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เรื่อง

การศึกษาการใช้ Extensive Reading สำหรับนักศึกษา

มหาวิทยาลัยอุบลราชธานี

A study of Extensive Reading (ER)
with EFL Thai students at Ubon Rajathanee University

โดย

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of the exposure to Extensive Reading, an approach that uses easy, varied, and personally selected texts, on the abilities in and attitudes to reading English material of a group of Thai university students. Fifty-one final year students at a Thai regional university completed a 15 week project in which they were encouraged to read a collection of English graded readers, pre- and post-tests of reading ability, pre- and post-questionnaires about attitudes, a journal recording their completed readings, and mid- and post-project evaluations. Results of the pre- and post-tests of reading ability in English showed little change in the performances of the more able students but students who performed at a lower level in the pre-test improved considerably. Results of the pre- and post-questionnaires and evaluations showed an overall positive development of reading in English. The study implies Thai students' abilities in reading English, especially those whose skills are not highly developed, and the general attitudes to reading English can be improved by exposure to Extensive Reading, thus assisting the students' performances in other academic areas requiring proficiency in English.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter briefly outlines the importance of the development of English language proficiency in the professional preparation of Tourism major students in the English programs delivered by the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Ubon Rajathanee University (UBU). It also highlights some of the problems experienced by these students with English that gave rise to the implementation of this project.

1.2 Importance of the development of English language proficiency in the professional preparation of Tourism major students and some of the problems experienced by these students

Tourism major students in the Faculty of Liberal Arts are required to complete a number of compulsory English courses in the completion of their Bachelor of Arts (Tourism) degree. These include Foundation English 1 and 2, English in Business, and Contemporary World Views. These requirements are in place to ensure the production of graduates capable of taking their place in a tourism world as academically and professionally qualified individuals with excellent English language skills, good cultural awareness, and high standards of management expertise. English plays an important role in this production as it is widely recognized as the international language in business generally and the tourism world specifically. However, some students experience difficulties in their English courses resulting in them struggling to complete degree requirements and restricting their study in other subjects that demand expertise in the language.

The causes of these students' difficulties in English may be due to a number of reasons. One of these may be that education relies heavily on the ability to read books, journals, articles, magazines, notes, and/or electronically-generated material, but

Thailand does not have a strong reading culture, even in its first language (Marukatat, 2003; “Raising Bookworms,” 2004). This results in students having limited motivation to read generally, a limitation that increases when they are confronted at university by complicated concepts in Thai and/or English. Another reason may be the fact that the majority of the students are drawn from the north-east of Thailand, a relatively poor agricultural area in which the population’s educational options are socially, financially, and geographically limited, and the opportunities for students to interact with English-speaking persons are severely restricted.

The researcher investigated the effects of the introduction of Extensive Reading (ER), an approach involving frequent, easy reading of a wide variety of English language texts, on a group of Tourism majors in the Faculty of Liberal Arts. The study posed two research questions:

1. What progress is made by Thai students in reading ability in English due to exposure to ER?
2. What changes are there in Thai students’ attitudes to reading in English due to exposure to ER?

1.3 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the importance of the development of English language proficiency in the professional preparation of Tourism major students and some of the problems experienced by these students with English.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the concept of ER and the development of reading skills. This explanation is accompanied by references to literature about the use of ER. The chapter then applies ER to foreign/second language contexts, highlights benefits of and concerns with the approach, and reviews instances in which it has been implemented.

2.2 Extensive Reading

A possible solution to some of the students' problems with English outlined in Chapter 1 is the introduction of Extensive Reading (ER). ER is an approach designed to improve students' reading skills by encouraging them to read large quantities of texts. The introduction of the term *extensive reading* is credited to Harold Palmer, a language teacher and writer (Day & Bamford, 1998, p.5). For Palmer, it meant reading numerous books quickly, with an emphasis on general understanding and enjoyment. It is contrasted with the *intensive reading* approach in which the stress is on the language via word by word and line by line analysis and translation (Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs, 1999).

Other terms have been used to describe similar approaches to ER to encourage reading in first and second languages. These include *abundant reading*, *free voluntary reading*, *supplementary reading*, *pleasure reading*, *Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR)*, *Silent Uninterrupted Reading for Fun (SURF)* and *Drop Everything And Read (DEAR)* (Lituanas, Jacobs & Renandya, 1999).

The amount of reading that constitutes “extensive” is open to interpretation, depending upon the students and the teachers (Susser & Robb, 1990; Day & Bamford, 1998).

There appears to be limited research on ER, some of it of dubious quality and much of it dealing with relatively unimportant aspects such as “book selection and course administration” (Susser & Robb, 1990).

Day and Bamford (2002) proposed 10 principles of ER programs that can be seen as characteristic of this approach. These state that reading is:

1. easy – students are able to understand the grammar and vocabulary of the texts without constant reference to teachers and/or dictionaries
2. varied – students are able to find subject matter that encourages them to read for different reasons and in different ways
3. selected by the students – students choose what they want to read and what they do not want to read
4. high in quantity – students are given ample resources and opportunities to read in class and in their own time
5. for pleasure, information and general understanding – students read according to their personal interests
6. for its own reward – there are few or no follow-up exercises
7. quick – reading speed is fast as students are reading texts that are relatively easy
8. individual and silent – students work on their own and determine the speed, time and location of reading
9. guided by the teachers – teachers play an active role in advising, helping and checking students
10. undertaken by the teachers as well as the students – teachers are a powerful role model for the students, showing them their interest and ability in reading.

There is some evidence that post-reading activities, such as the writing of summaries and oral presentations related to the texts, assists students’ comprehension and teacher checks

of reading completion (Schmidt n.d.; Susser & Robb, 1990; Day & Bamford, 1998; Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs, 1999).

2.3 Developing reading skills

Developing students' reading skills depends on four factors (Day & Bamford, 1998). These are automatic word recognition, automatic lexical access, the ability to remember the meanings of groups of words while reading, and prior knowledge of language and/or topic.

