The Implementation of Extensive Reading to Foster EFL Thai Undergraduates' Narrative Writing Performance and Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the enhancement of EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing through extensive reading (ER) and investigated the attitudes of EFL Thai undergraduate students towards ER. Forty-nine non-English major students at a public university in Thailand participated in the study over ten weeks. Two experimental groups were assigned. Twenty-five students were assigned to read graded readers one level beyond their current level of competence (i+1), and the other twenty-four students read graded readers at one level beneath their current level of competence (i-1). Quantitative data were collected through the pre- and post-narrative writing tests. A questionnaire was delivered to both groups after testing the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to get qualitative data. The results revealed that ER improved the writing performance of EFL Thai undergraduates in both i+1 and i-1 groups. However, no significant difference was found between the two experimental groups on overall writing performance and the other five specific writing features including content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic. Moreover, the results indicated that both i+1 and i-1 groups had positive attitudes

towards ER. The findings suggested that ER is an effective method for EFL students to improve their narrative writing performance, and it should be promoted in English classrooms.

Keywords: extensive reading, narrative writing, writing performance, reading attitudes

Introduction

In the Thai education system, the English language subject is compulsory in schools and universities. Writing is considered the most difficult and challenging skill for EFL students due to the complexity of writing, the limitation of vocabulary, and insufficient knowledge of grammatical structures (Khaoula, 2017). Narrative writing is a prevalent type of writing for students and teachers in EFL classrooms since it is not too complicated for students to express their ideas, and they can involve personal anecdotes that are relevant to their real-life experiences (Singchai & Jaturapitakkul, 2016). However, EFL students are expected to complete their writing tasks individually without help, making them struggle. It is believed that reading has a positive impact on EFL students' writing performance. The more students have opportunities to expose themselves to reading, the more they improve their writing performance (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 1989).

Reading is a receptive skill and writing is a productive skill. Both of them are relevant and should be taught together. However, reading and writing are usually taught separately in EFL classrooms. Teaching writing in isolation from reading is an ineffective way to enhance students' writing performance. Additionally, teaching in EFL classrooms is usually conducted by using translation procedures and intensive reading (Tamrackitkun, 2010). Muchtar (2019) pointed out that this method leads English classrooms to develop a monotonous atmosphere and discourages students from learning the English language which affects students' attitudes towards learning English.

As a result of the aforementioned issues and the recommendation, teachers of EFL students should consider the combination of extensive reading (ER) and writing skills in language teaching and learning procedures. It should be noted that ER has positive effects on writing performance. ER can enhance students' exposure to the language and help form texts, thoughts, and ideas in writing (Grabe, 1991). Moreover, students can naturally pick up vocabulary and grammatical structures while doing ER and are able to apply them in their written work (Kirin, 2010). There has been some

argument within academic circles about the ER materials which are the most effective for EFL students. Should they read the higher or lower level than their current level of competence or are any levels acceptable?

The author's research was conducted to examine how ER helps enhance EFL Thai undergraduate students' narrative paragraph writing performance, and explore whether there is a statistically significant difference in EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance after reading one level beyond their current level of competence (i+1) and one level beneath their current level of competence (i-1). Another purpose of this research study was to investigate the EFL Thai undergraduate students' attitudes towards ER. The research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What effects does extensive reading have on EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance?

2. Is there a statistically significant difference in EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance after reading beyond their current level of competence (i+1) and beneath their current level of competence (i-1)?

3. What are the EFL Thai undergraduates' attitudes towards the impact of extensive reading on narrative paragraph writing performance?

Literature Review

Extensive Reading: Background and Theory

It has been believed that extensive reading (ER) helps students read quickly but with pleasure. Not only do they enjoy reading, but they also get a general understanding the information presented in a given text. The terms of ER and its characteristics have been defined by many ER experts.

> ER is an approach to language teaching in which learners read a lot of easy material in a new language. They choose their own reading material and read it independently of the teacher. They read for general, overall meaning, and they read for information and enjoyment.
>
> (Day & Bamford, 2004, p. 1)

Students read pleasurably when they read extensively, however, the levels of materials must be appropriate for their language proficiency level. ER is to read in a quantity to gain a general understanding of the text, which gradually becomes their reading habits and preferences (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). ER can also be defined in different terms such as supplementary reading, book flood, uninterrupted sustained silent reading, sustained silent

reading, free reading, pleasure reading, self-selected reading, and wide reading (Khaoula, 2017; Ng et al., 2019).

