

EFL Students' Attitudes Toward Online Extensive Reading: Insights From an Extensive Reading Club Experience

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Abstract—This study explores Thai EFL university students' attitudes toward reading in English, extensive reading (ER), and reading graded readers online through the Xreading platform. The participants included eight English major students at a Thai university who volunteered to participate in a small-scale ER club in semester one of 2024 as an out-of-class activity. A mixed-methods research design was employed. A reading attitude questionnaire adopted from Puripunyanich's (2021) study was used to collect quantitative data. Qualitative data were gathered from semi-structured interviews. Findings from the questionnaire and interviews reveal that students held a positive attitude toward reading in English. They recognized its importance for language learning and showed a strong interest in improving their reading skills. Additionally, students had positive attitudes toward online ER on Xreading because reading simple graded readers increased their reading motivation, expanded vocabulary knowledge, and increased enjoyment in reading short texts. Students enjoyed Xreading's convenience of use, accessibility, and wide range of books. However, the problem of eyestrain while reading on a screen was reported. Students were satisfied with the ER club activities, mentioning the benefits of both ER and Xreading in enhancing their English skills and reading motivation. Students also recommended continuing the club activity and inviting other interested students to participate. The study offers implications for implementing ER in reading programs.

Index Terms—online extensive reading, Xreading, attitudes, extensive reading club

I. INTRODUCTION

English reading skills are vital for learning, working, and engaging in society, especially for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in today's digital world, where texts are readily available in electronic formats. Grabe (2014) stresses that “the ability to read English efficiently for academic purposes is widely recognized in EFL/ESL contexts as a critical skill in a wide range of secondary and university settings, and especially for more advanced students” (p. 8). Hence, developing reading fluency is essential for learners to efficiently process and comprehend extensive information quickly, saving time and energy (Shimono, 2023). Robb and Ewert (2024) also emphasize the importance of reading in language learning and state that “the more students read, the better they read, and... fostering a reading habit outside of school (or work) is essential for life-long learning” (p. 295). Extensive reading (ER) is a pedagogical approach that has been advocated to be incorporated in reading classrooms to increase reading fluency, comprehension, and enjoyment (Day & Bamford, 1998; Day & Bamford, 2002; Grabe, 2014; Nation & Waring, 2020; Renandya & Day, 2020). ER “involves each learner independently and silently reading lots of material which is at the right level for them” (Nation & Waring, 2020, p. 4). Reading materials that are usually used for ER are graded readers or “books that have been specially prepared with controlled vocabulary and grammar to make them accessible to the learner” (The Extensive Reading Foundation, n.d.). The recent review of existing research on classroom-based ER in the second language (L2) classrooms by Robb and Ewert (2024) concludes that ER has been widely implemented in the L2 context and benefited language learning, vocabulary, reading rate, motivation, and attitudes (e.g., Suk, 2017; Takahashi, 2018; Zhou & Day, 2021).

Day and Bamford (1998) suggested that ER can serve as an independent classroom activity, be part of existing courses, or function as an extracurricular activity, such as extensive reading clubs supervised by teachers. Existing research underscores the effectiveness of ER over intensive reading as it positively influences fluency, listening, writing, vocabulary, and attitudes toward reading in L2 (Day & Bamford, 2002; Nation & Waring, 2020). Despite its benefits, implementing ER in university English courses encounters obstacles. This includes restricted instructional time, concerns over curricular modifications, evaluation techniques, and financial limitations for acquiring books (Nation & Waring, 2020). Digital solutions, such as MReader and Xreading, offer capabilities for managing lengthy reading activities, allowing educators to track student progress (Nation & Waring, 2020). Researchers strongly recommend the integration of ER into English curricula or encouraging voluntary participation in activities like book clubs using online library systems, such as Xreading, which tracks reading progress, books read, and reading speed (Nation & Waring, 2020). According to Nation and Macalister (2021), “e-reading can help teachers overcome these challenges,” and

Xreading can be suitable as it is “a website created specifically to help schools implement” ER programs, although it is not free and needs a subscription (p. 65).

