.

Maipoka and Soontornwipast (2021) demonstrated that integrating IR with ER can improve English reading ability, including vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, among Thai primary school students, and that this instructional method is beneficial to the students. The researchers stated that students' English language skills, as well as their motivation to learn and read English, increased as a result of engaging in enjoyable reading assignments and activities from combining extensive reading with intensive reading.

Recently, extensive reading has been promoted in Thailand because it can motivate students to read more. Puripunyanich's study (2021) revealed positive attitudes to general extensive reading and online extensive reading, and that they enjoyed reading graded readers because it was simpler than the English materials they had read before. The students agreed that

a wide range of graded readers matched their interests and motivated them to read more. The only two criticisms from the study were that students found it difficult to choose what to read and that online extensive reading caused eyestrain.

To support these efforts and to promote extensive reading in Thailand, the Thailand Extensive Reading Association (TERA) was officially established in 2022 and is located at Mahasarakham University, Maha Sarakham. TERA was formed by a group of English teachers from all over Thailand to develop a community of extensive reading practitioners in Thailand. Additionally, TERA aims to assist schools and teachers to understand ER, adopt ER in their classes, conduct research related to ER, and promote positive student reading habits. The association set up many workshops and competitions in 2021-2022 to increase the awareness of people in Thailand about ER, and the number of teachers and students who participated in the activities increased substantially.

In conclusion, while there is awareness about extensive reading in Thailand, successful implementation is yet to be achieved, even with the formal establishment of TERA. Despite studies showcasing positive effects on language development and attitudes, the challenges persist. It thus becomes important to investigate the teachers' and students' understanding to refine teaching practices, address persistent challenges in implementation, and enhance student engagement, particularly to discern the factors contributing to the gap between the widespread recognition of extensive reading and its successful integration into the Thai education system. Notably, to date, there has been no study that attempts to systematically observe the opinions of a large number of teachers across the country. Three research questions are presented:

1. What do Thai teachers and Thai students understand about ER?
2. What are Thai teachers' and Thai students' attitudes to graded readers?
3. What challenges do Thai teachers and Thai students face when employing ER?

METHODOLOGY

This mixed method study used surveys for quantitative data and interviews for qualitative insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences with ER.

Ethical approval

The lead researcher obtained ethical approval from her university's Research Ethics Review Committee for Human Subjects prior to conducting the study and followed their research protocol.

Samples

Data were collected from subjects who were already familiar with the concept of ER. Where the population is unknown, the sample size can be derived by computing the minimum sample size required for accuracy in estimating proportions (Cochran, 1977). In the current study, the confidence level was determined at 95% and the margin of error at 5%. According

to Cochran's formula, the number of samples needed was 384. Therefore, data were collected from 200 teachers and 200 students from different universities and high schools. The universities and high schools varied in size and location, including both urban and rural settings, and had diverse student populations. Some institutions had already integrated ER into their curricula, providing an established context for its use, while others were newly introduced to ER through a workshop designed for this study. This variety in institutional contexts helps ensure that the findings are applicable across different educational settings and provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of ER in varied educational environments.

Research Instruments

1. Questionnaires

To collect quantitative data, two questionnaires were employed in the current study. The first questionnaire was given to teachers, while the second was administered to students. The objective was to compare these groups to determine if they hold similar or distinct beliefs and concerns regarding the implementation and effects of an ER program. The majority of questions in the first section were multiple-choice, check, or open-ended. The questionnaires were adapted from Waring and Chu (2017) and Waring and Vu (2020) because these instruments have been validated and widely used in previous research on ER, ensuring their reliability and relevance to our study. The first section in both surveys requested personal information. The second section gathered information regarding their knowledge and experience of ER, as well as their opinions regarding the applicability of ER to their teaching and learning. For the teachers, the third section inquired about the obstacles they might face when implementing ER programs in their positions. The questionnaires were piloted with teachers and students at a university in Northeastern Thailand. After the pilot phase, the questions were simplified and translated into Thai to avoid language barriers. They were created and distributed to participants throughout Thailand using Google Forms. The subjects were given unlimited time to answer the questionnaire.

