Research and development of the ASEAN cartoon lesson using the communicative language teaching approach and the common European framework of reference for languages

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Abstract

Cartoon pictures help to encourage students' attention and bring joy to learning English. Cartoon lessons efficiently support students' English language achievements. This research aimed to develop the Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) cartoon lesson using the communicative language teaching approach and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages for secondary school students. The ASEAN cartoon lesson was used to teach M.2 students for 22 hours. Then, interviews, a multiple-choice test, questionnaires and focus group discussions were used to collect data that were analysed by content analysis, descriptive statistics, a relative gain score and a dependent sample *t*-test. The research findings indicated that the cartoon lesson displayed very good efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, the students displayed developments in their language learning. This result will hopefully become a reference for English teachers to use to enrich students' learning.

Keywords: English, ASEAN, CLT, CEFR, cartoon.

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1. Introduction

English is an international language that is widely used and it has become an essential skill for learners in the 21st century. The Ministry of Education in Thailand requires all students studying at the basic education level to learn and practise English skills in order to gain fluent communicative ability. This is undertaken by using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for course design, measurement and evaluation, learning goals and teacher development. The CEFR specifies that the students who graduate secondary level was A2, way-stage or pre-intermediate should be familiar with frequently used expressions and should be able to express themselves in everyday situations (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2014).

Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that the communicative language teaching (CLT) or the communicative approach is an approach to language teaching that emphasises interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. CLT is usually characterised as a broad approach to teaching, rather than as a teaching method with a clearly defined set of classroom practices. Nunan (1991) defines a list of general principles or features of CLT. This includes: 1) an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language; 2) the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation; 3) the provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself; 4) an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning and 5) an attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom. This teaching focuses on students' ability to use the language correctly to communicate in different situations and achieve the purpose of communication (Klanrit, 2014). The Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 expects students to have a good attitude towards foreign languages, especially, English, and expects students to be able to communicate in various situations. In addition, students should also be able to use foreign languages in knowledge searches, careers or higher-level studies. In addition, these skills also offer insight into the stories and cultures of the world community and creatively convey ideas and culture to the world (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2010).

In 2015, the government specified a policy to prepare the Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) community. The objective was to prepare the educational infrastructure of both public and private sectors. Moreover, this policy was also to provide learning activities, expand relations and cooperation in education as well as makes continuously changes in education together with ASEAN member countries. Furthermore, the policy stated that students should enhance their skills in English and have a better understanding of countries in the region. As a result, ASEAN information is important knowledge for Thai students (Ministry of Education, 2014). This has prompted English teachers to create teaching materials for ASEAN learning activities. Malithong (2007) explains that the selection of teaching materials to be used for teaching effectively is paramount. Instructors must set objectives in choosing the materials for teaching. The materials need to relate to the content and aims of the lessons. In addition, they need to be valid, interesting and also provide the most effective teaching.

Previous empirical studies have indicated that cartoon pictures help to attract students' interest and motivate students in learning English, as well as help to improve students' vocabulary mastery (Fatkhurroman, 2013). In other words, cartoons help to develop students' achievements and develop students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English. Sidabutar (2014) is concerned about the effect of teaching media on students' achievements in speaking. This study was conducted with two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was taught using English comics while the control group was taught with written texts. The results showed that teaching speaking through the use of English comics as the media of choice had more significant effects than not using English comics. In addition, Hasianta, Salam & Bunau (2014) investigated the use of comic strips to promote students' comprehension of recounting texts. The results indicated that the use of comic strips promotes student comprehension of recounting texts. Furthermore, Yi-Ting (2014) investigated the use of mixed methods embedded design in developing students' English proficiency

scores. The students chose English songs, English cartoons, English videogames and English comic books as their most preferred learning resources. The results indicated that all students looked excited and appeared to be paying attention in class during the first 4 weeks. The intervention group's English proficiency scores significantly improved after receiving the supplementary instruction while the matched regular class scores actually declined. Moreover, a number of research studies have confirmed that cartoons or comics advance the development of student learning (Ariyawatwong, 2008; Chaiya, 2012; Ketwong, 2007; Phoomkong, 2008; Sornwichai, 2007; Wichianpat, 2013).

As a result, the researcher in this study has tried to create the ASEAN cartoon lesson using the CLT approach and the CEFR for improving students' skills and achievements in English.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The participants were 23 Mattayomsuksa 2 students, who are secondary students at the Napaen School within the Loei Primary Educational Service Area, Office 2, Thailand. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample for one class in semester two of the 2015 academic year.

2.2. Measures

The interview form was applied to study the students' learning problems when encountering ASEAN information while the five-level rating scale questionnaires were designed to inspect the ASEAN cartoon lesson's appropriateness and check participants' opinions. The multiple-choice tests were administered both pre-test and post-test. In addition, the focus group discussions were used to reflect the students' learning when finishing the ASEAN cartoon lesson in the class. All research instruments were inspected by specialists before undergoing a psychometric properties inspection. The result of psychometric properties inspection was the strong evidence showing content validity, difficulty, discrimination index and reliability of the research instrument.