In Thailand, research has demonstrated the benefits of ER through both physical and digital books at the primary and secondary levels (e.g., Charumanee, 2014; Maipoka & Soontornwipast, 2021; Promluan & Sukying, 2021), as well as in university education. The ER approach enhances reading ability, other language skills, and attitudes toward reading. For example, Puripunyanich (2021) conducted a large-scale study involving more than 5,000 university students from various disciplines assigned to read graded readers on Xreading as part of their English foundation courses throughout one academic year. The results from 356 students indicated that, generally, students had positive attitudes toward ER activities, highlighting its potential to improve fluency, motivation, and English language skills, as well as Xreading’s convenience and accessibility. In the Thai educational context, interest in the concept of ER has been increasing, as shown by the establishment of the Thailand Extensive Reading Association (n.d.), which aims to promote English reading development and inspire a love for reading at all educational levels through implementing ER. Recently, Puripunyanich’s (2022) study also sheds light on the important roles of key stakeholders in institutions, such as administrators and teachers, in successfully implementing ER programs.

Although a substantial amount of online ER research has been conducted in the context of in-class reading activities as part of intensive reading programs, little is known about the effects of out-of-class online ER on students’ attitudes in the present study. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no voluntary ER club has been established as a stand-alone ER program for any group of students, resulting in a lack of empirical data on students’ reading experiences and perceptions of such activities. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by organizing an ER club for interested English major students to engage in online ER via Xreading to explore its impact on their attitudes toward reading in English and their perceptions of participating in the ER club. The findings will enhance the understanding of how online ER influences EFL university students’ attitudes and their development in English language learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Extensive Reading and Reading Attitudes

The implementation of online ER programs in universities has been widely observed in reading courses as part of English course assignments that include grades (e.g., Rusiana & Santosa, 2024; Puripunyanich, 2021), as well as in extracurricular activities outside of class time, such as book clubs, including a book café (Speer & Lara, 2017) and an online book club for ESOL learners (Norman, 2021). Rusiana and Santosa (2024) noted that although the ER book club in their study was compulsory in an ER course, the club positively affected students’ reading attitudes, interest, and improved reading speed. Additionally, a hybrid ER program was implemented, combining “online materials and materials in print” (Peterson, 2022, p. 2). Other ER studies extended investigation in more advanced learners, such as Tabata-Sandom’s (2023) study of an ER program with adult L2 learners, and Zhou and Day’s (2021) study of using Xreading in an EAP course. This line of research provides evidence of the positive effects of ER on students’ attitudes, reading enjoyment, vocabulary gain, and reading rate development. According to Grabe (2009), numerous studies have investigated the benefits of ER in relation to attitudes and motivation, and findings “demonstrated that extensive reading is closely associated with positive attitudes and motivation for reading” (p. 322). Studies in Thai universities regarding the effects of ER on reading attitudes have also been conducted, which confirm the previous research results (e.g., Tamrackitkun, 2010; Wisajorn, 2017). A recent large-scale study conducted in the Thai university context by Puripunyanich (2021) offers valuable insights into implementing Online ER using Xreading in a reading program and its positive effects on students’ attitudes toward ER in fostering reading motivation and improving English language skills. Perceived usefulness and difficulties of the Xreading platform were also highlighted, paving the way for further research to implement ER in EFL reading curricula.

B. Xreading as a Platform for Online ER

Nation and Waring (2020) suggested using the Xreading platform to help educators and academic institutions incorporate extended reading activities into their curricula. Xreading, an online library system, allows students to enjoy extensive reading. Subscriptions are available through the Xreading website (www.xreading.com). It features over 1,000 graded readers from respected ELT publishers like Cambridge University Press, National Geographic, Pearson, and Macmillan. Students have unlimited access to numerous books and can read the same title simultaneously. Furthermore, Xreading provides quizzes for each book, allowing students to assess their comprehension and foster a sense of achievement in reading. Most books also include audio narrations, enabling students to listen while reading, with adjustable reading speeds. With an internet connection, students can access the platform on various devices, including personal computers, tablets, and mobile phones. Instructors can monitor each student’s reading activity through the Learner Management System (LMS), which provides data on each student regarding the number of books read, total words, reading speeds, and quiz scores. Students can also track their reading data and progress through this LMS.

In conclusion, earlier studies have demonstrated the successful integration of Xreading in ER programs for university students (e.g., Walker, 2020; Johnson & Taylor, 2020). Therefore, Xreading serves as an appropriate digital choice for the current study. This study aims to investigate the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are students' attitudes toward reading in English?

RQ 2: What are students' attitudes toward extensive reading?

RQ 3: What are students' attitudes toward engaging in online extensive reading using Xreading?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design. The quantitative component collects numerical data on students' attitudes toward online ER experiences through a questionnaire. The qualitative component aims to obtain deeper insights into students' perspectives on their online ER experiences through written responses to one question in the questionnaire and their answers from semi-structured interviews.

