Using Reading Logs to Develop EFL Undergraduate Students' Reading Comprehension Ability: A Case Study

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Abstract: *It is important for pre-service teacher students majoring in English language to elevate their reading skill for their professional development. Reading logs is one of the reading comprehension tools to empower their reading ability. This case study research objectives were to inspect the effects of using reading logs to develop undergraduate students' reading comprehension abilities, and to study the students' opinion level toward using reading logs to develop their reading comprehension abilities. The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting sixty-five, 3rd year English major students studying in the second semester of the 2022 academic year, faculty of Education, Lampang Rajabhat University. The research tools included a 20-hour lesson plan, a 45-item pretest and posttest, and a 10-item questionnaire focusing on students' opinion toward learning activities. The research revealed that the students' posttest scores were higher than their pretest scores with the statistical significance at the level of 0.5. The students' agreement level also showed that using reading logs helps developing their reading ability at the high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.31). The results lead to the conclusion that using reading logs in reading activity promotes students' reading comprehension ability.*

Keywords: EFL, Extensive Reading, Reading Ability, Reading Comprehension, Reading Logs

Introduction

Undergraduate students need to develop their reading comprehension abilities to elevate their reading comprehension abilities and to gain more knowledge in their own professions. This target brings universities in Thailand to develop their students' literacy skills to reach the government policy stated in the 20-year national strategy in education (2018-2037). This policy focuses on improving students' learning processes to accommodate changes in the 21st century by encouraging lifelong learning and development of learning skills (National Strategy Secretariat Office, 2018).

Focusing on undergraduate Thai students' reading comprehension problems, recent papers showed that many students had problems in vocabulary recognition, topic and main idea selection, sharing opinions after reading independently, and reading skill application in other related reading task appropriately (Thongwichit, 2018, Suwannaroa, 2021). These problems might be because they lacked their opportunities in the out-of-classroom practice, the teacher-center learning atmosphere, the unattractive teaching media, the passive teaching materials, the out-of-date reading texts, the inappropriate students' reading training technique, and the students' low attitude toward reading English assignments (Chomchaiya, 2014; Hayikaleng, Nair & Krishnasamy, 2016; Jaengho et al., 2021).These problems also occurred among undergraduate students in Lampang Rajabhat University, a university in the north of Thailand which led instructors to try to solve their problems. One approach to improve students' reading comprehension ability is encouraging them to participate in their reading task practice actively by using reading logs in their extensive reading assignments.

Reading logs or reading diaries is one of the accountable teaching materials to engage students with their reading assignments. It helps students to improve their reading comprehension in depth, especially encouraging students to reflect their understanding while reading through writing. Reading logs emphasizes readers to connect their background knowledge to the new knowledge while reading. It also provides opportunities for readers to share their opinions after reading. Moreover, it encourages students

to evaluate their understanding after reading (Lyutaya, 2011; Aulia, 2019), to see their own reading progress (Patin, 2009), and to control their own reading habit to reach their reading goals (Salsabila et al., 2021).

Reading logs can be applied in many reading comprehension approaches, especially in extensive reading activities. The use of extensive reading comes from the concept of socio cultural and the Zone of Proximal Development which both concepts focus on the role of friends' and teachers' scaffolding to encourage students' extra time reading practice. It also focuses on the four essential elements to promote students' reading skills: reader, teacher, text and classroom community (Sun, 2002). Extensive reading encourages students to do their reading tasks by themselves, and it helps students to focus on their language study on their own. The teacher needs to add some activities to encourage and monitor students' engagement in their reading, such as, doing reading logs, reporting students' reading, and making a group discussion (Harmer, 2015). To accomplish the reading comprehension goal, it is important for teachers to choose relevant content to the classroom texts and choose suitable level to students' ability (Scrivener, 2011). Without appropriate preparation, the extensive reading activities will also take long time in training and will gain low effectiveness outcomes (Wisaijorn, 2015).