2.3.1 Automatic word recognition

Efficient reading "begins with the accurate, swift, and automatic visual recognition of vocabulary" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p.12). It is this skill that allows mature readers to progress through texts quickly and effortlessly. Words that are automatically recognized are part of a person's sight vocabulary. While it is accepted that an extensive sight vocabulary is needed for comprehension, it does not necessarily cause it. Words that are not automatically recognized have to be carefully analyzed by the reader, thus slowing down the reading process.

2.3.2 Automatic lexical access

Lexical access is a similar skill to word recognition, being unconscious, automatic and quick. It involves the reader in identifying the meaning of the word and its context. Like unrecognized words, lexically inaccessible words make the reading process slow and laborious.

2.3.3 Ability to remember the meanings of groups of words whilst reading

This skill occurs both whilst reading is taking place and during brief breaks at the end of sentences and/or paragraphs. It allows the reader to comprehend texts at the same time as

continuing to read. If this ability to remember is not present or the reading is slow due to poor word recognition and/or lexical access, then the reader may find it difficult to understand the text, especially in the case of longer sentences and clauses.

2.3.4 Prior knowledge of the language and/or topic

Comprehension is greatly assisted by the reader's existing understanding of the language in use and the subject that the text is dealing with.

2.4 How ER assists reading in a foreign/second language

ER works in foreign/second language contexts through the development of automatic word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, and knowledge.

2.4.1 Development of automatic word recognition

Repeated exposure to words in a range of contexts increases the reader's familiarity with these words so that they become easily comprehended and enter the reader's sight vocabulary. "Familiarity breeds automaticity" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p.16).

It is important with foreign/second language readers that texts used are within their range of ability (see principle 1 and Day and Bamford's idea of *i - 1 where i is the reader's present level of ability*) as the focus is on developing automaticity through repeated exposure. This is achieved by making readers comfortable with and interested in the readings.

ER aims to achieve this by the use of texts that are easy (see principle 1), varied (2), student-selected (3), numerous (4), interesting (5) and rewarding in their own right (6).

2.4.2 Development of vocabulary knowledge

It is well established that, with first language readers, an extensive vocabulary assists comprehension (Day & Bamford, 1998). Much of this vocabulary is acquired by readers guessing meaning from contexts.

It is assumed that the process is similar for foreign/second language readers, although their ability to guess accurately may not be as good as first language readers. To minimise the effect of this potential inaccuracy, it is important to keep the number of “unknown” words low and the sentence structure simple.

ER is appropriate as it emphasises the use of texts that are easy (principle 1), varied (2) and interesting to the readers (3, 5, and 6).

2.4.3 Development of knowledge

It is generally agreed that reading comprehension and the development of topical and world knowledge are complementary in that advancement in one can aid progress in the other. More reading leads to better comprehension that leads to increased knowledge that leads to...

ER encourages reading that is varied (2), student-selected (3), abundant (4) and interesting (5 and 6). In this way, the person’s reading ability is improved at the same time as their knowledge is enhanced.

2.5 Benefits of and concerns with ER

2.5.1 Benefits

In addition to the above developments of automatic word recognition, vocabulary knowledge and knowledge generally, there are a number of other benefits of ER for

students (Bell, 1998; Schmidt, n.d; Lituanas, Jacobs & Renandya, 1999; Leung, 2002; Asraf & Ahmad, 2003). These include improvement in writing, increased motivation to read, reinforcement of previous learning, increased confidence in reading longer texts, more efficient reading, improved attitudes to English, and development of the ability to predict and hypothesize. Elly and Mangubhai (cited in Asraf & Ahmad) also found that there was a general improvement in academic performances of Fijian and Singaporean students as a result of ER programs.

For a comprehensive account of the benefits of ER, see Table 1, Summary of results of extensive reading programs (Day & Bamford, 1998, pp.33-39).

2.5.2 Concerns

Robb (2002) points out some of the problems with the principles of ER for Japanese students, such as their inability to be responsible for their own learning (principle 3) and the difficulty of convincing them of the value of reading for its own reward (principle 6). Also, most language classes in Japan focus on the development of the 4 language skills, so the idea of ER occurring in a “reading class” appears inappropriate. In Robb’s experience, ER has to be seen by the students as an integral and assessed part of the course, otherwise they will not complete it.

2.6 Recent examples of ER in operation in second language contexts

2.6.1 Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University, Sendai, Japan

Schmidt (2002) outlined the implementation of ER at Tohoku Bunka Gakuen University, Sendai in Japan.

In establishing an ER program in a self-access situation, the staff located 800 graded reader books in the library. Each book’s cover clearly displayed its level, the number of

reading pages and the availability of an audio-tape to accompany the text. Students were given an orientation to the ER books.

Students wrote brief reports (in Japanese or English) on books read and then discussed the books and their impressions (in Japanese or English) with staff at arranged interviews. Students received points for reading (1 point = 1 page) and are required to achieve a minimum of 50 points up to a maximum of 500 points (1000 points is the requirement for satisfactory completion of the course).

Student response was positive – most wished to continue with ER in their next English course. However, response to independent out-of-class reading has been poor, and is attributed to the low priority given to reading by students in their first language and the relatively low number of points on offer in relation to other courses.

2.6.2 Rural Malaysian schools

Because of the low English reading ability of the rural Malaysian students, Asraf and Ahmad (2003) closely followed the 10 principles suggested by Day and Bamford to make the program easy and interesting. They adopted regular routines of using graded readers so that the students recognized it as part of the normal procedure. Students were given opportunities to tell others about their readings and progress was rewarded with praise and awards.

The authors found the initial progress of this project to be very slow and laborious. The students found it extremely difficult to read texts without continued use of dictionaries, and the teachers conducted their classes in a very formal and serious manner. The students experienced major problems in presenting summaries of their readings to their peers due to their lack of English, but on occasions these problems were overcome by students using Malay. Once the students and the teachers had settled into the program, it seemed that they started to make significant progress for students whose exposure to English was minimal.