B. Participants

The study participants comprised eight undergraduate students majoring in English (five males and three females) at a public university in northern Thailand during the first semester of 2024. At the time of data collection, two were in their first year, five in their second year, and one in their fourth year. Among these students, six had recently changed their degree programs from other disciplines to English. They were aged between 18 and 20 years (mean = 19.13). On average, the participants had studied English for 12 years. The participants were purposively chosen based on their voluntary involvement as members of the ER club. Before starting the study, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the university's Human Ethics Committee (HEC). Subsequently, the researcher met with the participants in the classroom of the Strategic Reading course in which they were enrolled and thoroughly informed them of the study's purposes and significance to request their voluntary participation. Following this, written consent was obtained to confirm their participation in the study.

C. Contexts of the Study

The study was conducted at the university during the first semester of 2024. The ER club was established as an extracurricular activity outside of regular class hours. The researcher took on the roles of both a reading course instructor and an ER club organizer. The primary goal of creating the club was to foster a reading habit and promote reading enjoyment among students. The club was structured as a stand-alone ER program, meaning that participation did not earn any course credits. Since this was the club's first establishment, the researcher could only recruit eight English major students who previously expressed interest in joining and volunteered for designated activities within the club. The students were free to select their reading materials, utilizing Xreading (www.xreading.com) to access graded readers based on their preferred genres and difficulty levels for ten weeks. They were provided with usernames and passwords to log into the Xreading library on their computers, tablets, or mobile devices at any time, which allowed them to read outside of class at their convenience. After reading each book, students were required to complete a comprehension quiz and were encouraged to rate the book and share their comments about it.

D. Implementation of ER Club

An orientation session launched the club's implementation by explaining the objectives of the ER activity and its principles, while also demonstrating the use of Xreading through Microsoft Teams, a platform for the researcher and students to communicate and share updates on club activities. The students could introduce themselves and learn about other club members by sharing their reading interests and expectations for joining the club. Subsequently, the researcher encouraged the students to read as many books as possible, suggesting a goal of at least one book per week. After the orientation, each student began reading their selected graded readers at their own pace for ten weeks. Since all students were enrolled in the reading course taught by the researcher at that time, the researcher held brief meetings with them after class every other week to discuss their reading progress and exchange experiences from the ER club.

E. Research Instruments

(a). An Attitude Questionnaire

This study utilized Puripunyanich's (2021) questionnaire on attitudes and experiences, drawing on existing studies examining readers' attitudes toward ER (Cote & Milliner, 2015; Tamrackitkun, 2010; Wisajorn, 2017; Yamashita, 2013). The adopted questionnaire items for the current study comprise 53 statements from the original 58, organized into three sections: (1) students' attitudes toward reading in English, (2) extensive reading, and (3) students' experiences with reading graded readers online using Xreading (Puripunyanich, 2021). The questionnaire was distributed in paper format. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with the statements on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree). Additionally, in the final item of section three, they

were required to provide a short answer explaining their reasons for continuing or ceasing to read graded readers on Xreading.

(b). Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview guide was prepared by adopting Puripunyanich's (2021) interview questions or slightly modifying the wording to fit the study context. The interview questions address topics in line with each section of the questionnaire. In total, there are nineteen questions that ask participants to elaborate on their responses to the questionnaire items and share additional insights about their ER experience with Xreading and the ER club. Examples include the following questions: students' attitudes toward reading in English (e.g., What do you think about reading in English?) and extensive reading (e.g., Do you enjoy reading graded readers in English?), students' experiences with doing online ER through Xreading (e.g., How do you feel about reading graded readers on Xreading?), students' perceptions of the activities in the ER club (e.g., What do you think about the ER club after participating in it? Do you think the ER club is useful? Why or why not?), and students' suggestions for improving the ER club (e.g., Do you have any suggestions for future improvements of the reading activities in the ER club?).

F. Data Collection

Data collection procedures began in 2024. First, the researcher met with the participants in the Strategic Reading classroom to announce the establishment of the ER club and invite them to join voluntarily. After explaining the club and the objectives of the current research, the participants completed the previously mentioned consent form to participate in the study. Following this, the researcher held an online orientation meeting with the participants to demonstrate how to use Xreading and outline the goals of the ER club. The participants then engaged in online reading on Xreading for ten weeks. The researcher subsequently collected quantitative data after completing the assigned reading period by administering the attitude questionnaire to all participants to complete in a school meeting room. Lastly, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant in the same room to gain further insights into their perceptions of ER and the use of Xreading. Each interview was conducted in Thai and lasted approximately 15 minutes. The interviews were audio recorded.