2. Semi-structured interview

The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to collect the participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about ER implementation. Voluntary response sampling was used as a sampling method for this study. A total of seven teachers and 15 students were willing to give some insightful comments about their attitudes to the implementation of their ER program. The semi-structured interviews were conducted through an online application since the participants were from different parts of the country. There were 15 questions relevant to their answers which took participants around 15-20 minutes to answer.

Data analysis

1. Questionnaires

The quantitative data analysis incorporated all 400 survey responses. The results were downloaded and the statistics were calculated in Microsoft Excel to determine percentages, means, and standard deviations for all data.

2. Semi-structured interview

These qualitative data serve to offer contextual insights and support the quantitative findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the survey results. The data from the open-ended section of the questionnaire were grouped, categorized, and interpreted. The semi-structured interview data were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis.

RESULTS

The results and findings are presented in this section. The data was gathered through a combination of questionnaires and interviews, three research questions were addressed: The comprehension levels of ER among Thai teachers and students, attitudes towards graded readers, and challenges faced during ER implementation.

1. Data showing their understanding of extensive reading

Initially, the teachers' and students' overall understanding of ER was compared to the suggested ER classes. The data in Table 1 reports the teachers' and students' understanding of typical features of ER. Table 2 reports what the teachers and students know about the benefits of ER. The table shows two types of beliefs and practices about ER, those that are typical in ER programs, such as reading a lot and reading fluently without a dictionary, and those that are atypical of ER programs, such as reading a text in detail to learn language items like new vocabulary, phrases, and grammar. Typical ER focuses on extensive reading for fluency and enjoyment, while atypical ER involves intensive reading for language learning. If the respondents understood what a typical ER program should be like, they would select the statements typical to an ER program and not select the statements atypical to ER programs.

Table 1
Teachers' and Students' response to the question "What does the term "Extensive Reading" mean to you? Check any that apply."

Statements	Students	Teachers
<i>Features typical of an ER program</i>		
- Reading a lot	23.5%	48%
- Reading and being able to understand 98% of the content of the text	30.9%	34%
- Reading at a difficulty level at which you can read smoothly and quickly without looking up words or translating them	59.3%	19%
- Reading as fast as possible	27%	19%
- Reading fluently without using a dictionary	53.1%	50%
- Reading for pleasure	69.1%	81%

Statements	Students	Teachers
<i>Features atypical of an ER program</i>		
- Reading in text detail	14.8%	12%
- Reading to learn new language and vocabulary	76.5%	35%
- Reading authentic materials	17.3%	35%
- Reading short and simple texts followed by discussion questions	53.1%	22%
- Reading followed by comprehension questions	7.4%	18%

Different trends in Thai teachers' and students' understanding of extensive reading (ER) may be seen in Table 1. Interestingly, there was agreement between the two groups, 81% of teachers and 69.1% of students related ER to “reading for pleasure,” and about 50% of respondents defined ER as “reading fluently without using a dictionary.” Critical analysis of the data reveals that teachers and students evaluated essential components of ER at levels below 50%. These included “reading a lot,” “reading and being able to understand 98% of the content of the text,” and “reading as fast as possible.” This implies that Thai teachers and students may not fully comprehend the fundamental elements of extensive reading.

Moreover, the data highlight instances of confusion between ER and IR among the respondents. For instance, 53.1% of the students associated ER with reading short and simple texts followed by discussion, while 18% of teachers linked ER to reading followed by comprehension questions. Additionally, 35% of teachers expressed a belief that authentic reading materials should be used in ER classes, contrary to the recommended use of graded readers or similarly accessible materials for typical Thai students as they provide structured input for the students.