One teacher overcame the initial problems of poor student ability by having all students read the same text. While this was not in keeping with the principle of student-selected material, it worked in this case as the teacher and the students could grapple together with the words and the meanings.

2.6.3 British Council Language Center, Sanaa, Yemen

Bell (1998) stressed a number of points regarding the implementation of ER programs:

- get the students involved in the running the program to give them some ownership and to assist in lessening the organizational burden of collecting, moving and maintaining records of texts
- conduct regular teacher-student interviews to motivate, monitor and guide the readers. In Bell's study, this monitoring was used to assess students' progress and as an organizational tool to keep check on borrowing and returns
- have sessions in which the teacher reads aloud to the class. Bell found this to be a popular activity, assisting students' pronunciation and building confidence in their reading
- allow student presentations about their readings. Bell discovered that most students' choices were made as a result of their peers' recommendations, not the teachers
- use reading to stimulate writing. Get students to write short accounts, questions, reports, summaries and compositions as a result of their reading
- use audio-recordings with graded readers to assist student pronunciation
- don't test! – maintain the concept of pleasure and choice
- try not to use dictionaries – encourage students to read without resorting to constant use of dictionaries to find the meanings of individual words
- maintain the pleasure by use of videos, theatre excursions and guest speakers that relate to students' readings

2.6.4 Nagoya University, Japan

Yamashita (2004) investigated the relationship between L1 and L2 reading attitudes, these attitudes and L2 proficiency, and these attitudes and performance in L2 ER. She found:

- (i) correlations between reading attitude variables in L1 and L2, such as comfort, value, self perception and anxiety, suggesting a transference of attitudes between L1 and L2
- (ii) no correlation between L2 proficiency and reading attitudes
- (iii) correlations between average number of pages read in ER and positive variable attitudes of self-perception and comfort.

2.6.5 ER in operation at the University of Hawaii – Japanese course using ER

This paper described of a program in a Japanese course at the University of Hawaii using principles of ER (Hitosugi and Day, 2004). The program was unique in that it was the only course (as far as the authors knew) using ER in an Asian language.

The *Introduction* mentioned some of the literature relating to ER in foreign and second language contexts, and described the outline of the paper.

The *nature of ER* described the concept and explains the 10 principles relating to it.

Japanese 102 provided information about the course in which ER was used. It was a Japanese course dealing with speaking, listening, reading and writing for students with some background in the language. The classes in the course, each containing about 15 students, met 5 times per week over 16 weeks. ER was used with 1 class containing 14 students instructed by Hitosugi over a period of 10 weeks only, due to a shortage of texts. As all classes covered the same content, no part of it could be eliminated to accommodate ER, so the ER component had to be completed as an extra one by Hitosugi's class.

Implementing ER in Jpn 102 outlined some of the issues addressed by the authors in the course:

- (i) *What would the students read?* – due to a lack of available texts, it was decided to use books written for children learning Japanese as L1. 266 books were collected and these were graded and colour-coded from level 1 (easiest) to level 6 (hardest).
- (ii) *Would the reading, as an extra component, be assessed?* – yes, as an incentive to complete the reading. 30% of the total mark was at the teacher's discretion. For Hitosugi's class, 10% was for the ER component.
- (iii) *How much reading?* –
 - < 19 books - 2.5%
 - 20-29 - 5%
 - 30-39 - 7.5%
 - 40 - 10%
 - > 40 - students receive 1% bonus for every 4 books
- (iv) *ER in class or as homework?* – as ER was an extra component, it was done as homework
- (v) *How could the reading be incorporated into the course?* – it was decided to devote 30 minutes per week of classroom time to activities based on the reading, e.g. telling others about their favorite books, using new vocabulary from the reading. The authors found this very successful as they saw it as an exercise in linking/sharing the individual actions of reading, thus strengthening the class, and encouraging the students to read so that they could participate in these 30 minute sessions
- (vi) *How could the effects of ER on the students' Japanese be measured?* – the effects were measured in 2 ways. The students' reading ability was assessed by the use of a 3-part assessment that included:
 - a) part A – summarize in English a short memo in Japanese

- b) part B – answering in English some short questions about a travel ad in Japanese
- c) part C – stating in English some details about a letter written in Japanese

The students' motivation to learn Japanese was assessed by the use of a 22-item questionnaire.

Both of these assessments were administered to the ER class and to a regular Jpn 102 class before the commencement and at the conclusion of the program to be able to measure effects within each class and between the 2 classes.

What we learned outlined the results of the program. The authors acknowledged the small sample size but mentioned:

- (i) a high amount of reading – 1 student read 53 books; a total of 443 books were read; the average was 32 books per student – the authors made some comments about individual students
- (ii) that both the ER and regular class gained in part A and stayed about the same in part B. However, the ER class improved greatly in part C, a reading comprehension assessment, compared to the regular class which deteriorated
- (iii) that the questionnaire indicated a greater increase in motivation of the ER students compared to the regular students. The authors made some comments about individual findings, such as the students' use of dictionaries and changes to watching TV in Japanese.

Conclusion provided a brief summary and added that following courses along similar lines yielded like results and led to the development of interest in Japanese culture in a number of students.

The paper included a copy of the results, a reference list and copies of the 3-part test and the questionnaire.

**2.6.6 Personal communication between Patareeya Wisaijorn and Claire Hitosugi,
Department of Second Languages Studies, University of Hawaii (21.2.2006)**

In personal communication with Claire Hitosugi about her experiences with the implementation of ER, she stressed the benefits of ER in a language program and encouraged its increased use in language curriculum. She mentioned the importance of incorporating the ER program into the existing curriculum in that it must be assessed, the target must be clear to the students and the goals must be achievable. Hitosugi stated that the show and tell and the acting out activities were highly successful and she was able to observe the different learning styles of the students. Despite positive reflections on her experiences with ER, Hitosugi raised concerns in a number of areas. The establishment of the library and the collection of books required time and efficient management. She personally preferred to use reading materials that had been unchanged, saying that the original versions gave the genuine cultural flavor that others lacked.