According to the ER Foundation, ER helps students improve their reading skills rather than concentrating on the language itself. Not only are they better at reading, but students can also improve their writing, listening, and speaking through ER. Moreover, their vocabulary is enriched (Day & Bamford, 2004). Waring (2011) added that ER helps students improve their fluency, reading speed, and reading comprehension when they read quickly with enjoyment without constantly looking up words in a dictionary since the purpose of ER is to get general comprehension. Apart from improving language abilities, ER builds students' confidence, motivation, attitude to, and passion for reading, which are important factors in becoming effective readers and language users. To become a successful extensive reader, Day and Bamford (2002) determined ten basic principles of the ER program. Teachers play an important role in helping learners get engaged in ER. Applying those ten principles in ESL or ESL classrooms can lead to the successful promotion of the ER program and enhance students' language development. The basic principles established by Day and Bamford (2002) are as follows:

1) The reading material is easy.
2) A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics is available.
3) Students choose what they want to read.
4) Students read as much as possible.
5) Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.
6) The purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
7) Reading is its own reward.
8) Reading is individual and silent.
9) The teacher orients and guides the students.
10) The teacher is a role model of a reader.

The ten basic principles of the ER program focus on the benefits of ER input in promoting reading automaticity. The automaticity principle states that a language can be acquired and developed through ER when students are exposed to ER input at the 'i-1' level or one level below the students' current level of competence. Firstly, by reading i-1 materials, automatic word recognition happens leading to accessing their lexical knowledge. ER materials at the i-1 level create a condition for automaticity educating and extending a large sight vocabulary (Mikeladze, 2014). They allow students to be exposed to known words and syntactic structures. Students can experience words in a text more frequently and read faster. Secondly, easy ER materials are effective in building an awareness of how a

text works since students are exposed to words and structures repeatedly causing familiarity and automaticity to develop. Thirdly, ER materials at the i-1 level are easy, interesting, and meaningful, therefore, students feel less stressed and may free them from tension while trying to comprehend the text. Chiang (2015) also pointed out that i-1 helps students construct their reading certainty and reading fluency.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis

ER is recommended as an opportunity to experience the English language outside class time, and it can be easily achieved. However, students have to carefully choose levels of graded readers that are suitable for their language proficiency (Krashen, 1989). Students should have opportunities to receive input outside the classroom to become successful EFL learners. Contrary to Day and Bamford's Ten Basic Principles for ER: The Automaticity Principle, Krashen's Input hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) was introduced as a diverse scheme. It is suggested that students can advance their linguistic knowledge when they input new information beyond their current level. To put it simply, it is proposed that to move from stage i to i+1, students should be exposed to input that is a little beyond the current level of competence or contains i+1.
1) 'i' represents the current level of competence; and
2) '1' represents the input somewhat above the students' present language ability or next level.

Students acquire language when they focus on the meaning, not the form of the message. When students do not understand language that contains complicated structures or is beyond their current level of competence, they will apply their background knowledge and use context to help them understand and be able to acquire the language. Structures will be acquired after understanding. Krashen (1982) added that to acquire a language, unconscious learning while reading for pleasure is more effective than longer-lasting conscious learning. However, Krashen emphasizes that the reading materials should be only one level higher than their current level of competence. If they contain too much difficult vocabulary and structures, it will not be useful for their language acquisition.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) suggested the characteristics of effective input that are useful for second language or foreign language acquirers. The language input must be comprehensible. Classes should be conducted by providing students with natural communicative input. Teachers may use various materials, pictures, or students' schemata to help enhance their understanding. Plus, the language input must be interesting. Teachers may conduct in-class activities that are relevant to students' interests. The

activities should not cause anxiety in acquiring a language. Besides, the language input must not be grammatically sequenced. It can be stated that grammar should not be the main focus or taught directly even though the purpose of the lesson is to learn grammatical structures. Moreover, students should be provided with enough comprehensible and interesting input to reach the goal of language acquisition.