G. Data Analysis

Responses to the five-point Likert scale items in the questionnaire, which range from strongly disagree to strongly agree, were quantitatively analyzed by converting them into numerical scores. Descriptive statistical analysis was then performed using percentages, means (M), and standard deviations (S.D.) based on the following scale (Puripunyanich, 2021, p. 277):

Strongly disagree	1.00-1.80
Disagree	1.81-2.60
Neutral	2.61-3.40
Agree	3.41-4.20
Strongly agree	4.21-5.00

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews and short answers in the questionnaire were analyzed using content analysis. The participants' interview data were transcribed verbatim in Thai. The transcripts were then coded according to the interview questions that focused on students' attitudes toward reading in English and extensive reading, their experiences with reading graded readers online using Xreading and the ER club. However, the researcher was open to capturing other related themes from the students' responses to gain new insights. To protect the participants' identities, students were referred to as S followed by a number, designated as S1-S8.

IV. RESULTS

The summary of the eight students' use of Xreading, based on its database, revealed that over 10 weeks, students read an average of 11.5 books, ranging from 1 to 30 books, for a total of 59,825 words read (or an average of 7,478.1 words). The average reading time was 7.55 hours, with an average reading speed of 120.9 words per minute and an average listening time for the audio of 1.03 hours. The students' selected books varied in difficulty. The average Xreading level for each student spanned from level 2 (with 100-200 headwords) to level 9 (containing 1,250-1,500 headwords). More than half of the students (62.5%) selected books at an easy level, while the others preferred a higher level of difficulty. However, they tended to read children's books more than other genres.

The following section presents the results of the analyses of the attitude questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. For each research question, the quantitative findings will be presented first, followed by complementary evidence from the interviews.

A. Students' Attitudes Toward Reading in English

This section presents findings on how the eight students perceived reading in English, addressing RQ 1: What are students' attitudes toward reading in English?

TABLE 1
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD READING IN ENGLISH (N=8)

Statements	M	S.D.
1. I enjoy learning English.	4.63	0.52
2. Reading is an important skill in learning English.	4.88	0.35
3. I think the ability to read in English is essential for Thai students	5.00	0.00
4. Having a good reading skill in English is useful for my future career.	4.75	0.46
5. I can get various kinds of information if I read in English.	4.38	0.74
6. I can acquire broad knowledge if I read in English.	4.50	0.53
7. I get to know about new ways of thinking if I read in English.	4.25	0.71
8. I want to improve my reading skill.	4.75	0.46
9. Reading in English is difficult.	3.25	0.71
10. I feel nervous when I read in English.	3.25	0.89
11. Reading in English is easy.	2.88	0.64
12. I feel relaxed when I read in English.	3.13	0.64
13. I enjoy reading in English.	3.75	0.46
14. I feel nervous when I'm reading something I don't understand.	4.00	1.07
15. I don't mind even if I can't understand what I'm reading entirely.	3.38	1.06
16. I usually read things in English for fun.	3.38	0.74
17. I like to read things in English only in my topic area.	2.88	0.99
18. I only read things in English when I'm required to.	2.38	0.74
Total mean	3.85	1.03

Table 1 shows that students generally had a positive attitude toward reading in English, with an average mean score of 3.85. They all strongly agreed that the ability to read in English is essential for Thai students ($M = 5.00$). They also acknowledged the importance of reading in English for their education and future careers, as indicated by high mean scores for statements like "Reading is an important skill in learning English" ($M = 4.88$) and "Having a good reading skill in English is useful for my future career" ($M = 4.75$). Students also strongly desired to improve their reading skills ($M = 4.75$). However, they found reading in English challenging, with lower mean scores for statements such as "Reading in English is easy" ($M = 2.88$) and "I feel relaxed when I read in English" ($M = 3.13$). Additionally, students felt nervous when encountering material they did not understand ($M = 4.00$). Despite these challenges, they still enjoyed learning English ($M = 4.63$) and believed that reading in English could provide them with a variety of information ($M = 4.38$) and extensive knowledge ($M = 4.50$).