Studies on using reading logs in extensive reading have showed that reading logs empowered students' reading comprehension ability. Wisaijorn (2017) studied results of using extensive reading among 51 EFL undergraduate students in Thailand by spending 15 weeks in their extensive reading together with doing their own reading logs. The pretest-posttest results indicated that there was less development among the high reading ability group, but more development occurred among the low reading ability group. The extensive reading program conducted in this research helped students to solve their reading comprehension problem, especially among the 1st year students. The questionnaire survey result showed that students liked the extensive reading program; they were also able to apply extensive reading to other language skills.

Widyarini and Prastani (2020) studied undergraduate students' reading skill and reading interest focusing on the use of reading logs in their reading assignments. The posttest score indicated that students' average reading score was in the 'B' level which indicated that students gained more development after joining the reading program.

There were some challenges occurred in using reading logs assignments. Dincer (2020) inspected the extensive reading program by using reading logs for EFL students outside of the classroom. The reading program needed students to do their weekly reading log completion for three semesters. Although the research result was successful, some complaints occurred. According to the result, the students developed their reading and writing skills. The reading log encouraged their reading practice and motivated them to read and study language. While the complaints indicated negative opinions, such as, the reading program were boresome, the tasks were not for enjoyment, etc. Suggestions to solve problems were as followed; the assignment design should encourage students' motivation outside of the classroom, the teacher should monitor for their constructive feedback toward their reading tasks, and the teacher should consider some appropriate websites or technology media to encourage students' involvement and participation.

Moreover, Salsabila, Sawaso, Ratri &Utmawati (2021) studied the students' perceptions and experiences with using reading logs in students' extensive reading. The data collected from using questionnaires to find out students' perspectives about extensive reading, the benefits and the difficulties when doing the extensive reading activities using reading logs. Students' reflections indicated that they had learnt the value of life while reading. These reflections showed that they engaged in the usefulness of the input they received from the reading text they read. Teachers were able to monitor students' reading progress and know students' point of view from the books they read. Using reading logs also makes it easier to report their reading results. Meanwhile, using reading logs in extensive reading causes difficulty for some

students to manage their free time in reading, they also reported that they had difficulty understanding the text by themselves.

Reading logs brings benefits for students to improve their reading ability and encourages their reading habits. It also shows negative reflections from students in joining this reading activity. To bridge students' learning experiences with outside knowledge, it is important for teachers to provide opportunities for students to practice their reading comprehension abilities together with the use of reading logs. Focusing on the benefits of reading logs in the extensive reading approach, this study aims to inspect the effects of using reading logs in students' extensive reading assignments by comparing the students' pretest-posttest scores, and to find the students' opinions level toward the use of reading logs in their extensive reading tasks.

Methods and Materials

As there were limited research papers on reading logs among Thai undergraduate students, this research was conducted to find effects of using reading logs in extensive reading among students studying in the north of Thailand under the research question "Does the use of reading logs in students' extensive reading tasks helpful for students to elevate their posttest reading scores?" and "What are students' attitudes toward using reading logs in their extensive reading program?"

This quantitative research employed a one-group pretest-posttest, pre-experimental research design. This case study research limitation focused on the target group of sixty-five- 3rd year English major students studying in the second semester of the 2022 academic year in Lampang Rajabhat University, selected by using purposive sampling technique.

Before the research materials were conducted, the students' learning information was gathered by analyzing their midterm test results together with some classroom conversation on finding how to elevate their English reading comprehension scores. Then it brought the following materials:

- Five lesson plans focusing on reading comprehension under the northern Thai local wisdom theme, each plan consisted of 2-hour reading practice in classroom and 2-hour students' independent reading out of the classroom which totally 20 hours in practice. Students practiced their reading comprehension technique in the classroom with the teacher and spent2 hours in their reading comprehension practice out of the classroom by using Google Classroom. After that they needed to do their reading log assignment for each reading passage and complete the after reading exercise. Each exercise consisted of 8 multiple choice items and 1 open-ended question. The lesson plans were inspected by 3 experts in English language teaching, assessment and evaluation, and linguistics. A 5-rating scales technique was used in the lesson plan inspection and revealed the average scale of 4.82 with 0.17 standard deviation.