Table 1 provides more insight into the teachers' and students' comprehension of ER characteristics. There were noticeable comprehension gaps even though most students understood important ER concepts like “reading for pleasure” (69.1%), “reading at a difficulty level at which you can read smoothly and quickly without looking up words or translating them” (59.3%), and “reading fluently without using a dictionary” (53.1%). In addition, just 19% of teachers agreed that ER was “reading at a difficulty level at which you can read smoothly and quickly without looking up words or translating them”, and 23.5% of students said that ER involved “reading a lot.” The findings suggest the need for targeted educational efforts to enhance both teachers' and students' comprehension of ER principles, ensuring a more aligned and effective implementation of extensive reading practices in the Thai educational context.

Table 2
Teachers' and Students' response to the question "In your opinion, Extensive Reading helps students to ... Check any that apply."

Statements	Students	Teachers
<i>Features typical of an ER program</i>		
- build a life-long habit of reading	65.4%	84%
- build effective readers by going from the word-by-word level to the idea-by-idea level of reading	38.3%	63%
- improve reading speed and reading fluency	70.4%	87%
- develop a sense of the language by seeing how it flows in its natural context time and time again	45.7%	63%
- recycle and consolidate the language learnt in textbooks	42%	34%
- to build up learner autonomy	40.2%	21%
- Build confidence, motivation, enjoyment and a love of reading	80.6%	83%
<i>Features atypical of an ER program</i>		
- learn new vocabulary and grammar points	44.4%	64%
- build their vocabulary	86.4%	87%
- read a text carefully so that they can understand the content deeply	39.4%	32%

Table 2 presents the viewpoints of Thai teachers and students concerning the advantages and application of extensive reading (ER). Shared understandings include the perceptions that "ER enhances reading speed and fluency" (students: 70.4%, teachers: 87%), "builds confidence, motivation, enjoyment, and a love of reading" (students: 80.6%, teachers: 83%), and "encourages a lifelong habit of reading" (students: 65.4%, teachers: 84%). Varying opinions emerge in areas such as "enhancing learner autonomy" (students: 40.2%, teachers: 21%) and "recycling and consolidating textbook language" (students: 42%, teachers: 34%). The data also reveals misunderstandings among teachers, particularly in associating ER with post-reading quizzes, showing a need for clarity on appropriate practices.

The teachers in the interviews agreed that ER was a useful and interesting approach, but some were apprehensive about ER and needed more experts to help with the implementation.

T3: I believe that extensive reading is the most powerful way for successful language learning. I'd like to come to an ERP to get a better understanding of how to conduct extensive reading effectively on my students.

T5: I hope I can receive a scholarship from school to attend the extensive reading seminar this year. I want to know more about it.

T7: I wish I knew of some people or institutions that can help me to implement ER with my students.

Moreover, the interview data confirmed that some teachers misunderstood the pedagogy behind ER and IR. Some mentioned quizzes should be given to students after reading:

T1: I asked them to do some quizzes after their reading because I wanted to see the results of ER.

T6: I told them they have one week or two weeks to read in the green level, and they have to move to the blue level the following weeks.

Interviews with fifteen students consistently conveyed enthusiasm and satisfaction with ER, noting that ER is enjoyable and contributes to vocabulary learning.

S4: I think I learned more vocabulary from reading graded readers. I didn't use a dictionary but I still understand.

S7: Wonderful reading method that makes me feel comfortable so I can read more. I am glad to know this method. It helps me to become a better reader.

S10: Sometimes I found vocabulary in a book (graded reader) that occurs in the passage I read in class. I can guess the meaning when I think about it.

S13: I liked it because it was easy but I learned a lot of new vocabulary. My teacher asked me to list new words I learned every time I read. I got almost 50 words now.