Students' responses from the interviews supported the findings from the questionnaires, showing their perceptions of the usefulness of reading in English for both their studies and communication. They also acknowledged their limited vocabulary knowledge, which can make reading tasks difficult, as evident from students' comments, such as the following:

"Reading in English is useful for developing other language skills and completing my assignments, although sometimes I don't understand the words." [S1]

"Reading in English helps me learn how to pronounce words correctly and communicate with others." [S2]

"Reading in English can be challenging since it's not our native language. However, it isn't too hard if we begin with something simple." [S8]

B. Students' Perceptions of ER

This section examines the perceptions of eight students about ER, addressing RQ 2: What are students' attitudes toward extensive reading?

(a). Students' Attitudes Toward ER

TABLE 2
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD EXTENSIVE READING (N=8)

Statements	M	S.D.
1. I like reading graded readers in English.	3.50	0.76
2. Reading graded readers makes me enjoy reading in English more than before	3.75	0.71
3. I am more motivated to read graded readers because the stories are simple.	4.50	0.53
4. I prefer to read longer texts because they are more interesting.	3.00	0.76
5. I prefer to read shorter texts because they are more simple.	4.25	0.71
6. I am too busy with other coursework or activities to read graded readers out of class.	3.75	0.89
Total mean	3.79	0.85

As shown in Table 2, the overall mean of students' perceptions ($M = 3.79$, $S.D. = 0.85$) indicates that they generally agreed with the statements reflecting positive attitudes toward ER. Item 3 (They were more motivated to read graded

readers because the stories are simple.) achieved the highest mean ($M = 4.50$). This was followed by the second highest mean ($M = 4.25$) for Item 5 (They preferred to read shorter texts because they are simpler.). Item 2 (Reading graded readers makes them enjoy reading in English more than before.) also received a high mean score ($M = 3.75$). However, Item 6 had the same mean as Item 2, suggesting that being too busy with other coursework or activities impacted their time to read graded readers outside of class.

The interview data also reflect the students' responses to the questionnaire, indicating that ER provided them with new reading experiences. Six students thought they increased reading motivation and enjoyment by reading simple books, as evidenced by the following example excerpts:

“Reading stories at an easy level first makes me want to read more books at a higher level of difficulty. I want to finish reading each book as it challenges me to complete comprehension questions after reading.” [S5]

“It was my first time reading graded readers. I tried reading books at an easy level first and then continue reading at higher levels. I found ER fun and offered me a new reading experience unlike before.” [S3]

S1, S5, and S6 also added that they preferred reading short and simple stories as it helped them enjoy reading more than before. Having the freedom to choose their books of interest was also mentioned by S2: “I enjoyed choosing stories I liked.” However, S2 noted that he was sometimes busy with other activities and had little time to do ER.

(b). Students' Self-Evaluation of Their English Skills Improvement

This section shows students' responses to the questionnaire items that asked them to evaluate their improvement in English skills after doing online ER with Xreading.

TABLE 3
STUDENTS' SELF-EVALUATION ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR ENGLISH SKILLS (N=8)

Statements	M	S.D.
1. General English ability	3.88	1.36
2. Reading speed	4.00	0.76
3. Reading comprehension	3.88	0.99
4. Vocabulary	4.13	1.13
5. Pronunciation	3.88	0.83
6. Listening	3.38	0.74
7. Grammatical knowledge	3.25	1.16
Total mean	3.77	1.01

Table 3 indicates that, overall, students believed that ER had a positive effect on their English language skills ($M = 3.77$), as evidenced by the highest mean score for vocabulary development ($M = 4.13$), followed by reading speed ($M = 4.00$), reading comprehension, general English ability, and pronunciation ($M = 3.88$), respectively. However, improving grammatical knowledge received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.25$).

Students' comments from the interview were consistent with the above findings in that all students mentioned the improvement in vocabulary knowledge from doing online ER with Xreading.

“I could learn new words from reading and use them in conversations.” [S1]

“Doing ER helps me learn word meanings and how to interpret them based on the story's context. There were a lot of unknown words that I could learn while reading.” [S3]

All students also agreed that ER helped improve reading speed as they could read more fluently without worrying too much about looking up words in the dictionary, and they tended to read books at a manageable level. Besides, four students (S2, S3, S4, and S5) thought that the audio feature allowed them to learn correct pronunciation and improve listening skills. S2 also stated that he could improve his speaking ability by using knowledge of vocabulary gained from reading: “I took some notes of unknown words to search for their meaning after reading, and I could use this knowledge in speaking more fluently.” S1 added that ER helped expand his knowledge of familiar contents he had read before. Interestingly, S8 felt she could gain some morals from reading children's stories, which helped increase awareness of such morals.