- A 45-item pretest-posttest consisted of 40 multiple choice items and 5 open-ended short answer questions focused on 5 reading passages in the content of northern Thai local wisdom. The paralleled content two tests,pretest and posttest, were inspected by 3 experts:English language teaching, assessment and evaluation, and linguistics for the test content and the test purpose. A 5-rating scale technique was used in the test inspection. The average scale for the pretest inspection was 4.92 with the standard deviation of 0.13 and the posttest was 4.97 with the standard deviation of 0.10 respectively.

- A questionnaire on students' opinion toward using reading logs in their extensive reading task. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items on a 5-rating scale with content of self-assessment. Students checked their reading ability development observed by themselves and shared their opinions toward the extensive reading task.The questionnaire was inspected by using a 5-rating

scale technique. The average scale for the inspection was 4.88 with the standard deviation of 0.10.

Data Collection

The data collection was conducted by using 5-lesson plans including the reading passages, reading logs and the reading comprehension exercises, a pretest-posttest, and a questionnaire. The following steps were used in collecting the data:

The extensive reading program orientation: The teacher informed students about the extensive reading program including the objectives, the channel to submit their reading assignments, the reading assignments scheduled, and the evaluation. The orientation was made before the extensive reading program started. Sixty-five undergraduate students attended the meeting. The teacher informed the students that after they finished the 2-hour class meeting in their reading comprehension lesson in normal classroom, they needed to spend 2 hours in their own extensive reading assignments out of the classroom by using Google Classroom on their own with relevant content of each topic. The 5 topics were about northern Thai local wisdom, as followed: Legend, Local Food, Festivals, Northern Thai Recreation, and Northern Thai Architecture. The teacher informed students about the reading log and reading comprehension exercise submission dateline. After the orientation, students spent 80 minutes doing the pretest. The test consisted of 40 multiple choice test items and 5 short answer questions. The total points for the test were 50 points.

Reading comprehension program: Students attended 2 hours in reading comprehension normal classroom every week. In the reading class, the teacher demonstrated reading comprehension techniques to practice students in their reading passages. Then students spent their 2 hours in their self-studying on the reading passages assigned in Google Classroom and completed the reading logs and the assignments. The teacher monitored students' tasks by follow-up their tasks through Google Classroom and did some conversations about the reading tasks in their normal classroom.

Reading comprehension evaluation: The evaluation was made by 1) using reading logs to check students' understanding in the reading content, 2) using the after reading exercises in Google Classroom, and 3) using the posttest after students finished the 5 reading topics.

The reading logs assignment encouraged students to do the open-ended questions about they finished each reading passage. It focused on sharing their opinions toward the story, finding more meaning of vocabulary in the list, and summarizing the story.

The reading comprehension exercise in each after reading assignment composed of 8-multiple choice questions to check students' reading comprehension ability and 1 open-ended question to emphasize them share their opinions toward the story.

The posttest consisted of 40 multiple choice test items and 5 short answer questions. The total points for the test were 50 points with relevant content to the pretest. The time allowed to finish the test was 80 minutes.

Finding students' opinion toward the extensive reading class: After students completed the posttest, students were requested to complete a 10-item questionnaire focused on students' self-assessment and their opinions toward the program. Open-ended questions for more opinions in detail were added, such as, the learning activities, the reading passage contents, the assessment and evaluation, and other opinions.

Data Analysis

To find the development of the reading program, the data was analyzed by using percentage and pair-sample dependent statistic t-test in the pretest-posttest scores. To find the level of students' opinions toward the extensive reading program, arithmetic means and standard deviation were used in analyzing the data. Students' answers in the open-ended questions helped for more detailed about the extensive reading program.