In both tables, the respondents selected extensive reading (ER) as a major vocabulary learning strategy. While we agree with this, it is likely that the subjects do not understand the distinction between learning new, previously unknown vocabulary and mastering secondary aspects of vocabulary, such as collocations, associations, register, and formality. When we asked about the relationship between vocabulary learning and extensive reading, we were particularly interested in their views on whether ER was effective for learning new or previously unknown language items rather than vocabulary in general. The question specifically mentioned the word "new," which is an important distinction.

Previous research by Thongsan (2023), Brown et al. (2008), and Waring and Takaki (2003) among others, shows that when subjects read extensively at the 98% coverage level or above, the opportunity for encountering new words is limited to one or two per hundred words. If it takes 8-12 encounters to learn a word receptively, a student would need to read 1000 words to "learn" or master one new word. This does not imply that ER is ineffective for learning vocabulary in general. While some new words can be learned from extensive reading, it is also likely that students can learn new aspects of known words, such as collocations or word relationships. For example, they might notice from multiple exposures that it is more typical to say "black and white" rather than "white and black" in English. This is new knowledge but not a completely new vocabulary item.

The data show that the subjects understood that ER is good for overall vocabulary learning, encompassing both new items and deepening secondary lexical knowledge. However, they were not aware that ER is not as efficient for learning entirely new vocabulary items.

2. Data showing their attitude towards graded readers

The data regarding the teachers' and students' attitudes toward graded readers are shown in Table 3 and Table 4. The questionnaire asked them about the suitability of using graded readers in the Thai classroom.

Table 3
The teachers' thoughts about graded readers

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
- They can help students to read more naturally	35.8%	48.5%	12.5%	2.5%	1%
- They seem a little childish.	12%	19%	20%	41%	8%
- They are not really appropriate for my students.	0%	6.5%	13%	57%	23.5%
- They look interesting.	28.5%	56%	8%	5.5%	2%
- I want my students to read some.	33.5%	60.5%	5%	1%	0%
- They seem too easy for my students.	0%	6%	36%	23.5%	34.5%
- Students should not be allowed to use a dictionary when they read graded readers since they read at their level.	23%	32.5%	35.5%	6%	1%
- There should not be any assessment because Extensive Reading is for pleasure only.	19%	20.5%	28.5%	17%	15%
- Teachers should give students grammar and vocabulary exercises as post-reading activities.	26%	31%	24%	10.5%	8.5%
- Students should write reports/ summaries/reflections on each graded reader OR discuss their reading so the teachers can assess their reading.	23%	48.5%	12.5%	10%	6%
- Students should only read graded readers in class.	9%	5%	18%	40.5%	27.5%
- Teachers should decide what graded readers the whole class will read together.	24.5%	26.5%	22%	15%	12%
- Teachers should decide what graded readers each student will read on their own.	12%	22%	19.5%	22%	24.5%

About 84.3% of Thai teachers (35.8% *strongly agree* and 48.5% *agree*) were in favor of the statement: "graded readers help their students to read more naturally". Most of the respondents stated that they wanted their students to read some graded readers (33.5% *strongly agree* and 60.5% *agree*). Over 50% of teachers understood that students did not need a dictionary if they read at their right level and around 68% of teachers disagreed that students should read graded readers only in class, but they should also read anywhere (40.5% *disagree* and

27.5% *strongly disagree*). However, some data emphasized that teachers still relied on evaluation and examination. About the same number of participants agreed and disagreed that there should not be any assessment because extensive reading is for pleasure only. Over 70% of the teachers *strongly agreed* and *agreed* that students “should write reports/ summaries/ reflections on each graded reader OR discuss their reading so the teachers can assess their reading”. In regard to whether “teachers should decide what graded readers the whole class will read together”, roughly 60% agreed with the statement (24.5% *strongly agree* and 26.5% *agree*).

The qualitative data from teachers’ interview analysis showed that teachers had a positive opinion about graded readers.

T5: I was happy when my students asked me to bring more graded readers.

T6: Graded readers are easy and fun. I think my students enjoy reading them a lot.