Narrative Writing and The Relationship Between Extensive Reading and Writing Performance

Paragraph writing comes in different styles. The narrative paragraph often describes events from the writer's life. Narrative paragraphs are often stories written from a writer's personal experience. Narrative writing is the most interesting type of writing (Adam, 2015). It helps students develop their imaginative thinking skills and express their feelings based on their experiences. It has been believed that a narrative text is appropriate for students to enhance their writing performance since it is a text format that is easily understood (Hall-Mills & Apel, 2012). Moreover, it catches students' interest and motivates them to write. A narrative consists of the elements that gradually help learners begin writing systematically. Writing is one of the most difficult skills for EFL students. However, it is crucial and should be mastered by themselves by having a teacher who plays an important role to help students enhance their writing performance.

Although reading and writing are perceived as two separated skills, they are related. Hedge (1988) stated that students can become good writers if they read a lot. Harris (1995) also mentioned that writing can be acquired from reading and talking, therefore, reading should be cultivated. Reading helps extend students' thoughts and draws them into wider perspectives. Therefore, reading in the writing classroom is an appropriate input to improve students' writing performance since they can learn the rules of grammar and increase vocabulary while reading which leads them to become better writers (Johnson, 2008).

A number of studies were conducted to explore the correlation between ER and writing performance. Duong and Trang (2021), Salehi et al. (2015), and Sakurai (2017) found that ER positively affects the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Nugrahini and Rakhmawati (2022) revealed that the experimental group, who read ER materials as a strategy in order to improve their English ability, outperformed the control group in overall writing performance, and all specific writing features including content, communicative achievement, organization, and language use. Liu and Zhang (2018) added that ER performs better in enhancing students learning vocabulary if they choose graded readers that are simple and enjoyable. After

students start to develop a reading habit, they are able to improve their abilities in terms of syntax and phrases. It is believed that ER encourages students to experience the text format. They can be easily exposed to the patterns of the text format, causing them to develop their writing performance (Poorsoti & Asl, 2016). A piece of anecdotal evidence found that reading in only one format of ER materials helps the progression of readability since a range of words and constructs were repeatedly used (Bryan, 2011). Students learn how to write narrative text naturally from reading extensively, and then they repeat and utilize the specific writing features from the reading texts provided in their writing (Mahadi et al., 2018). It is suggested that extracurricular ER activities and learning experiences should be provided so that students have chances to apply the knowledge they gain to their writing (Alqadi & Alqadi, 2013).

Reading Attitudes

Students' learning processes are affected by a range of both internal and external factors such as anxiety, motivation, attitude, self-esteem, family support, and school environment (Chairunnisa et al., 2017). According to Gardner (1985), attitudes impact an individual's learning of a second or foreign language. They have been acknowledged as one of the most essential factors that lead to success or failure in learning a foreign language. It can be suggested that students who positively believe that they will earn positive outcomes will have positive attitudes towards certain behaviors, and this leads to their positive behaviors. On the other hand, students who have negative beliefs that the object is not useful or has negative value will tend to have negative attitudes. This is asserted by Gardner (1985) that attitude is thus linked to a person's values and beliefs and promotes or discourages the choices made in all realms of activity, whether academic or informal.

In the field of ESL and EFL reading attitudes, research studies have been conducted to investigate and examine three aspects of reading attitude. According to Wenden (1991), attitude can be classified into three main components – affective, behavioral, and cognitive components. The affective component of an attitude refers to an individual's feelings or emotions towards the attitude object. It is concerned with likes of dislikes. If learners have negative affective towards something, it will lead to negative attitudes towards that attitude object (Khaki et al., 2013). The cognitive component refers to an individual's thoughts and beliefs towards an attitude object. It is believed that each person's attitude might be based primarily upon a consideration of the positive and negative attributes of the attitude object. In language learning, cognition involves more than feelings, it includes the beliefs of language learners about the knowledge they receive and their

understanding of the language-learning process. The behavioral component of an attitude refers to an individual's past experiences and behaviors towards an attitude object. It is suggested that affection and cognition influence people's intention to behave. To put it simply, an individual will do or will not do an action because of his attitude towards that object.