**2.6.7 Observations by Patareeya Wisaijorn of reading classes ELI 72 and 82 and
interviews with teachers at the University of Hawaii (7-17.3.2006: *Sang Ki Li*,
ELI 72; *Hou Xiang Li*, ELI 82)**

Reading classes ELI 72 and 82 generally focused on intensive reading skills and strategies. However, there was a weekly reading circle session of 75 minutes duration that corresponded with the ER concept of building a “community of readers” (Day & Bamford, 1998, pp.126-155). In these reading circle sessions, students were observed sharing their ideas and impressions of self-selected materials in discussions with their peers and in written reports to their teachers. Each student had a role to play in the reading circle and the teacher acted as a facilitator of the group process. The reading circles were observed as successful collaborative exercises in which students and teachers supported each other to encourage the development of reading as a pleasurable habit.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter explains the ER approach and outlines some of its benefits and concerns that some researchers have. It describes its application in foreign/second language situations and reviews examples of its implementation.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the aim of the study, the participants and the context, and the procedure for the implementation of the study.

3.2 Aim of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the effects of the introduction of ER on the English reading skills and motivation to read in English of a group of Thai university students.

3.3 Participants in and context of the study

The study involved fifty-one fourth (final) year Tourism major students in a regular compulsory course (*English in Business*) in the Bachelor of Arts program being presented by the researcher at the time of the study. The study was conducted over a 16 weeks in the final semester of the students' degree program.

3.4 Procedure for the implementation of the study

The implementation of the study was based on work done by a number of personnel who had used ER in second language situations, mainly Hitosugi and Day (2004). The reading part of the study involved a collection of approximately 300 graded readers of different difficulty levels from the Oxford, Cambridge, and Heinemann publishers. This collection was maintained in the Self-Access Center in the Faculty of Liberal Arts at UBU.

The study was introduced as part of the *English in Business* course over 16 weeks and procedures were organized to be of minimal disruption to the regular course for students and lecturer. These procedures involved a number of quantitative and qualitative instruments:

3.4.1 pre- and post-tests – in weeks 1 and 15, students completed pre- and post-tests respectively (see appendix 1)

3.4.2 pre- and post-questionnaires – in weeks 1 and 16, students completed pre- and post-questionnaires respectively (see appendix 2)

3.4.3 journals – students were asked to keep a journal of their reading that included a record of the title, publisher, level, start and finish dates, reading time in minutes, number of pages, comment on appropriateness of level (too easy, good, too difficult), rating (good, fair, poor), total reading in minutes, and total reading pages. Students were informed of the following award of marks in the *English in Business* course for satisfactory completion of the journals:

Completed	15+ books	5%	5-8 books	2%
	12-14 books	4%	1-4 books	1%
	9-11 books	3%	0 books	0%

Journals were collected for checking in week 8 and marks were awarded for submission of completed journals in week 15

3.4.4 ER activities – nine ER activities were designed and conducted in the first 10 minutes of course lectures (see appendices 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9). These activities were short, easy, involved no preparation by the students, and no marking by the researcher. They were also intended to act as motivators for students to read and as checks on the completion of their reading. One of these ER activities was titled **WHAT DO YOU THINK?** and was used in the measurement of students' attitudes

3.4.5 students' comments – in week 16, students were invited to write comments about ER in any language.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter explains the study's aim, participants and setting, and its implementation.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines details of the participants, and the results of the pre- and post-tests, pre- and post-questionnaires titled *Responses to statements about ER*, students' responses to an activity titled *WHAT DO YOU THINK?*, and students' comments on ER made in writing in a language of their own choice at the end of the study.

4.2 Participants

Fifty-one fourth (final) year Tourism major students completed the pre- and post-tests in the project (please note that the numbers of students completing different instruments in the project varied due to the administration of instruments at different times and fluctuations in students' attendances).

4.3 Pre- and post-tests

Fifty-one students completed both pre- and post-test parts of the study. Their pre- and post-tests results and the changes between their performances in these 2 tests are shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Pre- and post-test results and changes between pre- and post-tests (n=51)

Student number	Pre-test score /50	Post-test score /50	Change between pre- and post-tests
1	45	41	-4
2	37	38	+1
3	25	30	+5
4	24	28	+4
5	26	35	+9
6	32	29	-3
7	40	39	-1
8	32	29	-3
9	40	33	-7
10	43	47	+4
11	33	39	+6
12	40	39	-1
13	42	38	-4
14	34	25	-9
15	26	32	+6
16	34	31	-3
17	37	35	-2
18	37	32	-5
19	39	36	-3
20	39	42	+3
21	28	37	+9
22	43	46	+3
23	31	32	+1
24	39	38	-1
25	35	35	0
26	33	40	+7
27	42	40	-2
28	30	38	+8
29	44	44	0
30	31	30	-1
31	39	41	+3
32	41	39	-2
33	31	38	+7
34	27	26	-1
35	43	37	-6
36	37	38	+1
37	37	34	-3
38	36	40	+4
39	22	26	+4
40	37	36	-1
41	35	34	-1
42	29	34	+5
43	28	31	+3
44	38	38	0
45	33	41	+8
46	29	28	-1
47	25	24	-1
48	34	40	+6
49	33	26	-7
50	39	34	-5
51	40	42	+2

4.4 Pre- and post-questionnaires

Forty-nine students completed the pre-questionnaire and fifty-eight completed the post-questionnaire. The results of the pre-/post-questionnaires are displayed in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2 Results of pre-/post-questionnaires titled Responses to statements about ER (pre- n=49/post- n=58)

