The Development of an English Innovation Based on Needs Analysis for Young Tour Guides at Muang Tam Sanctuary in Thailand

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Abstract

The purposes of this mixed quantitative and qualitative research were 1) to investigate the needs for English of the young tour guides at Muang Tam Sanctuary in Buriram Province, Thailand, 2) to develop an English innovation based on their needs and 3) to discover their level of satisfaction with the innovation. The samples were composed of 20 students, five of whom were from grade 4 and 15 of whom were from grade 5. They were selected through a purposive sampling method. The instruments consisted of focus group discussion, pre-test and post-test, innovation of tourism English communication, innovation assessment form and satisfaction form. The statistics employed to analyze the quantitative data were percentage, mean, standard deviation and effectiveness index whereas the qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis. The results revealed that the samples had problems of all English four skills, but they most needed to practice speaking and listening skills more than other skills. Most of them needed to practice 16 English topics. Two appropriate types of innovations i.e. booklet and CD were also most needed. The samples' post-test scores of reading and speaking tests were significantly higher than the pre-test scores. The innovation evaluation made by the experts was overall found at the highest level. Finally, their satisfaction with the innovation was also found at the highest level.

Keywords: English Innovation, Needs Analysis, Young Tour Guides, Muang Tam
              Sanctuary

1. Introduction

English is the dominant global language. It has an official or a special status in 75 countries with a total population of over two billion. English is the language of diplomacy and international communications, business, tourism, education, science, computer, technology, media and internet (David, 1997). Recently, English has been proposed as a lingua franca (ELF). ELF is the use of the English language as "a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages." English, as mentioned in Article 34 of the ASEAN Charter, is regarded as an official working language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Moreover, the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRAs) among the ASEAN members has been made to facilitate free labor movement in eight professions including doctors, dentists, nurses, engineers, architects, accountants, surveyors and tourism personnel. Even if English language is used as a foreign language (EFL) in Thailand, it is still very crucial for Thais who are going to communicate in English with ASEAN people. Regarding tourism, the tourism personnel including tour guides are under the eight professions in ASEAN. They are the important factors in tourism industry. It was reported in the Bangkok Post that tourism has produced the most income for Thailand, and more than 22 million tourists visited Thailand last year, up nearly 16 % year-on-year, setting a new record for the kingdom. Janthet, Head of Phnom Rung Sanctuary and Prasat Muang Tam, says that about ten thousand foreigners visited Prasat Muang Tam in 2012, a historical tourist site in Prakhonchai district under Buriram Province, and tourism revenue amounted to more than one million Baht.

The young tour guides at Muang Tam Sanctuary are the students of Wat Ban Muang Tam School. Some of them used to study the tour guide course in Thai language, but none of them took the English course before, so they are not able to communicate with foreign tourists in English. Janthet says that young tour guides have been trained to be the tour guides in the Thai language, but they have not been trained to use English. Siangtrong, Director of Wat Ban Muang Tam School, adds that his students never attend the English course for tour guides, and they do not have a guidebook to practice their English, so they are not able to communicate well in English with the foreign tourists. This might make them lose the chance to spread Thai culture to the foreigners. However, if these students can use English properly, they might spend their free time with creative activities and earn some money.

Because of the aforementioned reasons, the researcher is interested in conducting the research relating to development of an English innovation and design of the suitable English courses for the young tour guides at Prasat Muang Tam in order to assist young tour guides to develop and improve their English for communicating with foreign tourists. For developing the English innovation so as to meet the samples' demand, their needs are analyzed because needs analysis is the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992). Needs analysis is developed alongside the formulation of a communicative approach to language teaching. It has been particularly associated with the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Johnson and Johnson, 1998). ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning (Hutchinson and Waters, 1996). It is described as the teaching used in academic studies and the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes (Anthony, 1997). Two formal ways of collecting the information about needs analysis: a questionnaire and a structured interview (Mackey and Montford, 1978). Moreover, the most frequently used ways of data gathering are the questionnaire, interview, observation, informal consultations with sponsors, learners and other relevant sectors (Hutchison & Waters, 1996).

Some studies on development of an English innovation and needs analysis have been conducted by some researchers, for instance, Atipaedya's research on a self-study learning model for communicative English for eco-tourism in Thaka, Amphawa, Samutsongkram (2010), Sangsai's research entitled "English for Khon Kaen University Drivers: An Analysis of Needs and English Course Guidelines" (2004), and Meemark's research about an analysis of needs and problems of English for tourist police (2002), etc. It is clearly evident that the research focusing on development of an English innovation based on needs analysis for the young tour guides at Muang Tam Sanctuary has not been conducted before. The researcher is, therefore, interested in doing the research entitled "The Development of an English Innovation Based on Needs Analysis for Young Tour Guides at Muang Tam Sanctuary in Thailand."