Research and Methodology

Participants and Research Context

The participants of this research study were limited to 49 second-year Thai undergraduate students studying non-English majors whose ages were over 18 years old and were studying at a public university in the country's central region. They attended neither international schools nor bilingual programs. All of them enrolled in an English Listening and Speaking Skills, which was one of the mandatory English courses. Regarding the course title, it seemed to focus on listening and speaking skills, however, one of the course objectives was that students would be able to write paragraphs talking about personal experiences and events. The majority of the participants were at A2 and B1 CEFR levels. Participants were divided into two experimental groups. The i+1 group consisted of 25 participants who were required to read ER materials that were one level beyond their current level of competence. Meanwhile, the i–1 group consisted of 24 participants who experienced ER materials with one level beneath their current level of competence. The samples were selected using intact and non-probability sampling of those who enrolled in those two researcher's sections.

Research Instrument

The instruments used in the study were pre- and post-narrative paragraph writing tests in which the participants were asked to write a paragraph with 80 – 100 words on the topic given. The topics were chosen regarding the guidance of CEFR, and were appropriate for participants whose English language proficiency was at A2 and B1 CEFR levels. Moreover, both topics were suitable for the narrative paragraph writing test since they were relevant to students' real-life experiences. The ESL Composition Profile, an analytic rubric established by Jacobs et al. (1981), was used to rate the participants' writing tests. Both pre-and post-narrative paragraph writing tests were rated by two raters, one researcher and one ESL lecturer teaching at the same academic level at the same university, since inter-rating can result in high consistency and reduce the problems of subjectivity. Two raters were the researcher and one ESL lecturer who holds ad degree majoring in English,

and have experience in teaching EFL undergraduates for over seven years. Both of the raters taught a listening and speaking course for more than three consecutive years, and were familiar with using the analytic rubric. The questionnaire was distributed to participants in the tenth class of the course after being exposed to ER. The attitude questionnaire employed in this study was adapted from Duong and Trang (2021) in order to be suitable for EFL students which aimed to investigate participants' attitudes towards ER. It consisted of 20 statements on the 5 Likert's scale focusing on affective, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes. Semi-structured interview questions were conducted.

The reliability and validity of the pre- and post-narrative paragraph writing tests, and the questionnaire used in the study were validated by three experts in the field of TEFL which the IOC index means of expert scores of all items equal to 1.0 and 0.98 accordingly, therefore, both writing tests and all statements were qualified. Moreover, they were piloted with students who shared the same characteristics. The questionnaire was satisfactorily reliable with a significantly high Cronbach Alpha's coefficient of 0.892 for 20 items in total.

Procedure

The ER instruction was implemented for ten weeks. One week before semester commenced, participants were required to take the CEFR level test to know their English language proficiency level.

In week one, participants were asked to do a pre-writing test of a narrative paragraph on "My First Day at University". Dictionary or any electronic devices were not allowed. Then, students were asked to form a group of 4 – 5 with the same current English proficiency level. Working in a group appeared more effective for encouraging language practices and interaction among students – positive interdependence and face-to-face promotive interaction. Meanwhile, the decision of pair work seems to be made by moving students, and working individually did not seem to promote performance in learning English and the classroom atmosphere.

Over eight weeks, students selected graded readers depending on their favors on Xreading which were within the levels assigned by the researcher. Plenty of genres were provided such as adventure, fairy tale, fantasy, historical, horror, drama, romance, thriller, etc. However, only a narrative format was allowed to be selected. Reading in only one format can help the progression of readability since a range of words and constructs were repeatedly used. After that, they predicted the story from its name and the book cover. Then, a 15-minute sustained silent reading was allocated before the class was dismissed. According to ER Foundation Guide, it is suggested

that students should read silently for about 10 – 15 minutes. That amount of time was important because it kept students engaged in silent reading without leading to fatigue and helped to keep them concentrated on the task, which could have waned after 15 minutes.

Students continued reading extensively outside class time. So that they could recheck their reading and writing performance, and the researcher could follow up on their reading and writing progress. Students were asked to complete an online quick quiz and a book report form. Over 10 weeks, biweekly, students did various in-class ER group activities related to narrative writing practices such as writing through story mountain, narrating pictures from books, indicating orders of stories, brainstorming important events, writing their own stories using words from books, etc.

At the end of the activities, students submitted the writing task to the researcher, and feedback was given back in a later week. In week 10, they did a post-narrative paragraph writing test entitled "My Most Memorable Day in My Life". Moreover, an attitude questionnaire was distributed to survey students' attitudes towards ER. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to get more details.