Results

After the 20-hour of attending extensive reading program excluded the pretest-posttest, the results were shown as follows:

Students' reading comprehension ability: The research results were shown in 2 sub-topics to indicate students' development: students' extensive reading comprehension scores during the program and the pretest-posttest comparison scores.

- Students' extensive reading comprehension scores during the program: During the 20-hour extensive reading program, 65 students did 5 reading comprehension exercises and completed their reading logs assignment. Each reading passages exercise contained 10 points which compared to 100% for each exercise. The full 50 points then were compared with the full score of 100%in total. Table 1showed that in the full scores of 100, these students were able to reach the average score of 65.48 as shown in table 1.

Table 1: The average scores of 5 extensive reading comprehension exercises

Students (persons)	Exercise 1 score (100%)	Exercise2 score (100%)	Exercise 3 score (100%)	Exercise 4 score (100%)	Exercise 5 score (100%)	Total average score (100%)
65	66.62	64.46	65.23	65.23	65.85	65.48

- Students' pretest-posttest comparison scores: The pretest was used before students attended their extensive reading program, and the posttest was used after they completed the extensive reading program. Each test contained 50 points in full scores and compared to the percentage of 100. The average score of the 65 students gained from their pretest was 51.23 and the average score of 65 students gained from their posttest was 72.40. Table 2 represented the percentage of the average score of the pretest and the posttest as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Pretest and posttest average scores

Students (persons)	Pretest score (100%)	Posttest score (100%)
65	51.23	72.40

To test for statistical differences of the scores which these students gained between the pretest and the posttest, the t-test pair sample dependent was applied to test for statistical significance. The results showed that the average pretest score was 51.23 with the standard deviation of 6.72 and the average posttest score was 72.40 with the standard deviation of 6.20 respectively. The average difference between the pretest and the posttest score was 21.17 with the standard deviation of 5.58, and the t-test score was 30.60. The t-test score result indicated that the posttest score was significantly higher than the pretest score at the statistic level of 0.5, as shown in table 3.

Table 3: The t-test statistic result

Test	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{D}$	SD_D	t	Sig. (1-tailed)
Pretest	51.23	6.72				
Posttest	72.40	6.20	21.17	5.58	30.60	0.00

*p<0.5

Students' opinions toward using reading logs in extensive reading program: A10-item questionnaire was separated into 2 parts: students' self-assessment toward using reading logs in extensive reading (item 1-6), and the students' opinion toward the program (item 7-10). The results showed that the students' overall opinion indicated the agreement level at the high level ($\bar{x} = 4.31$, SD = 0.1). The three highest agreement levels were "The extensive reading text is relevant to the classroom text." ($\bar{x} = 4.69$, SD = 0.52), "The reading logs help me improve my reading comprehension ability." ($\bar{x} = 4.51$, SD = 0.56), and "I can elevate my reading skill in finding the text main idea." ($\bar{x} = 4.51$, SD = 0.56) respectively, as showed in table 4.

Table 4: The agreement level of using reading log in extensive reading program

Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	Agreement level	Ranking
1. I can improve my reading ability in finding meaning in context.	4.43	0.61	high	3
2. I can elevate my reading skill in finding the text main idea.	4.51	0.56	highest	2
3. I can write answers in the reading text exercise correctly.	4.04	0.32	high	7
4. I can express my opinions toward the text appropriately.	4.26	0.47	high	5
5. I can summarize after reading.	4.17	0.54	high	6
6. I can use my background knowledge to understand the texts.	4.17	0.51	high	6
7. The extensive reading text is relevant to the classroom text.	4.69	0.52	highest	1
8. The timeframe is suitable forextensive reading practice.	4.03	0.39	high	8
9. The reading logs help me improve my reading comprehension ability.	4.51	0.56	highest	2
10. The reading exercises help me to improve my reading comprehension ability.	4.38	0.6	high	4
Total average	4.31	0.1	high	

Some answers for the open-ended questions indicated positive answers, such as, "Reading logs helps me understand the reading content more.", "Reading logs helps me understand more vocabulary.", and "Extensive reading program promotes the use of my free time."