However, the most often mentioned comments were regarding the improvement in the students’ scores. Teachers stated that they wanted to see if ER really helped their students, and they believed that tests could keep students more active in reading.

T1: I encourage my students to read a lot. We discussed what they read in each class and learned vocabulary lists together. I included those words in the final exam, too.

T2: I worked hard on it. We will read one graded reader together every week. I created pre-post tests for my students and asked them to do it every week. I found that they were more active to read because they wanted to get higher scores.

T5: I gave them 10 points for reading graded readers. If I don’t do that, no students read.

Table 4
The students’ thoughts about graded readers

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
- They can help me to read more naturally.	42.5%	30%	19%	5%	3.5%
- They seem a little childish.	9%	15%	20%	34%	22%
- They are not really appropriate for me.	4%	12%	18%	36%	30%
- They look interesting.	46%	38%	14%	2%	0%
- I want to read some.	49%	37.5%	13.5%	0%	0%
- They seem too easy for me.	3%	14%	24.5%	28%	30.5%
- I should not be allowed to use a dictionary when they read graded readers since I read at my level.	24%	17%	34.5%	19.5%	5%
- There should not be any assessment because Extensive Reading is for pleasure only.	32%	38%	20.5%	6%	3.5%

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
- Teachers should give students grammar and vocabulary exercises as post-reading activities.	0%	6%	28%	34%	32%
- Students should write reports/ summaries/ reflections on each graded reader OR discuss their reading so the teachers can assess their reading.	12%	18%	21%	34%	15%
- Students should only read graded readers in class.	2%	6%	14%	40%	38%
- Teachers should decide what graded readers the whole class will read together.	4%	9%	28%	36%	23%
- Teachers should decide what graded readers each student will read on their own.	0%	0%	9%	38%	53%

In reflection, over 70% of the students agreed that graded readers helped them to read naturally (42.5% *strongly agree* and 30% *agree*). Most of them disagreed that graded readers are childish or too easy for them. However, over 80% of students *strongly agreed* and *agreed* that graded readers are interesting, and they want to read more (46% *strongly agree* and 38% *agree*). Their opinions towards the assessment differ from the teachers. 70% of the students (32% *strongly agree* and 38% *agree*) stated that there should not be any assessment because extensive reading is for pleasure only. Additionally, not a single respondent *strongly agreed* that teachers should give students grammar and vocabulary exercises as post-reading activities, and almost half disagreed with giving writing assignments. Moreover, 91% (53% *strongly disagree* and 38% *disagree*) disagreed that teachers should decide what graded readers each student will read on their own. These data showed that students understand that they should select their own reading materials.

The students' interview data showed that students enjoyed graded readers. They said that graded readers motivated them to read more.

S8: I enjoyed reading them. I like the colorful pictures and the easy story.

S10: I am proud of myself that I can finish my first English book. I want to read more.

S13: I did two levels this semester, green and blue. I hope to read at yellow or red level next year If I can.

Also, the data showed that some students were quite independent readers.

S12: Whenever I am free, I will read graded readers... at home or at the university ... wherever.

S15: I love to read graded readers before going to bed. I feel more concentrated on them and feel relaxed.

In summary, while both teachers and students generally acknowledge the benefits of graded readers, there are some differences in their perspectives regarding assessment and autonomy in the selection of material highlighting the importance of aligning teaching approaches with student preferences in the context of extensive reading in the Thai classroom.

3. Data outlining the challenges they face when using extensive reading

The following data in Tables 5 and 6 illustrated the challenges teachers and students encounter while they are in the ERP. The students were asked the same questions as the teachers because they are also aware of what happens in their school and what issues teachers face when trying to help them.