No	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I don't know many English words.	2/1	32/25	13/28	2/4
2	It is easy for me to read English.	1/5	18/41	28/12	2/0
3	I read English books, comics, newspapers, etc., outside of class.	1/6	20/43	22/8	6/1
4	I find English difficult.	2/1	25/24	21/32	1/1
5	I would like to do well in this English course.	28/32	18/24	3/2	0/0
6	I have confidence in my ability to read English.	0/6	17/35	27/16	5/1
7	When I read English, I must look up many words in the dictionary.	9/6	28/21	12/31	0/0
8	When I read English, I am very interested in what I read.	5/11	39/45	5/2	0/0
9	I find studying English boring.	0/1	5/4	33/31	11/21
10	After reading English, I am very interested in what I read.	5/13	37/43	7/2	0/0
11	I would like to read more English.	19/20	20/34	10/4	0/0
12	I look forward to coming to this English class.	11/12	29/35	9/10	0/1
13	I do not enjoy reading English.	0/0	10/4	33/36	6/17
14	Considering how I study English, I can honestly say that I do just enough to pass.	0/4	22/34	23/12	4/8
15	I am a slow reader when I read English.	9/5	29/25	10/28	1/0
16	When I read English, I understand relatively little.	3/0	35/29	11/29	0/0
17	I like to watch English television programs.	16/21	19/29	9/8	5/0
18	I try to speak English outside of class at every chance I get.	10/8	25/26	10/12	4/2
19	It is hard for me to read English words.	3/2	16/10	28/35	2/11
20	I feel uneasy when I see English.	2/0	15/13	29/31	3/14

4.5 Responses to WHAT DO YOU THINK?

One of the ER activities completed by students in the project involved a class activity in which students responded to a series of statements about ER. Their responses are shown in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3 Results of class activity WHAT DO YOU THINK? (n=54)

	I agree	I disagree
Reading in my first language is fun	53	1
ER has been useful to my English	51	2
Reading in English is difficult	22	31
I feel comfortable reading the ER texts	40	13
I look up new English words in the dictionary	52	0
If I read quickly in English, I don't understand the text	26	27
I enjoy reading out loud in English	31	22
The ER texts are too easy	13	40

4.6 Students' comments about ER

Fifty-seven students made comments about ER, 34 in Thai, 22 in English, and 1 in Thai and English.

The main comments were – improved vocabulary (21 mentions); improved grammar (3); difficult (4); interesting (11); improved reading skills (8); improved English skills (7).

Some interesting comments were – books not linked to course (1); no time to read (2); need better ways to make sure that students actually read the books (1); changed from not liking reading to liking reading (1); proud to finish reading a book (1); liked being able to choose for oneself (1).

Also, the following were comments as written by students:

I think it is good thing. I have more practice about my English skill. I know many words from my read. I don't know before that there are many English so good book and interesting also fun book. It make me very happy to read and I feel fun every time I read.

It's very good because I think that it makes me love English more, reading and speaking. But level 3 is good for me. I want to be able to read mor level and understand it without finding the meaning of the difficult word. "The promise is great! I love to read it"

One of my hobbies is to read. Especially the books about children, travelling or others culture. The books that I read from SAC are interesting and fun. I will keep reading to implove my reading skill, my English and open my mind to get any idea from books.

I think it is really that I can practice my English with Extensive Reading. It made me love reading, it gave me a lot of knowledges.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter describes the number of students and gives details of the results of the pre- and post-tests, pre- and post-questionnaires, students' responses to the activity completed in class, and students' comments on ER at the end of the study.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The chapter makes comments on and offers some interpretations of the results of the study.

5.2 Pre- and post-tests

The results of the post-test compared to the pre-test were generally disappointing. Even though there was an increase in the average score out of 50 (pre-test 34.8; post-test 35.4), this increase was very small.

To investigate differences between ability groups as determined by performances in the pre-test, students were allocated to one of 3 groups, each containing 17 students, and their results and changes in performance were considered. Group A contained the top 33.3% of the students based on the pre-test results with scores from 38/50 to 45/50. Group B consisted of the middle 33.3% of students with scores of 33 to 37, and Group C was made up of the bottom 33.3% with scores from 22 to 32. In the group with the more able students, Group A, 5 students improved their scores in the post-test and the average improvement was 3 marks. Eleven got worse with an average reduction of 3.3 marks, and 1 remained the same. In the middle ability group, B, 7 improved their scores in the post-test with an average improvement of 4.7, 8 deteriorated by an average of 3.9 marks, and 2 stayed the same. Group C, consisting of the less able students, had 11 improvers with an average of 5.5 marks, 6 had reduced scores by an average of 1.7 marks, and no student recorded the same score. These results are illustrated in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1 Groups A, B, and C based on rankings (top 33.3%, middle 33.3%, and bottom 33.3% respectively) as a result of the pre-test scores, showing numbers who improved, deteriorated, and remained the same, and average improvement and deterioration

	Group A (top 33.3%; scores 38-45)	Group B (middle 33.3%; scores 33-37)	Group C (bottom 33.3%; scores 22-32)
Number of students	17	17	17
Number who improved	5	7	11
Average improvement	+3	+4.7	+5.5
Number who deteriorated	11	8	6
Average deterioration	-3.3	-3.9	-1.7
Number with no change	1	2	0

It can be seen that only a small number (5) of the better performing students in the pre-test allocated to Group A improved their scores in the post-test. This was to be expected as these students performed at an advanced level in the pre-test to obtain a high mark and ranking, leaving little scope for improvement in the post-test. However, there was a relatively large number (11) of students in this group whose performances deteriorated. In addition to this smaller number of improvements compared to deteriorations, there was also a difference in the size of the average changes in improvement and deterioration (Group A – average improvement change +3/average deterioration change -3.3). The combination of these 2 factors, a higher number of better students deteriorating and larger average changes in deterioration, strongly affected the overall picture of the pre- and post-test results.