2.3. Procedure and design

A four-phase research and development design was employed for this study. First, 10 students were interviewed about the learning problems when encountering ASEAN information, their needs identification and the guidelines for the development of English learning materials. Next, the data from the first phase were analysed so that the ASEAN cartoon lesson could be created. Before using the ASEAN cartoon lesson, specialists inspected the cartoon for content validity and appropriateness. Then, the one group pre-test and post-test design was applied for a quasi-experiment. The students were tested before the ASEAN cartoon lesson was administered in the class for 22 hours. When finishing the learning activities, the students completed the post-test. Finally, the rating scale questionnaires were applied to evaluate the students' learning procedures by using the ASEAN cartoon lesson together with the focus group discussion for reflecting on the students' learning and gathering their ideas about how to improve the ASEAN cartoon lesson.

2.4. Statistical analysis

The qualitative data from the interview and the focus group discussion were analysed by content analysis while the efficiency and effectiveness of the ASEAN cartoon lesson were analysed by percentage (Promwong, 2013). Moreover, the students' English achievements and development scores were also analysed by descriptive statistics, a dependent sample *t*-test and the relative gain score (Kanjanawasi, 2009).

3. Results

3.1. Problems, needs and guidelines for development

The students still lacked basic knowledge of ASEAN and its member countries. There were not enough materials that displayed information about ASEAN, especially, in English. The students faced limitations in searching for sources so they did not pay attention to ASEAN. As a result, they wanted the teacher to collect ASEAN information and teach them in the classroom so that they could learn easily. Moreover, they suggested that the teacher create teaching materials that consist of cartoon pictures in order to gain and hold their attention and help them in practicing their English skills.

3.2. The quality of the ASEAN cartoon lesson

The ASEAN cartoon lesson garnered strong evidence showing high content validity for 1.00 for item of objectives congruence and the highest level of appropriateness [mean = 4.63, standard deviation of the mean (SD) = 0.44]. In addition, the cartoon lesson showed a very good efficiency index for 84.35/83.91 of process efficiency to outcome efficiency (E1/E2) and effectiveness for 0.6862 of the effectiveness index (EI), as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. The efficiency index (E1/E2) and the effectiveness index (EI) of the ASEAN cartoon lesson

Content	Efficiency index (E1/E2)		Effectiveness index (EI)
	Process (E1)	Outcome (E2)	
No. 1 Let's know ASEAN	84.35	83.91	0.7413
No. 2 Come to Thailand	86.09	86.52	0.7459
No. 3 Fun with Laos	83.48	82.17	0.6985
No. 4 Let's join Vietnam	82.17	80.43	0.6565
No. 5 Hi Cambodia	83.91	82.61	0.7037
No. 6 Travel to Myanmar	84.35	82.17	0.6846
No.7 Tour Singapore	83.04	83.48	0.7246
No. 8 Amazing Indonesia	81.74	80.87	0.6641
No. 9 Hello Philippines	82.61	80.87	0.6788
No. 10 Malaysia on Tour	81.30	81.74	0.6818
No. 11 Visit Brunei Darussalam	80.87	80.00	0.6567
Overall	83.08	81.78	0.6862

3.3. Students' English achievements

Overall, students scored higher in the post-test than in the pre-test at the level of significance 0.01 and they had relative gain score at the medium to the highest levels. The results are shown in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2. Comparison of students' English achievements

Content	Pre-test (10)		Post-test (10)		N	df	t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
No. 1 Let's know ASEAN	3.78	1.17	8.39	0.89	23	22	33.674**
No. 2 Come to Thailand	4.70	1.06	8.65	1.11	23	22	21.613**
No. 3 Fun with Laos	4.09	1.08	8.22	0.90	23	22	28.526**
No. 4 Let's join Vietnam	4.30	1.06	8.04	1.02	23	22	20.747**
No. 5 Hi Cambodia	4.13	1.10	8.26	1.05	23	22	26.166**
No. 6 Travel to Myanmar	4.35	1.11	8.22	1.09	23	22	21.358**
No. 7 Tour Singapore	4.00	1.00	8.35	1.03	23	22	25.071**
No. 8 Amazing Indonesia	4.30	0.97	8.09	0.95	23	22	24.652**