2. Research Methodology

This research consisted of three objectives: 1) to investigate the needs for English of the young tour guides at Muang Tam Sanctuary or Prasat Muang Tam in Buriram Province, Thailand, 2) to develop an English innovation based on their needs and 3) to discover their level of satisfaction with the innovation. The samples were composed of 20 students, five of whom were from grade 4 and 15 of whom were from grade 5. They were selected from a total population of 17 grade 4 and 34 grade 5 students at Wat Ban Muang Tam School in Prakhonchai District, Buriram Province. The samples were purposively chosen because of the following reasons: 1) They were personally interested in being tour guides. 2) Some of these informants have already been young tour guides in the Thai language. And 3) neither of these had been trained to be English guides before.

The research instruments consisted of focus group discussion, pre-test and post-test, English innovation for young tour guides, innovation assessment form and satisfaction form. The statistics used to analyze the quantitative data were percentage, mean, standard deviation

and effectiveness index while the qualitative data was analyzed through content analysis. The methods of developing the research tools were discussed as follows:

2.1 Regarding the focus group discussion, all samples were invited to participate in a discussion forum organized at Wat Ban Muang Tam School in order to obtain the in-depth data of their English problems and needs. The form of focus group discussion was divided into three parts: 1) participants' general information, 2) six items of their opinions about problems and needs of communicative English for young tour guides, and 3) other suggestions.

2.2 Pre/post tests comprised three parts: 1) the reading part with 15 questions for testing the samples' reading comprehension, 2) the vocabulary part with ten questions for testing their English vocabularies, and 3) the speaking test. For the latter test, one out of three pictures of Prasat Muang Tam would be chosen by the samples, and they would talk about it for at least 10-15 sentences. Moreover, the speaking test was evaluated on four criteria i.e. pronunciation, presentation, fluency, and interaction. The difficulty index (P) of the reading test was determined by trying it out with 20 non-samples who were the students of Ban Jorakhemak School, and the difficulty of the obtained scores was analyzed. The results showed that the test difficulty index was between 0.40-0.60, and the test discrimination was between 0.20-0.50. For the calculation of the test reliability, Kuder Richardson's KR-20 formula was applied. The reliability of the test was 0.81 whereas the speaking test was calculated by using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, and its reliability was 0.82. Regarding the research hypothesis, the samples' post-test scores of reading and speaking tests would be significantly higher than the pre-test scores at the statistical level of 0.05.

2.3 The English innovation for young tour guides was developed in line with the samples' needs analysis and the results of their pre-test of English capability. Two innovations which were most needed by the young tour guides i.e. booklet and CD. These two types of the English innovations consisted of 16 units. Before utilizing the innovation, the following steps were carried out: drafting innovation, examining its contents validity by three experts, panel of three experts making comments on innovation, trying-out with non-samples, and using the innovation with the target samples.

2.4 The innovation form consisted of three main parts: English contents with four items, booklet design with eight items and English CD with three items. It was considered and assessed by three experts, and the panel discussion was also organized openly for public. The comments given by the experts and participants were taken into account in order to develop the suitable innovation with contents validity.

2.5 The satisfaction form was composed of three main parts: English contents with four items, booklet design with eight items and English CD with five items. The form had the content validity examined and approved by three experts. It was tried out with 20 non-samples and finally was used with the samples in the target area.

It was noted that these research instruments with the IOC between 0.5 and 1.00 were chosen, and the tools' Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was between 0.67 and 1.00.

3. Results

The results were presented according to the research objectives as follows:

3.1 The needs of English for young tour guides at Prasat Muang Tam

The personal information of young tour guides were shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Personal information of the samples

No.	Personal Information	Frequency (n=20)	Percentage (%)
1	Sex		
	Male	4	20
	Female	16	80
2	Grade level		
	Fourth grade	5	25
	Fifth grade	15	75
3	Experience of being tour guides in Thai		
	Been tour guides in Thai	8	40
	Never been tour guides in Thai	12	60

As shown in Table 1, out of 20 respondents, the number of females (80 %) was much greater than that of males (20%). Most of them were from grade 5 (75 %). And most of them have never been tour guides in Thai language before (60 %).