These comparisons of pre- and post-test results and groups indicate that the ER project was beneficial to those students who performed at a lower level in the pre-test. For

example, 11 students in Group C improved their scores in the post-test at an average of +5.5 marks and only 5 in Group A improved at an average of +3.

However, ER did not improve the performances of the highest groups. Why did many of the better students perform worse in the post-test compared to the pre-test? One explanation may be that the students completed the pre-test in week 1 of the semester when the ER project was a novelty and they were relatively refreshed from vacations, enthusiastic, and free of academic pressures. As a result, they performed to the best of their ability. The post-test was completed in week 15 of semester when the project was no longer a novelty, many of the students had finished their ER readings many weeks previously, had acquired and knew the marks for their involvement in the project, and were no longer fresh from holidays or free of the stresses of exams and assessments. But this explanation does not account for the fact that the lower level students tended to benefit from ER despite experiencing the same conditions as the better students, most of whom did not improve their performances.

An explanation of the differences in performances between the more able and less able students may be due to the assessment motivation provided to the students to complete the readings. The students were offered the following incentives to read a number of books during the 16 weeks that constituted the period for the course *English in Business* in which the ER project was presented:

Complete	15+ books	5%	Complete	5-8 books	2%
Complete	12-14 books	4%	Complete	1-4 books	1%
Complete	9-11 books	3%	Complete	0 books	0%

The students' journals were collected for checking in week 8. A number of students had already at this stage completed the recordings for the maximum number of readings for the award of the allocated 5% and were awarded the marks. When the journals were again collected in week 15 for a final check, it was noticed that many of these students had not read any more books – they had achieved their maximum mark in the first half of the semester and realized that they could not improve their mark by reading any more! Assuming that the students who completed all their readings early were the better ones,

this may partly explain the poor performances of the better students in the post-test. They may have completed the pre-test to the best of their ability, done their readings in the first 8 weeks, achieved the maximum marks available, gone on to concentrate on other academic tasks to the best of their ability, and completed the post-test for the ER project as quickly as possible in week 15, having had nothing to with the project since week 8.

The presentation of the project in the *English in Business* course was beyond the control of the researcher. This was the only course that in which it was possible to implement the project at the time. The appropriateness of *English in Business* for the project may be questioned. The course was not a reading course – it involved activities oriented to writing applications for employment, completing interviews, and fulfilling tasks associated with roles in the work situation. It was a compulsory course for Tourism majors and was offered only in the final semester of their final year. This meant that it was a stressful time for the students who were completing assessments in a number of areas and many were seeking opportunities for employment and/or further study.

5.3 Pre- and post-questionnaires

Comparison of the students' responses to the pre-questionnaire (n=49) and post-questionnaire (n=58) revealed an encouraging development of attitudes to reading English. In cases where the item was positive, there tended to be an increase in numbers of strongly agrees and agrees and a corresponding decrease in strongly disagrees and disagrees. For example, item 6, a positive statement, showed an increase in students who chose "strongly agree" from 0 in the pre-questionnaire to 6 in the post-questionnaire. There was a decline from 5 to 1 of students who selected "strongly disagree" for the same item (see Table 5.2):

Table 5.2 Comparison of pre- and post-questionnaire responses to a positive item (pre- n=49; post- n=58)

No	Item	Strongly agree A (pre/post)	Agree B (pre/post)	Disagree C (pre/post)	Strongly disagree D (pre/post)
6	I have confidence in my ability to read English.	0/6	17/35	27/16	5/1

In cases where the item was negatively phrased, the movement of numbers was in the opposite direction. Item 20, a negative statement, showed a reduction from 2 to 0 in students who chose “Strongly agree” and an increase from 3 to 14 in the number who chose “Strongly disagree” (see Table 5.3):

Table 5.3 Comparison of pre- and post-questionnaire responses to a negative item (pre n=49; post n=58)

No	Item	Strongly agree A (pre/post)	Agree B (pre/post)	Disagree C (pre/post)	Strongly disagree D (pre/post)
19	It is hard for me to read English words.	3/2	16/10	28/35	2/11
20	I feel uneasy when I see English.	2/0	15/13	29/31	3/14

The responses to the pre- and post-questionnaires suggested that there was a general development of confidence in reading and/or using English on the part of the students involved in the ER project.

5.4 Responses to WHAT DO YOU THINK?

As part of the ER project, students were asked to indicate their agreement or otherwise with a number of statements. These were general statements of a mixed nature. The

most interesting response was to the statement *ER has been useful to my English*. Fifty-one students agreed with this and only 2 disagreed. This is an extremely encouraging response about the value of reading generally and ER specifically from a group of students who were involved in a course that was not focusing on reading.

5.5 Students' comments about ER

The students' comments about ER were also positive overall. They indicated a positive attitude to reading as a means of improving English skills and developing interests in a wide range of topics.

5.6 Limitations

In the consideration and discussion of the results of this study, it is important to take into account some limitations that may have had an influence on the outcomes.

The participants in the study were fourth (final) year Tourism major students in the Bachelor of Arts program. The fact that they were final year students may have tested their feelings of the relevance of such a project at such a late stage of their undergraduate careers when they may be less focused on academic skills of reading and more concerned about their career skills and prospects. These same feelings may also have been reinforced by the professional-oriented nature of their major – Tourism – and the practical skills-based approach of the course in which the project occurred – *Business in English*. As mentioned previously, this particular group was the only one available to the researcher at the time of the project. It was decided to implement it with this group in an attempt to test the effectiveness of ER and improve the reading skills in English to benefit the students' efforts in other courses requiring English reading proficiency, their career prospects and their career performances. The implementation of the project at a late stage in their study program and the professional nature of the students' major and the course may have been a limitation on the outcome of the study. Such a limitation may be overcome by the

implementation of the ER project in the first year of study at university and in a basic academic course taken by all students such as *Foundation English*.