C. Students' Attitudes Toward Reading Graded Readers on Xreading

This section presents findings regarding students' perceptions of their experiences using Xreading to read graded readers online, addressing RQ 3: What are students' attitudes toward engaging in online extensive reading using Xreading?

(a). Students' Preferred Reading Modes and Genres

When asked whether they preferred reading physical graded readers at the library or using Xreading on their phones, tablets, or computers, most students (62.5%) favored reading with Xreading on their electronic devices. Only three students (37.5%) opted to read physical books at the library. The interview data provide example reasons for students' preference mode of reading as follows.

“I prefer Xreading because it is convenient to access books anywhere. I can read whenever I have time.” [S2]

“I think using Xreading is more convenient than borrowing books from the library.” [S4]

“I like reading physical books as I can feel the pages and enjoy looking at the story's illustrations.” [S7]

Additionally, all students reported that they preferred to read graded readers on various topics instead of reading about their field of study.

Regarding their preference for continuing to read on Xreading, six students (75%) indicated in the short answer question in the questionnaire and in the interviews that they would like to keep reading on Xreading as shown in the following excerpts.

“I want to continue reading on Xreading because it has helped enhance my language skills and use them in my studies and daily life.” [S3]

“I want to keep using Xreading since my English skills have improved significantly. It is very hard to find a website like this that offers various difficulty levels to challenge my reading ability.” [S5]

However, S2 mentioned that he wanted to discontinue reading on Xreading as he felt he could focus better on physical books than on a screen. S7 also felt more comfortable reading physical books, so she hesitated to continue reading with Xreading.

(b). Factors for Selecting Graded Readers

Based on students' responses to the questionnaire item asking them to reflect on the factors they considered when selecting books on Xreading, seven factors were mentioned in order of popularity, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that all students first focused on the book title when choosing a book. The second most popular factor was the difficulty level, with 87.5% of students choosing it. Students also found the book cover and genre as influencing factors, each receiving 75% popularity, followed by the number of words and the summary. The least popular factor was the ratings and reviews from other readers, with only one student considering it. These findings suggest that, for these students, the visual representation of the books and the difficulty level are influential factors in choosing graded readers.

TABLE 4
THE TOP SEVEN FACTORS FOR GRADED READER SELECTION

Factors	n	Percent of cases
1. The book title	8	100%
2. The difficulty level	7	87.5%
3. The book cover	6	75%
4. The genre	6	75%
5. The number of words in the book	5	62.5%
6. The summary	3	37.5%
7. The rating and reviews from readers	1	12.5%

The qualitative data reveal similar findings as all students stated that they first looked at the book title first as shown in the following excerpts.

“I first looked at the book title to see what the story is about.” [S1]

“I usually consider interesting titles first before choosing each book.” [S2]

Additionally, S3, S4, and S8 mentioned that after reading the book title, they also paid attention to the difficulty level and the word count to ensure they could complete reading the whole book and comprehend the story.

“I also looked at the number of words in the book because if the story is too long, I will not be able to focus my attention on reading.” [S8]

(c). Students' Attitudes Toward Advantages of Xreading

TABLE 5
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ADVANTAGES OF XREADING (N=8)

Advantages of Xreading	M	S.D.
1. There are many kinds of graded readers on Xreading that I can choose from.	4.38	0.52
2. I can read anywhere, anytime.	4.50	0.53
3. The Xreading website is easy to use.	4.13	0.64
4. It's easy to search for books.	4.00	0.00
5. I can see book ratings and reviews.	4.13	0.35
6. I can check my reading data (e.g., number of books I've read, my reading speed, quiz scores, etc.)	4.25	0.89
7. I often listen to the audio narration while reading.	3.38	1.30
Total mean	4.11	0.76

According to Table 5, the average mean score ($M = 4.11$) indicates that students generally held a positive attitude toward the advantage of Xreading. The primary benefit is being able to read at any location and time, suggesting that accessibility is highly valued ($M = 4.50$). Students also enjoyed choosing a wide range of books available on Xreading ($M = 4.38$). Being able to check reading data was also beneficial ($M = 4.25$), followed by the ability to read book

reviews and ratings ($M = 4.13$). They also found the website convenient for searching for books ($M = 4.00$). However, the audio narration feature while reading received the lowest rating ($M = 3.38$).