Results and Discussion

Effects of ER on EFL Thai Undergraduates' Narrative Paragraph Writing Performance

To investigate the effects of ER on EFL Thai Undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance, the participants took the pre-narrative writing test before the implementation and the post-narrative writing test after being exposed to ER for over ten weeks. Then, the mean scores of overall narrative writing performance and five specific writing features obtained from pre- and post-narrative writing tests were compared and analyzed quantitatively using paired t-test.

Table 1

The Overall Mean, Standard Deviation, and the Mean Differences of EFL Thai Undergraduates' Narrative Writing Test before and after Implementing ER

Groups	N	Pre-Test		Post-Test		Mean diff.	SD	t-value	p
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
i+1	25	43.40	13.022	72.96	10.710	29.56	12.111	12.204	.000
i-1	24	40.71	11.495	67.92	10.164	17.21	10.317	12.920	.000

* $p < 0.05$ level

Regarding i+1 group, the results revealed that the mean score of pre-narrative writing test was 43.40 (out of 100). After a 10-week implementation of ER, the mean score of the post-narrative writing test rose to 72.69. Meanwhile, the mean score of the pre-narrative writing test for the i-1 group was 40.7, and the mean score of the post-narrative writing test increased to 67.92. It can be seen that the mean scores obtained from the post-narrative writing test for both i+1 and i-1 groups were significantly higher than the mean scores of the pre-narrative writing test at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the result indicated that EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance increased significantly after being exposed to ER, showing that ER positively affected EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance whether they read English-graded readers one level beyond or beneath their English language proficiency.

ER materials are considered the main instrument that improves students' writing performance (Duong & Trang, 2021). Tsang (1996) supported that ER should be integrated with English. A wide range of genres of graded readers within students' linguistic capacity helps improve EFL students' language abilities including writing performance. Additionally, it is more beneficial when students read ER materials based on their interests. ER encourages students to experience the text format. The more they read extensively, the more they are easily exposed to the patterns of the text format and genres which triggers them to build up their writing skills (Poorsoti & Asl, 2016). Plus, extracurricular ER activities, and various techniques and learning experiences should be provided such as predicting, brainstorming, editing, and rewriting, to keep and encourage students reading and writing so that they have opportunities to apply structures and vocabulary to their writing (Alqadi & Alqadi, 2013). Therefore, it is significant to push students to produce meaningful and syntactically appropriate output.

Table 2

The Overall Mean, Standard Deviation, and the Mean Differences of EFL Thai Undergraduates' Narrative Writing Scoring Criteria before and after Implementing ER

Scoring Criteria	Group	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean diff.	SD	t-value	p
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
Content	i+1	15.32	3.288	23.76	2.712	8.44	3.042	13.870	.000
	i-1	14.83	3.185	22.71	3.029	7.88	3.327	11.595	.000
Organization	i+1	9.00	2.708	14.92	2.565	5.92	2.753	10.754	.000
	i-1	8.83	3.002	14.00	1.888	5.17	2.426	10.435	.000

Vocabulary	i+1	8.56	2.274	13.68	2.393	5.12	2.315	11.058	.000
	i-1	8.08	2.165	12.08	3.562	4.00	3.270	5.992	.000
Language Use	i+1	8.24	4.666	16.76	3.382	8.52	4.455	9.563	.000
	i-1	6.71	2.971	15.38	2.871	8.67	3.158	13.446	.000
Mechanic	i+1	2.28	0.542	3.84	9.554	1.56	0.651	11.988	.000
	i-1	2.25	0.442	3.75	0.173	1.50	0.659	11.145	.000