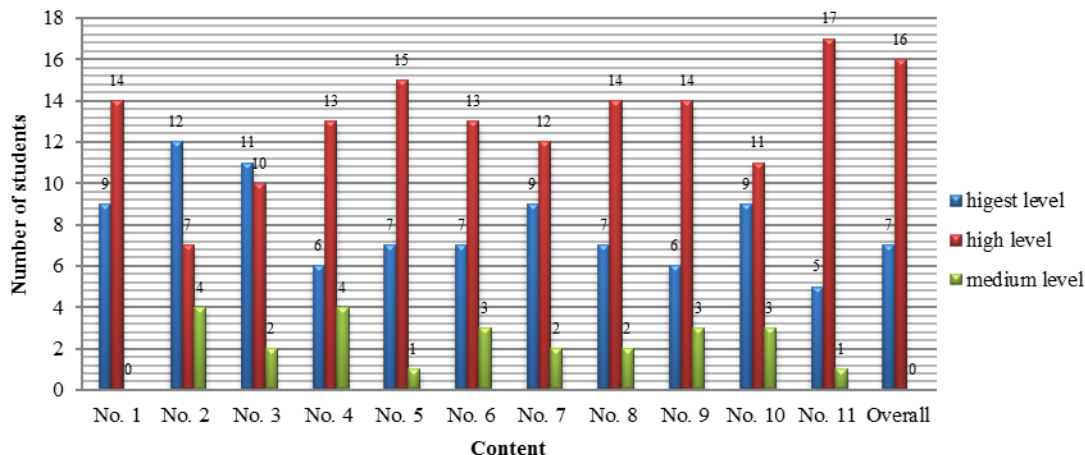|							
No. 9 Hello Philippines	4.04	1.07	8.09	0.95	23	22	22.088**
No. 10 Malaysia on Tour	4.26	1.18	8.17	0.98	23	22	17.321**
No. 11 Visit Brunei Darussalam	4.17	1.11	8.00	0.95	23	22	28.215**
Overall (110)	46.13	10.58	90.48	8.98	23	22	60.574**

* $p < 0.01$.

Figure 1. Number of students classified by relative gain score level

3.4. Evaluation of the ASEAN cartoon lesson

Overall, the students satisfied the classroom learning activities by using the ASEAN cartoon lesson at a high level (mean = 4.39, SD = 0.18). Moreover, the students illustrated that the ASEAN cartoon lesson was outstanding in its gathering of ASEAN information and the attractiveness of its colourful cartoon pictures. There were conversations between characters in the cartoon so the content was not stressful but, rather, interesting. Furthermore, the ASEAN cartoon lesson contained vocabulary and exercises for practising listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. In addition, the size of the book was convenient for students to read everywhere.

4. Discussion and conclusion

It may be concluded that the ASEAN cartoon lesson reached the specified criterion both efficiently and effectively. This means that the ASEAN cartoon lesson will hopefully become an important material for English teachers to use to enrich students' learning and improve students' language skills. The success of the cartoon is based on the fact that it contains ASEAN information and consists of colourful cartoon pictures together with conversations between the characters while it also includes vocabulary and exercises for practising language skills. This result correlates with the research results of Sornwichai (2007), who created a lesson plan using comic books for teaching social. The results of this study illustrated the efficiency of this innovation. This is similar to Ketwong (2007), who developed comic books for primary six students. The findings indicated that the comic books had an efficiency index of 91.33/90.15 and an EI of 0.57. Moreover, many researchers created other comic books during 2008–2013 in Thailand. Their innovations achieved the criterion of both the efficiency index and the EI (Ariyawatwong, 2008; Chaiya, 2012; Phoomkong, 2008; Wichianpat, 2013).

In other words, the ASEAN cartoon lesson helped to develop students' English achievements in ASEAN knowledge and develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English. This result correlates with the research results of Fatkhurroman (2013), who conducted action research for two cycles to develop students' vocabulary mastery. The researcher designed learning activities using comic books, combining storytelling and games in the first cycle and storytelling with role-play in the second cycle. The

results of this research showed that students' progress in vocabulary mastery was very good. There has been improvement in students after they have been taught using comic books and this was confirmed by the significant results of the test. The average achievement of the students was 63.73% at the pre-cycle, 76.83% at the first cycle and 80.5% at the second cycle. The main factor that caused this improvement was the fact that students were motivated to learn English by using comic books. Based on the results of the research, using comic books in teaching English vocabulary has been recommended for English teachers, especially, for elementary school teachers, to attract students' interest and motivate students in learning English, as well as improving students' vocabulary mastery.

This is similar to Sidabutar (2014), who was concerned about the effects of teaching media on students' achievements in speaking. This study was conducted with two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was taught using English comics while the control group was taught using written texts. The results showed that teaching speaking by applying English comics as the media had more significant effects than not using English comics. In addition, Hasianta et al. (2014) investigated the use of comic strips to promote students' comprehension of recounting texts. The results indicated that the use of comic strips promotes student comprehension of recounting texts. Furthermore, Yi-Ting (2014) investigated the mixed methods embedded design in developing students' English proficiency scores. Students chose English songs, English cartoons, English videogames and English comic books as their most preferred learning resources. The results indicated that all students looked excited and appeared to be paying attention in class during the first 4 weeks. The intervention group's English proficiency scores significantly improved after receiving the supplementary instruction, while the matched regular class scores actually declined.

Nevertheless, this research had limitations in that the participants were selected by purposive sampling. The main issue was that there were only 23 students in the only class of the same grade. This leads to a problem of using inferential statistics, so the next study should try to use the random sampling method for inferential advance.

Acknowledgements

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