

Improving English by Reading Local Literature: The Case for Thai Primary Children

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Abstract : The aim of this research is twofold: to develop a local literature (simplified English translation version) reading booklet for Thai primary school children (the fourth graders) and to encourage the love of reading in English by reading local literature. An excerpt from Thai literature namely Phra-apaimani, the reading requirement for Primary 4 was selected to be translated into English in simplified language with cartoon pictures to illustrate the key happenings of the story. After the first draft of the booklet development, the samples of the booklets were distributed to 3 educator experts to call for validity and comments on 1) the appropriateness of the English language, 2) the organization of the booklet, 3) the comprehension of the story, and 4) the relevance to the core curriculum of Basic Education of Thailand (B.E.2551). The IOC (Index of Item - Objective Congruence) was 0.9 indicated that the material is applicable (with some comments and suggestions). After the first amendment, the booklets were distributed to 30 fourth graders (in 3 schools - 10 in each school), 10 English teachers of Primary 4, and 10 educational supervisors for English subjects (in primary level) to call for comments on 1) the comprehension of the story 2) the organization of the booklet, and 3) the encouragement for the love of reading in English. The English reading booklet on Phra-apaimani for Thai primary children, the IOC questionnaire (with the open-ended questions) for the educator experts, and the rating scales for the students, the teachers, and the educational supervisors were used as the instruments of the research. The findings revealed that most students rated 'positive' level for the comprehension of the story, while the teachers and the educational supervisors rated 'highly positive'. The 3 groups rated 'highly positive' for both the organization of the booklet and for the encouragement for the love of reading in English. It is recommended that there should be more production of English reading texts for children, especially the texts that children already have some background knowledge. Moreover, illustration is the most crucial part for the children's reading texts.

Keywords : English language, reading skill, primary children, Thai literature

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