As for the samples' opinions about English, most of them agreed that English is very crucial for entering ASEAN community because English is regarded as the working language of ASEAN, so young tour guides need to know English and must be able to communicate well with foreign tourists in English. Regarding their English problems, all of them had problems of four English skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, but they needed to develop speaking and listening skills more than the other two skills because they would interact with foreigners and explain to the tourists about the historical park in English. However, they did not want to study grammar.

The topics they needed to learn should be about English in daily life and English related to the story of Prasat Muang Tam. Total 16 topics or contents were needed by the samples. These topics were presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: 16 topics of English innovation

No.	English Topics
1	Greetings and Welcoming
2	Introducing Oneself
3	Brief History of Prasat Muang Tam
4	Baray or Muang Tam Reservoir
5	Pediment
6	Boundary Walls and Doorways
7	Lintel
8	Stone Inscriptions
9	Lotus with 8 Petals
10	Ponds
11	Gallery and Arched Doorways
12	Banalai or Library
13	Group of 5 Towers
14	Lotus Bud of the Towers
15	Giving Directions
16	Thanking and Saying Goodbye

Table 2 showed that 16 topics were needed by the samples. These items were suitable and necessary for them as the young tour guides at Prasat Muang Tam. It was noted that items 1, 2, 15 and 16 were about speaking English in daily life situations while the rest related to Prasat Muang Tam.

Regarding the English innovation suitable for young tour guides, they needed two appropriate types of innovations i.e. booklet and CD.

For their other suggestions, the following points were recommended:

1. English vocabulary should be added at the end of each unit of the booklet.

2. The English words should be transcribed into the Thai language.

3. English should be translated into Thai in order to help them understand the contents better.

4. The pictures of Prasat Muang Tam should be added in the booklet in order to make it more interesting.

5. CD scripts should be read by foreigners or native speakers so that the young tour guides will get familiar with the native English accents.

3.2 Pre/Post-tests

The pre-test was organized prior to the development of an English innovation in order to evaluate the samples' English capability and to utilize the pre-test scores as the data for developing the innovation suitable for them. Before giving them the post-test, the English training workshop was organized in order to introduce the booklet and CD and let them practice English. One native speaker and the researcher himself taught them how to communicate in English effectively. After the workshop, the samples had one month of English self-learning based on the developed innovation, then their English capability was evaluated so as to compare their pre-test and post-test scores.

Having compared their English capability before and after using the innovation of the first test 1, it revealed that their pre-test scores were found at 29 percent while the post test scores were found at 55 percent. Moreover the effectiveness index that reflected their learning progress was found at 0.3630 or 38.30 percent. Thus, it was concluded that they obtained the learning achievement after using the developed innovation.

The samples were given one more month to practice English using the same innovation in order to see if their scores would increase in line with the time extension. After taking the second test 1, their scores significantly increased and were found at 58 percent. In addition, the effectiveness was found at 0.4052 or 40.52 percent.

Having compared their two post test scores, it was obvious that the second post test scores (58) were significantly higher than the first post test scores (55). This reflected that they had learning progress and time extension also assisted them to get learning achievement.

3.3 English Innovation for young tour guides

The innovation development was based on the data obtained from pre-test and focus group discussion. Two types of the innovations were constructed i.e. booklet with A5 size and English CD. 16 topics or contents were included in the innovation. Its contents validity was examined by three experts and had the IOC of 0.67-1.00. Regarding the English CD, one native speaker was invited to read the English scripts in order to help the samples get familiar with the native English pronunciation.

3.4 Innovation assessment

The innovation form consisted of two parts: 1) close-ended questions with five-rating scales and 2) recommendations. Moreover, the first part was composed of three sections with a total of 15 items: four items for English contents, eight items for booklet design, and three items for English CD. The form possessed the content validity of 0.67-1.00. Look at the concise figures of the innovation assessed by three experts in Table 3.

Table 3: The experts' assessment of the innovation

Items		Numbers of experts	Levels of satisfaction	Mean $\overline{X}$	S.D.
English contents		3	highest	4.67-5.00	0.00-0.58
	4 items	3	highest	4.83	0.29
Booklet design		3	highest	4.67-5.00	0.00-0.58
	8 items	3	highest	4.83	0.29
English CD		3	highest	4.67-5.00	0.00-0.58
	3 items	3	highest	4.78	0.32
Total	15 items	3	highest	4.81	0.32

The table above indicates that the innovation evaluation made by the experts was overall found at the highest level (4.81). Having considered each aspect, it shows that two aspects i.e. English contents and booklet design were found at the highest level with the same average of 4.83, and the English CD was also found at the highest level with an average of 4.78.