* $p < 0.05$ level

The results showed that after implementing ER, the mean scores obtained from the post-narrative writing test were higher than the mean score of the pre-narrative writing test in all five specific writing features for both i+1 and i-1 groups. In terms of content, the mean scores of the post-narrative writing test of i+1 and i-1 groups (23.76 and 22.71 out of 30) were higher than the mean scores of the pre-narrative writing test (15.31 and 14.83). In terms of organization, the mean scores of the post-narrative writing test of both i+1 and i-1 groups (14.92 and 14.00 out of 20) were higher than the mean scores of pre-narrative writing test (9.00 and 8.83). In terms of vocabulary, the mean scores of the post-narrative writing test of i+1 and i-1 groups (13.68 and 12.08 out of 20) were higher than the mean scores of the pre-narrative writing test (8.56 and 8.08). In terms of language use, the mean scores of the post-narrative writing test of i+1 and i-1 groups (16.76 and 15.38 out of 25) were higher than the mean scores of pre-narrative writing test (8.24 and 6.71). Regarding the mechanic, it was similar to the other four writing features. The mean scores of the post-narrative writing test of i+1 and i-1 groups (3.84 and 3.75 out of 5) were higher than the mean scores of the pre-narrative writing test (2.28 and 2.25). The significant differences in all writing features were found at 0.05. Therefore, ER positively affects students' narrative writing performance in all five specific writing features for both i+1 and i-1 groups.

ER requires and focuses more on content; thus, students are provided with a new collection of ideas and thoughts. When students are repeatedly exposed to ER, they produce a text by relating ideas from the text they read (Poorsoti & Asl, 2016). Students tend to focus on the content when they read ER materials that are their interests since they can relate to their experiences and background knowledge of the topic (Day & Bamford, 1998; Krashen, 1985; Mahadi et al., 2018). Furthermore, students can see how a main idea is developed throughout a passage (Al-Mansour & Al-Shorman, 2014). ER allows students to elaborate ideas fully and clearly from one sentence to another. Therefore, cohesive and well-organized sentences can

be made. Moreover, ER has a major impact on vocabulary and syntax which helps students enrich their use of the target language if they are provided with sufficient reading materials (Day & Bamford, 2002). Atilgan (2013) suggested that ER should be purposefully integrated into the language classroom as students are exposed to ER which demonstrates a rich variety of words in their writing due to the repetition of words in graded readers. When students repeatedly see the same vocabulary, they can recognize it, acquire it, and later produce it. In terms of language use, Krashen's Input Hypothesis predicts that structures and vocabulary will be presented if the reading is comprehensible. While reading, students learn how to write narrative text naturally. They apply the reading texts provided as examples in their writing. Repetitive instructional practices in class also helps students recall structures they use in their writing, therefore, similar structures are repeated and utilized (Mahadi et al., 2018). ER, eventually, has a positive impact on developing mechanics for writing. Newton et al. (2018) stated that ER helps students learn and improve mechanical accuracy including punctuation and spelling. Writing practices allow them to understand the use of punctuation and how to spell correctly. However, to develop the mechanics in writing more effectively and obviously, McNaught and Shaw (2016) advised that intensive teaching of mechanics including spelling and punctuation should be done.

Regarding Krashen's Input Hypothesis, it is believed that relevant reading input, a little above the students' current level of competence, can help learners enhance their writing performance. On the other hand, Day and Bamford (1998) suggested that ER becomes effective when students read texts that are marginally beneath their current level of language competence. Although both theories are diverse models on the difficulty level of the input, it is believed that one level above and one level beneath students' current level of competence is still comprehensible. With comprehensible input, students can acquire the necessary vocabulary, grammatical structure, content, organization, and mechanics for their narrative paragraph writing.

The Significant Difference in EFL Thai Undergraduates' Narrative Paragraph Writing Performance Between i+1 and i-1 Groups

To explore the significant difference in EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance between i+1 and i-1 group, the mean scores obtained from the total scores of post-narrative writing test and five writing featured were compared and analyzed by using an independent sample t-test.

Table 3

Comparison of the total score and five writing features between i+1 and i-1 groups

Specific Feature	Mean difference	Std. error difference	t	df	p
Content	1.05	0.82	1.282	47	0.206
Organization	0.92	0.65	1.425	47	0.161
Vocabulary	1.60	0.86	1.849	47	0.071
Language Use	1.39	0.90	1.542	47	0.130
Mechanic	0.09	0.20	0.442	47	0.661
Overall	5.04	2.99	1.689	47	0.098

The results indicated that the significance of all variables was more than 0.05. Similarly, to those five specific writing features, the significance of the mean score was more than 0.05. Therefore, there was not a significant difference in EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance between the i+1 and i-1 groups.