Table 5
The data outlining the challenges teachers face when setting up an ER program: Teachers

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
- It is difficult to make extensive reading compulsory especially when the main objective is to help students pass tests.	29.5%	40%	17%	8.5%	5%
- It takes a long time to evaluate the success of an extensive reading program (ERP).	28.5%	38.5%	22%	7%	4%
- There is not sufficient funding for setting up a library of graded readers.	44.5%	33.5%	14%	4%	2%
- There is no suitable place to set up a library of graded readers.	29%	38.5%	16%	9.5%	7%
- There is not enough time for extensive reading in the curriculum.	24.5%	41%	22%	7%	5.5%
- Schools have poor management systems of graded readers, for cataloging, labeling, checking out, recording and returning them.	27.5%	35%	17%	12.5%	8%
- Schools find it hard to choose which graded readers to buy.	21.5%	37.5%	16%	17.5%	7.5%
- Schools are not willing to modify the curriculum.	27%	39%	14.5%	10.5%	9%
- Teachers are not well-trained for extensive reading.	26%	43%	19.5%	7.5%	4%
- Students do not understand the need for extensive reading.	32.5%	39%	18.5%	9%	1%
- Students are not motivated enough to select and read graded readers out of class.	25.5%	36%	18.5%	14%	6%
- Students do not even read books in Thai.	34%	40%	12.5%	9.5%	4%
- Students are unsure about their reading ability.	28.5%	39.5%	16.5%	10.5%	5%
- Students might steal graded readers or forget to return books.	19%	28%	18%	24.5%	10.5%

Given that ER is still growing in Thailand, the data in Table 5 are broadly in line with expectations. Almost 70% of teachers believed that it is difficult to make ER compulsory especially when the main objective is to help students pass tests (29.5% *strongly agree* and 40% *agree*), and 67% thought it took a long time to evaluate the success of an ERP. These data demonstrate a limited perspective of the benefits of ER (28.5% *strongly agree* and 38.5% *agree*). Additionally, they also reported issues with the management of an ER program. Over half of participants *agreed* that there is not sufficient funding for setting up a library of graded readers, no suitable place for an ER library, not enough time in the curriculum, schools had poor management systems of graded readers, and schools are not willing to modify the curriculum. Additional concerns involved the students' lack of reading motivation or awareness of the importance of reading, especially in Thailand. A total of 74% of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that students did not read books even in Thai, and 68% of students are uncertain about their reading ability (28.5% *strongly agree* and 39.5% *agree*).

Some comments from the interview data showed that teachers were anxious about funding and management systems.

T2: I got graded readers as a reward from TERA but they were not enough for my students. I hope to have more of them.

T3: I really want to have some English storybooks to read, because there are no English storybooks in my school, we saw some online, but we cannot afford them. Could you please share with us some websites to find interesting English stories?

T4: It could be a useful program if it is practical, somehow the evaluation and curriculum management in Thailand aims to just pass several tests without any promotion of real-life skills. I don't know if it can last long.

T7: I wish I could have more books and places for my students to read. The school doesn't give any support for this. I used my own money.

Table 6
The data outlining the challenges students face when participating in an ER program: Students

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
- It is difficult to make extensive reading compulsory especially when the main objective is to help students pass tests.	21%	45%	23%	9%	2%
- It takes a long time to evaluate the success of an extensive reading program.	8%	18%	24%	32%	18%
- There is not sufficient funding for setting up a library of graded readers.	30.5%	41.5%	11%	10%	7%
- There is no suitable place to set up a library of graded readers.	37.5%	39%	23.5%	0%	0%
- There is not enough time for extensive reading in the curriculum.	27.5%	29%	14.5%	17.5%	11.5%