5.7 Conclusion

The chapter considers the results of the ER project, gives some explanations of these results in relation to the context of the study, and takes into account some limitations of the study.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

The results of the study obtained from the pre- and post-tests suggested little improvement in the general English reading ability of the most talented students who participated in the ER project but a positive development in the least able students. However, data collected by other methods (pre- and post-questionnaires, agree/disagree responses, and anonymous written comments) indicated that most students responded favourably to ER. The differences in these 2 sets of data may be explained by the poor application of the students in the post-test due to the reasons offered previously. This poor application may have led the students to be dismissive and neglectful with their answers, resulting in poor performances in the reading ability in the post-test. Responses to questionnaires, agree/disagree tables, and written comments did not demand the same degree of application by the students and the students found it easier to respond in accord with their true feelings.

6.2 Recommendations

1. ER is justified in any English context and/or course as reading is an integral part of the language situation in which all skills are interrelated. It however may have more relevance in reading-oriented courses and the students are able to recognise its relevance in such courses.
2. It may be more appropriate to use ER in an earlier situation than the final semester of the final year of a student's program. If so, it needs to be introduced early in the program so that students develop their reading skills to allow use in other areas of study.

3. It is recommended that the project is repeated using students from different disciplines and different years of study to enable comparison of the effectiveness of ER across academic areas and stage of study.
4. The graded readers that were used in the ER project provided a number of texts that suited the range of students' abilities. It is recommended that these readers be used again.
5. The texts were stored in the Self-Access Center in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and students accessed them using this institution's procedures. This relieved any loaning burden on the researcher and made the texts readily available to the students. This system needs to be retained.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Pre-test and post-tests (the same test was used for both)

PRE-TEST

Student's I.D.

You have 30 minutes to complete the passage below.

FILL IN EACH GAP WITH ONE APPROPRIATE WORD:

My name is Huckleberry Finn. My friends call (1)_____ Huck. I am fourteen years old.

Have (2)_____ heard about me? Have you heard about me (3)_____ my friend, Tom Sawyer? Mr Twain wrote (4)_____ book about us. The book was about both (5)_____ us, but Mr Twain called it *The Adventures* (6)_____ *Tom Sawyer*. The stories in that book are (7)_____. But Mr Twain didn't tell you everything about (8)_____. He didn't know everything about us. He (9)_____ a writer, not a boy. Writers don't (10)_____ everything about boys!

Now *I'm* going to tell (11)_____ some more of my story. But first, (12)_____ going to remind you about myself.

I was (13)_____ in St Petersburg in Missouri. St Petersburg is (14)_____ the western shore of the Mississippi River. My (15)_____ died a long time ago. After that, (16)_____ father left town and I lived alone.

Tom's (17)_____ were dead too. But Tom lived with his (18)_____ Polly. I didn't have any aunts. I (19)_____ alone for many years. In the summer, (20)_____ slept in barns on farms near town. I (21)_____ go to school and I didn't learn lessons. (22)_____ didn't go to church on Sundays and I didn't (23)_____ prayers. I didn't wash my face and I (24)_____ comb my hair. My life was good!

_____ didn't have any aunts. I didn't have any (25)_____ or sisters. But I had many friends.

(26)_____ of the boys in town were my friends. (27)_____ their mothers and fathers weren't my friends! Their (28)_____ and fathers didn't want me to come to their (29)_____. They didn't want me to talk to their (30)_____. Why? Because their children didn't like going (31)_____ school. And their children didn't like going to (32)_____. All my friends wanted to be me. (33)_____ parents didn't like that.

So, what about (34)_____ father? I didn't see him very often. (35)_____ he came to St Petersburg. But he was (36)_____ bad man. He was always drunk. He (37)_____ hit me and he stole things from me. (38)_____ was afraid of him.

.....

Two years ago, (39)_____ 1844, Tom and I had an adventure. (40)_____ were two bad men in our town. They (41)_____ stolen some money and they had hidden it. (42)_____ wanted to attack a widow, Mrs Douglas. (43)_____ of the men hated this widow. Her husband (44)_____ dead. He had been a judge. Some (45)_____ before, Mrs Douglas' husband had sent this man (46)_____ prison. The man and his friend wanted to (47)_____ Mrs Douglas. They wanted to get into her (48)_____ and attack her.

Tom and I found out (49)_____ the men's plan. And Tom and I told (50)_____ Thatcher about it.....

Total _____ /50

Appendix 2 – Pre- and post-questionnaire (the same questionnaire was used for both) (adapted from Hitosugi & Day, 2004, with permission)

Select A, B, C or D for the following statements (10 minutes)

No	Item	Strongly agree A	Agree B	Disagree C	Strongly disagree D
1	I don't know many English words.				
2	It is easy for me to read English.				
3	I read English books, comics, newspapers, etc., outside class.				
4	I find English difficult.				
5	I would like to do well in this English course.				
6	I have confidence in my ability to read English.				
7	When I read English, I need to look up many words in the dictionary.				
8	When I read English, I am very interested in what I read.				
9	I find studying English boring.				
10	After reading English, I am very interested in what I read.				
11	I would like to read more English.				
12	I look forward to coming to this English class.				
13	I do not enjoy reading English.				
14	Considering how I study English, I can honestly say that I do just enough to pass.				
15	I am a slow reader when I read English.				
16	When I read English, I understand relatively little.				
17	I like to watch English television programs.				
18	I try to speak English outside of class at every chance I get.				
19	It is hard for me to read English words.				
20	I feel uneasy when I see English.				

Appendix 3 In-class activities

ER 1 and ER 2

Discussion questions – discuss with a partner in any language:

1. What are your first memories of reading?
2. Did anyone read to you? No – why not? Yes – who, where and what?
3. What reading material did you enjoy the most?
4. Do you still enjoy the same material or has your reading changed? How?
5. What role does reading now play in your life as a student, a young Thai.....?