Several research studies were conducted on promoting writing performance through ER. However, the main purpose of those studies was to explore the outcomes of an ER and a non-ER class, and studies did not mention the exact levels of graded readers provided to students. Those only claimed that the graded readers were appropriate and met students' English language proficiency. Nevertheless, those results were beneficial to the findings of this study. Al-Mansour and Al-Shorman (2014), Duong and Trang (2021), and Tsang (1996) revealed that the ER class outperformed the non-ER class in the writing performance of EFL students, and the ER class had a significant enhancement. Salehi et al. (2015) agreed that the level of ER materials should be slightly difficult for students. Students can develop the vocabulary banks and structures to reach this level since they were exposed repeatedly. This agrees with Krashen's i+1 theory which stated that students should be given i+1 to enhance their language skills since it is believed that students will unconsciously learn and acquire a foreign language when they understand the input. However, Kirin (2010) argued that to successfully increase students' writing ability, language input alone at the i+1 level may not be sufficient. Students needed the production of written tasks to confirm the language learned. On the other hand, Yang et al. (2021) mentioned that reading extensively at one level beneath students' English proficiency can promote English language development and reading engagement. Yoshida (2012) affirmed that the i-1 group got better proficiency in syntax and semantic units. Nuttall (1982) advised that the first ER reading material should be below students' English language proficiency so that they feel comfortable after starting reading.

One of the possible reasons for the findings of this study showed no significant difference between students in i+1 and i-1 groups could be because reading in only one genre can help the progression of readability since a limited range of words and constructs were repeatedly used. Yang et al. (2021) suggested that ER has a strong impact on students' English language proficiency development if they read appropriate ER materials consistently and regularly. Moreover, their writing performance can be enhanced when they have access to a wide range of enjoyable and comprehensible reading materials which they choose depending on their preferences (Day & Bamford, 2002).

It can be concluded that reading ER materials at one level beyond their current level of competence (i+1) was as effective as reading ER materials at one level beneath their current level of competence (i-1) in promoting EFL Thai undergraduates' paragraph writing performance. Additionally, both approaches significantly improved EFL Thai undergraduates' paragraph writing performance for a short period as long as they were exposed to only one text format, read ER materials consistently, and chose ER materials that matched their English proficiency level.

The EFL Thai Undergraduates' Attitudes Towards the Impact of Extensive Reading on Narrative Paragraph Writing Performance

Table 4

The Overall Mean and Standard Deviation of EFL Thai Undergraduates' Attitudes towards ER

Attitudes towards ER	i+1 (N = 25)			i-1 (N = 24)		
	Mean	SD	Description	Mean	SD	Description
Affective	4.01	0.448	Positive	3.81	0.606	Positive
Cognitive	3.74	0.650	Positive	3.62	0.727	Positive
Behavioral	4.02	0.644	Positive	3.98	0.639	Positive
Total	3.92	0.519	Positive	3.80	0.589	Positive

The results revealed EFL Thai undergraduates in i+1 and i-1 groups had positive attitudes towards ER, with mean scores of 3.92 and 3.80. Regarding i+1 group, the first two highest positive attitudes they had towards ER after being exposed to it were behavioral attitudes and affective attitudes with mean scores of 4.02 and 4.01. Although cognitive attitudes were not the highest, they also agreed that they tended to have positive cognitive attitudes towards ER with a mean score of 3.74. Regarding EFL Thai undergraduates in i-1 group, they agreed that the highest positive attitudes towards ER was

behavioral attitudes with a mean score of 3.98. Meanwhile, the second and the third highest positive attitudes towards ER were affective attitudes and cognitive attitudes with mean scores of 3.81 and 3.62. From the results, it can be concluded that the highest positive attitudes towards ER in narrative paragraph writing of EFL Thai undergraduates were behavioral attitudes, followed by affective attitudes and cognitive attitudes, respectively.

It is believed that ER helps improve EFL students' writing skills. When students choose appropriate ER materials based on their interests and language ability, they tend to have a positive affective attitude and confidence in reading (Day & Bamford, 1998). Yamashita (2013) insisted that ER has a great positive influence on feelings and emotions. Comfort and anxiety present affective attitudes. Once students have a positive affective attitude, it facilitates performance in ER and English language ability. Students from both groups agreed that their attitudes towards narrative paragraph writing have changed after implementing ER. They felt that narrative paragraph writing in English was easier, and they were more enjoyable after they were exposed to ER.