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
- Schools have poor management systems of graded readers, for cataloging, labeling, checking out, recording and returning them.	29%	30%	21%	14%	6%
- Schools find it hard to choose which graded readers to buy.	14%	33%	28%	21%	4%
- Schools are not willing to modify the curriculum.	32%	37%	21%	7%	3%
- Teachers are not well-trained for extensive reading.	31%	29.5%	17.5%	14%	8%
- Students do not understand the need for extensive reading.	14%	16.5%	20.5%	22%	27%
- Students are not motivated enough to select and read graded readers out of class	21%	29.5%	18%	13%	8.5%
- Students do not even read books in Thai.	23%	38%	27%	8%	4%
- Students are unsure about their reading ability.	39%	28.5%	19%	8%	5.5%
- Students might steal graded readers or forget to return books.	10.5%	13.5%	22%	19.5%	34.5%

Table 6 presents the challenges students had when they were in an ERP. 66% of the students *strongly agreed* and *agreed* that it was difficult to make ER compulsory especially when the main objective is to pass the tests (21% *strongly agree* and 45% *agree*). Over half of students *agreed* that there is not sufficient funding for setting up a library of graded readers, no suitable place to set up a library, and not enough time for ER. Moreover, they stated that schools had poor management systems of graded readers, for cataloging, labeling, checking out, recording, and returning them (29% *strongly agree* and 30% *agree*), and schools were not willing to modify the curriculum (32% *strongly agree* and 37% *agree*). On the issue of teachers' performance, 60.5% said that their teachers did not have enough training about ER (31% *strongly agree* and 29.5% *agree*), but they understood why ER is needed but most of them were not motivated enough to read graded readers or do any reading in Thai. Interestingly, half of them *strongly disagreed* and *disagreed* that ER takes a long time to evaluate its success. This implies their belief in ER.

The qualitative data also illustrated what students encountered while they were in an ER program. They also mentioned the teachers' performance and management system in school.

S1: Sometimes only reading in class is not enough. I want to have an extensive reading club on campus because I want more friends to share my reading.

S4: It was difficult to borrow graded readers, the ER corner doesn't open all the time. I went there many times and I didn't see anyone to check them out for me.

S8: Teachers should give me more advice on how to select graded readers.

S13: I wish to have more choices of books such as novels or history.

Additionally, two of them stated that ER was somehow a burden for them.

S5: I know it is good if we read but I have a lot of assignments to do. I do not want to do anything but to finish my assignments.

S15: I think it is better to do it on school break because I don't have time for that.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Overall, the participants understand that ER exists and have a positive opinion of it. Students expressed enjoyment in participating in ER, appreciating the freedom to choose their own reading materials and the opportunity to read extensively at their own pace. Teachers also acknowledged the benefits of ER, noting improvements in students' reading motivation. These positive outcomes highlight the potential of ER to enhance language learning and foster a lifelong love of reading. However, despite these positive sentiments, the data collected from teachers and students who had already experienced ER reveal that not everyone clearly understood the processes and goals of ER. The findings in Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate that teachers still misunderstand some of the core elements of extensive reading, indicating that there is no consensus on the purpose of ER among Thai teachers. This also means that when teachers use the term 'ER,' we should not have confidence that they are, in fact, talking about the same thing because they are quite likely to be thinking and talking about something different from a 'traditional ER' practice. It is likely that many of the teachers adopt intensive reading practices when doing ER such as using short difficult texts, not giving much reading and not being concerned about reading fluency, volume and enjoyment. Moving forward, when talking about ER, we need to first clarify our mutual understanding. One way to do this is to hold systematic awareness-raising workshops to ensure a more accurate understanding of ER. The training should consist of a more in-depth series of practical lectures and workshops demonstrating how an ER class is structured and operates to increase understanding and foster the growth of an ER community in Thailand.