Extensive Reading

1. Read, read, read, read, read, read, read, and then read some more
2. Read easy
3. Read interesting
4. Re-read interesting
5. Read for general understanding
6. Ignore unknown or difficult words – just keep reading
7. Avoid dictionaries – just keep reading
8. Expand your reading comfort zone
9. Set reading goals and keep a reading log
10. Enjoy your reading

ER 3

Most books have a “blurb.” This is a short description of the book and is usually found on the back cover of the book. To make your choice of a book quicker, you need to be able to read the blurb and decide if the book is appropriate to you.

Read the 9 blurbs below and write the titles of books on display that you think they describe. Record also why you made these decisions.

Blurb 1 – England – 1828 to 1840. Maggie Tulliver is beautiful and intelligent. But she is lonely and unhappy.

Philip Wakem loves her. But she cannot meet him. The Tullivers and the Wakems are enemies.

Then Maggie meets Stephen Guest. They fall in love. But Stephen is going to married to Maggie’s cousin.

Title.....

Why?.....

Blurb 2 – Ikuko goes to England to study, promising to return to Japan to get married. But in Birmingham, Ikuko not only discovers another way of life but also a great deal about herself.

This is a powerful story about love that is carried across 3 continents and even time itself...

Title Why?

.....

Blurb 3 – “Mr Scrooge,” said the gentleman. “I have come to ask for your help because it is Christmas. I want money to help the poor people who have no money and no homes.”

“Aren’t there any prisons?” asked Scrooge. “Put these poor people in prison.”

“But prisons are not very pleasant places. I’m sure you want people to have a merry Christmas.”

“I don’t have a merry Christmas,” said Scrooge. “Christmas is nonsense. I don’t believe in Christmas. I’m not giving anyone money so they can have a merry Christmas.”

Title Why?
.....

Blurb 4 – This is a love story you won’t forget. Oliver meets Jenny. He plays sports, she plays music. He’s rich, and she’s poor. They argue, and they fight, and they fall in love. They get married and make a home together. They work hard, they enjoy life and they plan for the future. Then they learn that they don’t have much time left.

Title..... Why?
.....

Blurb 5 – In the mountains of Transylvania, there stands a castle. It is the home of the Count – a dark, lonely place, with wolves howling at night.

In 1875, Jon Harker comes to do business with the Count. But Jon does not like the castle. Strange things happen at night, and very soon, he begins to feel afraid...

Title.....
Why?.....

Blurb 6 – These enjoyable stories offer 8 slices of life in England today. The themes include food, the media, immigration, student life, football and leisure. These stories provide a fascinating picture of the country at the start of a new century.

Title.....
Why?.....

Blurb 7 – Liz teaches archaeology in Athens. She works hard and needs a holiday, so she goes to the beautiful and peaceful island of Sifnos. But the peace does not last long when a mysterious yacht arrives. Liz becomes involved with some dangerous people.

Title.....
Why?.....

Blurb 8 – “I sleep with my eyes open. My ears hear the smallest sound and I wake. You may see something moving the corner of your eye. If you turn to look, there will be nothing there. But I am following in the darkness behind you. I am your worst dream.”

Title.....
Why?.....

Blurb 9 – Frank Wormald is a writer. He doesn't have much money and his wife is unhappy. To help him finish one of his stories he starts to use a computer. But the computer gives him more than he wants. Then he really needs help!

Title.....

Why?.....

ER4 – FIND YOUR LEVEL – WRITE ON THIS PAPER – DO NOT WRITE ON THE TEXTS

1. CHOOSE 1 OF THE TEXTS (THEY ARE THE FIRST PAGES OF SOME OF THE CAMBRIDGE GRADED READER BOOKS)
2. RECORD THE CODE (LETTER AND NUMBER, E.G. B2 – THE NUMBER TELLS YOU THE LEVEL OF THE BOOK)
3. QUICKLY READ THE TEXT AND RECORD BELOW ANY WORDS OR PHRASES YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND – DON'T WRITE ON THE TEXT
4. IF YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH THE TEXT....
5. IF YOU RECORD MORE THAN 5 WORDS OR PHRASES....

	CODE (LETTER AND NUMBER)	WORDS OR PHRASES YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND	IS IT YOUR LEVEL?
FIRST TEXT			
SECOND TEXT			
THIRD TEXT			

ER 5 – NEW VOCABULARY

Complete the table for **5 new words** that you have discovered in your Extensive Reading

New word	Part of speech, e.g. noun etc.	Meaning	Synonym(s)	Antonym(s)	Other forms of word, e.g. adjective
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

ER 6 – SHARED NEW VOCABULARYComplete the table for new words from **others'** Extensive Reading

New word	Part of speech, e.g. noun etc.	Meaning	Synonym(s)	Antonym(s)	Thank you
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

ER7 WHAT DO YOU THINK?

	I agree	I disagree
Reading in my first language is fun		
ER has been useful to my English		
Reading in English is difficult		
I feel comfortable reading the ER texts		
I look up new English words in the dictionary		
If I read quickly in English, I don't understand the text		
I enjoy reading out loud in English		
The ER texts are too easy		

ER 8 – RE-ORIENTATION

(going in the right direction; keeping on track)

Your aim is to read and record in your journal at least 15 books to achieve the 5% allocated for Extensive Reading.

- You started in week 1 at zero.
- This is week 12 – you should have read and recorded at least 12 books.
- How many have you read and recorded? _____. Are you on track? _____.
- Check the 10 points about Extensive Reading that you were given in ER 1.
- You have to hand in your journals on 9.2.07 (week 15).

ER 9 – MY FAVOURITE PASSAGE/BOOK

With a partner, tell each other what is your favourite passage/book that you have read in ER. Tell each other:

1. title, author, type of book (love, history, adventure...)
2. brief description of the passage/book
3. reasons for liking the passage/book