> "S2: At first, I had no idea how to start writing a narrative paragraph. However, after reading English graded readers continuously, those books helped me to know where I could start writing and how to continue my story."

> "S3: I like English. However, I did not have much time to practice reading and writing. I felt more confident after my teachers assigned me to write a narrative paragraph. English-graded readers and writing practices helped me realize how to construct a good paragraph. I think I can do it well now."

ER strongly impacts students' cognitive attitudes (Chien & Yu, 2015). When their students matriculated into the university, they considered ER unimportant and irrelevant, however, they changed their perceptions after experiencing ER for over 10 weeks. Yamashita (2004) stated that linguistic value and practical value typify the cognitive part of reading attitude which will be positively fostered through ER. What's more, writing important points or commenting on their journal writing and group work leads to positive cognitive attitudes since students agreed that their writing was fostered in ER class (Hutahaen et al., 2023). Students believed that a good writer is a person who reads a lot.

> "S8: I learned new words after I read a lot because the structures were repeated. I could use appropriate words and correct grammatical structures for my writing, and I could

arrange ideas logically. After finishing my first draft, I was able to edit and revise my writing by myself."

"S2: After I have been exposed to ER, I felt that I would become a better writer even though I don't currently feel like I write well. I started to be familiar with vocabulary and gained new words. So far, I have felt that I am able to write a story that interests readers.

Behavioral attitudes are significantly developed when students access and choose their own ER materials they are interested in (Rodrigo et al., 2014). They continue ER because it comprises various kinds of stories and activities. Chang (2010) stated that group activities lead to a strong connection between group members. A positive atmosphere inside a group is created when they engage in group activities, and it becomes a tool for behavioral attitude development. Students mutually believed that ER positively influenced their performance in narrative paragraph writing. English-graded readers and group activities helped them become better writers in English narrative paragraph writing

"S4: With ER materials and group activities, the writing lessons were not boring anymore. After reading extensively, I gradually learned and understood the steps of narrative paragraph writing. In-class practices also encouraged me to write better."

"S6: Previously, I wrote what I thought, and had no main ideas to my writing. The focus of my writing was not interesting. However, I felt that my writing performance was better after implementing ER in my writing lessons with my classmates.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study aimed to examine the effects of narrative paragraph writing performance, and to explore the significant difference in EFL Thai undergraduates' narrative paragraph writing performance after reading beyond their current level of competence (i+1) and beneath their current level of competence (i-1). Moreover, their attitudes towards ER were investigated. In general, the results obtained from the pre- and post-narrative paragraph writing tests revealed that ER helped enhance the overall narrative paragraph writing performance and all five specific writing features including content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics of EFL Thai undergraduates in both i+1 and i-1 groups. The result indicated that reading ER materials with one level beyond EFL Thai undergraduates' English

language proficiency was as effective as making students read one level beneath their English language proficiency since no significant difference in their narrative paragraph writing performance between i+1 and i-1 groups was found. Regarding the results from the attitudes questionnaire, it showed that EFL Thai undergraduates in both i+1 and i-1 groups had positive attitudes including behavioral, affective, and cognitive attitudes after implementing ER for over 10 weeks. To put it simply, ER positively affected the EFL Thai undergraduates' attitudes towards ER.

In addition to the results of the study, it was suggested that to enhance the narrative paragraph writing performance of EFL students who are not familiar with ER, and to positively maximize their attitudes towards ER, teachers should set up an appropriate ER program. ER should not be only conducted as extracurricular activities, but also integrated with English courses. Students should be able to select the ER materials based on their interests and English language proficiency since they can relate their experiences and background knowledge to the topic. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to repeatedly experience the narrative text type since they can be easily exposed to the patterns of the narrative format, and they can relate plenty of new ideas and thoughts. After reading, they should be encouraged to apply structures and vocabulary to their writing. Apart from reading individually, students should have opportunities to predict, brainstorm, edit and proofread with classmates since instructional practices after reading assist students in writing. When the ER programs are effective, affective, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes can be promoted simultaneously.

More importantly, to investigate if the results are comparable to the findings in the current study, it is recommended a larger number of participants should be asked to participate in the study. Moreover, an ER program should be conducted over the longer term or for at least two consecutive semesters to ensure the outcomes are valid.

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