In Thailand, examinations are frequently seen as measures of academic achievement. The data in the study has demonstrated that most Thai teachers viewed ER as a tool to learn vocabulary and that tests are needed to evaluate the results as if intensive reading and extensive reading were essentially aiming at the same goals. Teachers still insist on post-assessments and follow-up activities despite already having agreed to let students choose their own reading material. Only a few teachers perceive ER as a source of reading enjoyment. The result of the current study shows that tasks that are overly dependent on intensive reading can decrease students' reading motivation. As much as possible, extensive reading should be enjoyable, and the inclusion of a test may cause the reading experience to feel like another form of academic assessment (Nation & Waring, 2020). In turn, this may result in students considering extensive reading only as an academic subject, as opposed to a way to develop lifetime reading habits. Instead of focusing the students on linguistic aspects of the material, any follow-up test should be used to ensure that students complete their assigned readings, motivate them to read more, give feedback on their understanding to boost confidence, and show them their progress.

The lack of students' motivation or understanding of the importance of reading, even in the Thai language, is a concerning issue. The results of the current study were similar to other studies in Vietnam and Indonesia (Waring & Chu, 2017; Waring & Husna, 2019; Waring & Vu, 2020). Some possible reasons may include limited access to reading materials or using age- inappropriate or outdated materials which may not be attractive to students, or they may be too difficult for them to enjoy reading (Unchai & Thongsan, 2021). As a result of the Thai educational system's emphasis on examinations, students are overly pressured to study, leaving them with no time for leisure activities such as reading for enjoyment (Assana et al., 2017). The cultural and social backgrounds of Thai people also have an impact on their reading motivation and attitudes. The prevailing perspective among Thais perpetuates a belief in the insignificance of English in everyday life, therefore many Thai students do not develop at-home reading habits (Rungrojsuwan, 2013; Thongwichit, 2018).

Not only the students' motivation, but the teachers' motivation is also a problem. Teachers frequently lack the time and resources necessary to implement extensive reading into their classes due to the heavy workload and demands of their profession. Teachers can feel overburdened and overwhelmed by the pressure to cover a vast curriculum within a limited timeframe, prepare students for examinations, and fulfill various administrative requirements (Sribayak et al., 2018). As a result, extensive reading initiatives are often overlooked in favor of more pressing academic concerns. Despite recognizing the importance of extensive reading in promoting language development and fostering a love of reading, teachers may be unable to completely engage in and implement such programs.

Despite the potential benefits of extensive reading for language acquisition, it has not been well-implemented in Thailand due to a lack of awareness of the importance of ER and a lack of support from schools and educational authorities. The data from the current study show that many schools do not allocate sufficient financial resources for reading materials or training for teachers on how to implement an effective ERP. In addition, extensive reading is excluded from the formal curriculum, limiting its integration into language instruction. As a consequence, students are not provided with sufficient opportunities for extensive reading, which hinders their language acquisition.

The current study highlights the crucial role of policymakers and the government in recognizing the significance of ER and providing the necessary support for its effective implementation. By allocating adequate financial resources for reading materials, teacher training programs, and incorporating ER into the formal curriculum, educational authorities can create a more supportive environment for ER community in Thailand. Without the backing of administrators, it can be difficult for teachers to obtain funding or integrate the program into the curriculum, as demonstrated by the success of their Language Institute's decision to integrate the ERP into English courses (Anandari & Iswandari, 2019; Kwon et al., 2017; Puripunyanich, 2021).

Overall, the results from the questionnaire and the interviews revealed factors that might hinder the implementation of extensive reading in Thailand. However, these challenges can be overcome with the support and help of different stakeholders as mentioned. By fostering collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents, and policymakers, the barriers to

extensive reading can be effectively addressed, ensuring the program's successful adoption and long-term sustainability.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Despite using careful methodology, there are a few limitations that deserve to be mentioned. First, the survey was distributed online, so people who do not have access to the Internet or who are not familiar with technology might not be able to take part in the study. Additionally, the study relied exclusively on self-report measures, which are subject to response bias and other sources of measurement error. Finally, the study was cross-sectional in nature, which limits the ability to track changes in participants. In spite of these limitations, the findings offer valuable insights into the experiences and perceptions of the sample population. Future research can build on these findings, offer better solutions, and improve the success of extensive reading in Thailand.

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