The interview data provide similar findings as all students noted Xreading's ease of use, its wide selection of books, accessibility, and compatibility on various devices. The audio and quiz functions were also mentioned to be beneficial for learning word pronunciation and checking reading progress, as shown in the following excerpts:

“Xreading is an easy-to-use platform with various reading options to allow reading anywhere.” [S1]

“Taking the quiz after reading helps me concentrate on the story.” [S8]

“I often listen to the audio narration while reading because it helps me feel relaxed.” [S4]

(d). *Students' Attitudes Toward Difficulties When Using Xreading*

TABLE 6
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD DIFFICULTIES WHEN USING XREADING (N=8)

Advantages of Xreading	M	S.D.
1. I am not sure what graded readers to choose.	3.25	0.71
2. There is not enough variety of graded readers that I'm interested in to choose from.	2.88	0.83
3. Most of the graded readers on Xreading are too difficult for me.	2.75	0.46
4. It's easy to search for books.	2.75	1.04
5. The book quizzes are too difficult.	2.88	0.35
6. I have problems with the Internet connection.	2.88	1.13
7. I often experience system errors.	2.13	0.64
8. Xreading functionalities (e.g., adding books, taking quizzes, changing the audio speed, etc.) are difficult to use.	2.75	0.89
9. Reading graded readers on Xreading uses too much of my cellular data.	1.50	0.53
10. I have eyestrain when reading on Xreading.	3.25	0.71
Total mean	2.70	0.88

According to Table 6, the overall mean score of 2.70 suggests that students viewed the degree of these problems as neutral, meaning they did not encounter several difficulties. The highest-rated difficulties are being uncertain in selecting graded readers to read and experiencing eyestrain when reading ($M = 3.25$). Other issues regarding the lack of variety of the graded readers, the difficulty level of the graded readers and Xreading features, and internet connection problems were rated between the mean scores of 2.75 and 2.88, indicating that students did not find those issues problematic. Students strongly disagreed and disagreed with items 9 and 7, suggesting that reading on Xreading did not use too much of their mobile data ($M = 1.50$), and they did not often experience system errors while using Xreading ($M = 2.13$).

The interview data indicate that students mentioned having few technical problems in using Xreading, except some students experienced eyestrain when reading on the screen, which corresponded to their questionnaire responses:

“I did not encounter any problems. It is very easy to use on my tablet.” [S1]

“Sometimes the internet connection is not stable resulting in slow book download... I occasionally experienced eyestrain when reading.” [S4]

Overall, students were satisfied with the design and functionality of Xreading. However, some students suggested that the website include additional functions to save favorite books, add attractive icons, and offer a wider selection of contemporary books.

(e). *Students' Attitudes Toward the ER Club*

The interview data provide insightful information on students' views on their experiences participating in the ER club. All students perceived the club establishment as useful for beginner readers since most had just transferred from other disciplines to English. The positive impacts of the club that were frequently mentioned by the students include (1) enhancing their reading motivation, confidence, and skills, (2) improving vocabulary knowledge and other language skills essential for their studies, (3) developing better reading fluency and concentration, (4) building a reading habit and spending free time effectively, and (5) having the opportunity to use new reading for pleasure platform. The excerpts below illustrate students' attitudes toward the ER club.

“Participating in the ER club is very valuable for my time because I can practice reading more books in a fun way and improve other language skills. I am proud of myself for finishing more books.” [S7]

“This is a new experience for me because I have not read graded readers online before. I find it really relaxing because the books I choose are not too difficult to read. Thank you for recommending this activity” [S8]

Students also offered helpful suggestions for developing and expanding the ER club by recruiting more interested readers from other schools, providing a reading competition or rewards to motivate readers, and arranging more book discussions. Three students recommended integrating ER assignments in a reading course to earn credits, which may increase reading motivation, while the rest felt that it might not encourage intrinsic motivation if students are required to do ER. Nevertheless, all students wish the online ER program to be available for students to practice reading in the future.

V. DISCUSSION

The overall results indicated that students possessed positive attitudes toward reading in English and participating in online ER via Xreading. These results can be discussed in relation to the following aspects.