For their other suggestions, the following points were recommended:

1. English should not be translated into Thai word by word, but the Thai translated version should be separately given on another page.

2. English-Thai transliteration should be based on the English-Thai dictionaries written by Thai authors because this transliteration looks very familiar to the samples.

3. The musical sound should be added in the CD at the beginning and the end of each unit in order to make the CD more interesting. Moreover, the sound of music in the northeastern region is recommended.

3.5 The samples' satisfaction with innovation

The satisfaction questionnaire consisted of two parts: 1) close-ended questions with five-rating scales and 2) recommendations. Moreover, the first part was composed of three sections with a total of 17 items: four items for English contents, eight items for booklet design, and five items for English CD. The satisfaction questionnaire possessed the contents validity of 0.67-1.00. Look at the concise figures of their satisfaction in Table 4.

Table 4: The samples' satisfaction with the innovation

Items		Numbers of samples	Levels of satisfaction	Mean $\overline{X}$	S.D.
English contents		20	highest	4.65-4.80	0.41-0.59
	4 items	20	highest	4.71	0.54
Booklet design		20	highest	4.65-4.80	0.41-0.59
	8 items	20	highest	4.73	0.49
English CD		20	highest	4.65-4.80	0.56-0.70
	5 items	20	highest	4.76	0.45
Total	17 items	20	highest	4.74	0.49

The table above indicates that the samples' satisfaction with the innovation was between 4.65-4.80. Overall, this was ranked at the highest level (4.74). Having considered each aspect, it shows that English CD was found at the highest level and was ranked first (4.76). It was followed by booklet design (4.73) and English contents (4.71) respectively.

4. Discussion

The following points based on the research results were discussed:

4.1 The research had been conducted in line with the samples' needs, so their needs were analyzed by organizing focus group discussion and pre-test taking in order to obtain the authentic data for the developing the English innovation suitable for them. This is identical to the process proposed by the scholars who said that needs analysis is the process of determining the needs for which a learner or group of learners requires a language and arranging the needs according to priorities (Richards, Platt, and Platt, 1992).

4.2 The samples had problems in all four English skills, but speaking and listening skills were mostly needed to practice. The reason might be that they have to listen and speak English for selling their products and services to the foreign tourists. This is similar to the research which revealed that two English skills: listening and speaking were needed by most of Khon Kaen University's drivers (Kaewphanchuang, 2010, and Sangsai, 2004).

4.3 Two types of innovation, booklet and English CD were most needed by the young tour guides at Prasat Muang Tam. The reason might be that the booklet is a convenient and portable tool which can be used anywhere and anytime they are available, and they also can practice listening skill by listening to the CD. This result is similar to the research of Atipaedya (2010) who stated that a self-directed learning model for communicative English language using for eco-tourism in Thaka, Amphawa, Samutsongkram consisted of picture books, illustrations and vocabularies both in English and Thai.

4.4 16 English topics were most needed by the samples. This might be because these topics are about English in daily life situations and Prasat Munng Tam. The result was close to the research finding which revealed that the English topics relating to the samples' occupation were included in the English course (Sangsai, 2004).

4.5 Their English ability after using the innovation was significantly higher than before using it. The main reason might be that this innovation was systematically developed. The right process of innovation development was also carried out according to the theory proposed by the scholar who said that the innovation should be developed through the right process in order to acquire the efficient innovation (Sitthisombun, 2006).

4.6 The English innovation was evaluated by three experts at the highest level (4.81), and the samples' satisfaction with the innovation was also found at the highest level (4.74). This might be because of the following reasons: It was developed according to the target group's needs analysis. The systematic development process was conducted from the first stage of data collection to the final stage of post-test taking. The innovation can cover their needs of the English topics and contents used in their daily life. The booklet is a convenient and portable instrument. Moreover, they can also practice listening skill using the CD. This is similar to the research results of the researcher who said that the samples were satisfied with the local innovation because it covered the needed contents, and was convenient to use (Kaewphanchuang, 2010).

5. Recommendations

The following are some recommendations based on the research results:

5.1 The innovation developed by the researcher can be used by relevant tourist agents or organizations to train and develop their personnel. Educational institutes can also utilize the innovation as the data to develop the courses of English for Guides or English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Lastly, this innovation is designed for self-learning, so it can be useful for those who do not have enough time to study English in a formal setting.

5.2 It is also recommended that further studies should be conducted for other tourism personnel such as receptionists, vendors, and taxi drivers, etc. Other types of innovation such as Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI), and social media, and on-line courses, etc. should also be developed.

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