Discussion

Reading logs is an essential learning tool to promote undergraduate students in their reading comprehension in detail. During the extensive reading practice, students can use reading logs as their tools to train their reading skill independently. They can also practice their critical thinking skill through sharing their opinion in the reading logs. This case study presents the effects of using reading logs to promote undergraduate students' reading comprehension abilities, after students attended the 20-hour extensive reading practice program.

After the extensive reading program, the average posttest score is 72.40 and the average pretest score is 51.23. The research finding indicates that students' posttest score is significantly higher than the pretest score at the level of 0.5. The research results clearly indicate that reading can elevate students' reading comprehension scores. Focusing on the benefits of reading logs in this extensive reading program, it encourages students to develop their reading comprehension skills in many ways. Firstly, it monitors students to practice their reading skill independently. Secondly, it encourages students to participate in their reading tasks through the assignment's completion. Thirdly, it promotes students' reading comprehension skill in the whole and in detail while reading the tasks (Rakana, 2017, Widyarini and Prastanti, 2020; Salsabila et al., 2021 & Patin, 2009).

Focusing on the extensive reading program, it is an important approach to promote students' reading comprehension. Extensive reading brings benefits for students in their language learning as follows: 1) it promotes students' reading skill and increases students' reading rate, 2) it provides opportunities for

students to improve their reading strategies, 3) it increases students' knowledge in vocabulary, speaking skills, and writing skills. 4) It explores readers to the real world, 5) it promotes readers' aesthetic in reading activities, and 6) it helps readers to have good reading habits (Syamsuddin, 2021; Renandya, Jacobs, 2002 & Harmer 2015).

Furthermore, students' overall opinion toward using reading logs in the extensive reading program reveals the high level of their agreement. Reading logs is a tool to monitor students' reading task and it contributes to students' motivation in doing their reading assignments. The reading log is a clear evidence to show students' participation in their reading activities. It provides a chance for students to show their understanding and feedback toward the text and the reading activity. Students are also able to apply knowledge gained from their reading to other tasks (Aulia, 2019; Patin, 2009 & Lyataya, 2011).

Finally, the teacher's role in monitoring students' reading participation is important to achieve the reading activity target. During the reading program, some students might miss their assignments. As this program is made both in the classroom and out of the classroom, the follow-up activity is essential to connect students with their tasks. It can be made in the classroom by using the conversation about the reading tasks, asking students to do the discussion in the classroom, checking students' reading logs and their reading assignment, and encouraging students to complete their tasks (Salsabila et al., 2021; Aulia, 2019).

Conclusion

This case study presents the finding that reading logs is a useful teaching material for teachers to encourage their students to engage in their extensive reading task with the use of reading logs. With reading logs, students can record their reading, summarize the text concept, search for more information, and share their opinions about the text. For teachers, reading logs shows students' participation and engagement in their language learning. It provides students' information about how they do their independent reading in the weekly assignments, and how they develop their language skills both reading and writing. The teacher's feedback is also important for students to improve their works.

Recommendations

Although the research results are good, there are some recommendations for conducting further research and application for different implementations. First, a 5-weekly or 20-hour reading program is not enough time for most students to successfully meet the reading target. To meet the success of this program, the training time should be longer with successive manner and continually. Second, some text contents should be close to students' daily living. It would be better for students to connect their knowledge with new ideas represented in the reading texts. Last, teachers' role in monitoring students' reading log is essential to connect them with their reading task. It is not easy for students to complete both their reading and their reading log assignments. It takes time for students to read and write. Follow-up techniques with many channels of communication are needed to apply for the task completion.

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APPENDIX

Appendix: Reading Log 1 (Example)

Title: _____

Date: _____ Time spent in reading: _____

Main Characters:

1)_____ 2) _____

3)_____ 4)_____

Setting:

Time: _____

Place: _____

Lesson Learn from the story:

_____

_____

Vocabulary list:

Words	Parts of Speech	Definitions