First, students' positive attitudes toward reading in English might explain their willingness and motivation to participate in the ER club. Their responses to the questionnaire and interviews showed that they viewed reading in English as a vital skill for their studies and expressed a strong desire to enhance their reading abilities. This finding aligns with Yamashita's (2013) study, which indicated that Japanese EFL learners had positive attitudes toward reading after participating in an ER program, showing that "positive attitudes are likely to shape motivation" (Bui & Macalister, 2021, p. 4). The results of the present study also align with Porkaew and Fongpaiboon's (2018) research examining the effects of a 15-week ER program on Thai EFL university students' reading attitudes, using Yamashita's (2013) reading attitude questionnaire, which revealed that after exposure to ER, students demonstrated positive attitudes and reported "positive beliefs about the intellectual benefits" of ER (p. 215).

Regarding students' positive attitudes toward ER and Xreading, the results of the present study are in accordance with the findings gained from Thai university students investigated by Puripunyanich (2021) in several aspects. Overall, students in both studies expressed positive attitudes toward ER. Three similar reasons emerged for these attitudes: (1) they felt more motivated to read graded readers because stories are simple, (2) they preferred shorter texts because they are easier to read, and (3) reading graded readers enhanced their enjoyment of reading compared to before. Students also showed positive attitudes toward participating in online ER through Xreading, emphasizing its benefits for enhancing English language skills, particularly vocabulary, reading speed, and comprehension. In both studies, Xreading was regarded as advantageous due to its convenience, easy access, broad selection of books, and progress monitoring feature. The two main difficulties of uncertainty in choosing graded readers and experiencing eyestrain when reading on screens were similarly reported. The issues of eye fatigue from reading online and being occupied with other life activities reported by some students were also consistent with Bui and Macalister's (2021) findings with Vietnamese university students. Overall findings indicate that university EFL students appreciated the benefits of engaging in online ER. Thus, implementing the ER program was encouraged in university-level reading programs (Wisaijorn, 2017; Puripunyanich, 2021).

Finally, students expressed their satisfaction with participating in the ER club, which may stem from the nature of voluntary reading and unassessed activities. This finding aligns with previous research on implementing ER as a stand-alone activity, such as a book club café (Speer & Lara, 2017) or an online book club (Norman, 2021), where students felt no pressure while reading and had opportunities to choose ER materials that matched their preferences. Learners in these studies perceived the ER club positively, indicating that this form of ER program has the potential to be implemented and sustained through integration with online reading platforms, as evidenced by studies showing successful use of Xreading in developing reading attitudes and skills and supporting their language learning (Harimurti et al., 2021; Janah et al., 2023). However, the present study revealed that two students were reluctant to continue ER, and some of them suggested including ER in a reading course. This aspect should be considered for future classroom-based ER implementation, as suggested by Robb and Ewert (2024) that "there is some evidence that intrinsic motivation to read can develop from initial required reading" and "extrinsic motivators are often required" (p. 298).

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study investigated EFL students' attitudes toward reading in English and their experiences with ER using Xreading. The analysis of data collected from the reading attitude questionnaire and individual interviews led to the following conclusions: (1) students had positive attitudes toward reading in English, although they recognized the challenges involved; (2) students responded positively to using Xreading for their ER assignments in the club, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing English skills, reading motivation, and enjoyment; and (3) the ER club provided a valuable opportunity for them to engage with graded readers on an online platform, allowing them the freedom to choose books that suited their interests and proficiency levels. These findings contribute to implementing online ER as a stand-alone program, utilizing the Xreading platform to cultivate reading habits by promoting genuine enjoyment for motivated readers. Although the ER club in this study was in its early stage, its initial successful implementation with a small group of EFL readers may offer valuable insights for practitioners considering the introduction of this type of ER in their institutions, in addition to the ER required in an intensive reading program, as a pathway to fostering a community of successful and happy readers.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The present study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, due to the small sample size of only eight students, the reported perceptions of ER may not represent the views of English major students at the university or in other contexts. Thus, future studies should involve larger samples to gain more comprehensive perspectives. Another limitation is that the duration of ER in this study was only 10 weeks, which may not be sufficient to effectively monitor reading progress. Consequently, future research should consider extending the reading duration to at least 15 weeks or incorporating ER assignments into a reading course to boost motivation as students' progress is graded. Lastly, the

study primarily focused on assessing students' attitudes and did not measure improvement in other variables such as vocabulary, comprehension, and reading rate. Therefore, it would be beneficial for future studies to further explore these variables in relation to students' language proficiency to better understand the impacts of online ER on their attitudes.

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