



The Buddhist Innovation in Dhamma Learning
Through English Lessons Based on the Natural Approach
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Abstract

This article was written in accordance with the concept idea in learning Dhamma and English language learning for students in Buddhist schools. The approach for the study was called “The Buddhist Innovation in Dhamma Teaching through English for Young Learners in a Buddhist School”. Four topics presented in this writing consisted of: 1) the Needs of Dhamma teaching, 2) Thai students learning English, 3) Language learning approach and, 4) the development and implementation of lesson plans.

Keywords: Buddhist innovation, Dhamma learning, Natural approach

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The Needs of Dhamma Teaching

During A.D. 1914 to A.D. 1918, people all over the world were frightened of the First World War (WWI). And about 20 years later, the Second World War (WWII) was fought from 1939 to 1945. They were the largest military conflicts in human history. Both wars involved military alliances between different groups of countries. Following the Post-World War II tensions, the Cold War started to begin. It was between the United States and the Soviet Union. That lasted for at least the second half of the twentieth century. Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto (B.G. Evans translated) mentioned in the major presentation to the 1993 Parliament of the World Religions, Chicago, August 28th - September 4th, 1993, that in the approaching twenty-first century, many people felt that the human race would be blessed with a much more peaceful existence, that the world would live in peace. The World Wars had passed, but the danger is not yet gone. The mischievous conflict and terrorists still pose in all countries. Moreover, Bhikkhu P.A. Payutto also added that “technology has become greed and hatred. Science, technology, and the development of information and communications technology have been used to lure human race into thoughtless consumption, rather than for the development of the human being or quality of life. (P.A. Payutto, 2002: 1-4) In addition, His Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu stated in Buddhadasadhamma

Series at the Buddhist Economics section 11 that if the morality does not return, the world would be in disaster

On the other hand, the ASEAN Era is approaching within a month or so. in the year 2015. Positively, the ASEAN Vision for the Year 2020 is the partnership in Dynamic Development. The task will take a closer economic integration. In addition, ASEAN will establish a peaceful and stable Southeast Asia. The ASEAN community expects to have conflict removed, and remain the respect for justice and the rule of law through the strengthening of national and regional flexibility (www.asean.org/asean/asean-structure/asean-community-councils/)

In summary, the main point of the needs in Dhamma Teaching and learning is to support the expectation of ASEAN community in reducing or removing conflict by practicing and following the path of Dhamma which is basically nurtured in everyone and in every religious and belief. This practice would sustain the respect for justice and the rule of law through the strengthening of national and regional flexibility

(www.asean.org/asean/asean-structure/asean-community-councils/) The learning and practicing would settle the living in the morality basis. Henceforth, books, easy readings, and the simple innovated devices activities and media publicized to young children should be appropriately developed and



implemented. They must also be easy to access to. Consequently, authority, society and community must be strongly co-ordinate on creating forms of technology for the benefit of the morality and integrity learning.

Thai Students Learning English

Thailand is in the process of the international integration. This process is arising from the interchange of the world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. People call it as a globalization. This fast changing world has carried the Thais in facing several problems. Some of the examples are as described:- 1) Thais are tempted to the new technology and new inventions. Many are not important but some are. There are problems on drug and drug trafficking, animal abused, rape, school violence and misbehavior, environmental-related problem, unemployment, political and economic problems and corruptions. In the illegal area, there have not been only adults but also teenagers, including people of the younger age. These announcements can be obtained rapidly through all kinds of media. It is the answer that morality in the society is declined. Moreover, it also reflected that the Thai education system failed both in enhancing and developing Thais to conduct oneself as good members of the community. Thus, the strong and effective educational system is needed within Thai society. According to

The Eleventh National Education Plan (2012-2016), the Thai Education system consists of 12 year-free basic education, 6 years of “Prathom” (primary education, grade 1 to 6) and 6 years of “Mattayom” (secondary education, grade 7 to 12). A child starts the basic education system at the age of seven

The Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) stated the reason why it is necessary to learn social studies, religion and culture. The Learning Area of Social Studies, Religion and Culture studies enables learners to acquire knowledge and understand lives of human beings as both individuals and as members of a society. The area addresses self-adjustment in accordance with needs of environmental situations and management of limited resources. Learners would learn to understand development and change with necessities of various periods, times and factors, leading to understanding of one and others. Learners would also acquire patience, self-control and acceptance of differences. They would be endowed with morality and the ability to adjust knowledge gained for application in leading their lives as good citizens of the country and desirable members of the world community

PrarajVorameethee mentioned in a topic about knowledge-based society, that ASEAN is going forwards to be the society for the benefit of the ASEAN economics. (www.mcu.ac.th/



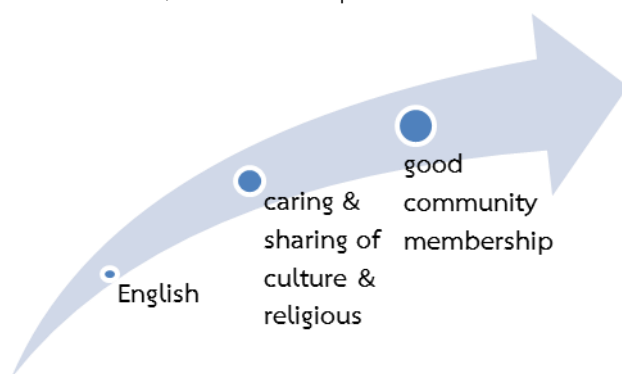
site/articlecontent.php) Supporting the reason of the near-future changing community, language for communication is very important. In the meantime, as we all know, English is used all over the world as the main medium for communication among people with different mother tongue. Similarity to those, every country in ASEAN community studies English in schools. In addition, English is one of the official languages in some ASEAN countries, e.g. Singapore and the Philippines.

By the way, to ease the strong concentrated on ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), let us take a look on the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). ASCC can be shared and cared for sustainable community too. Thus, we Thais, especially students, should be able to communicate for the basic understanding through culture and religious. To be able to do so, we must

know our culture and religious first. Activities for culture and religious learning should be carried out in both language skills and practice. Language skills will endow students with knowledge, skills, morality and desirable value to become good and responsible citizen. From now on, Thai students should seriously study and learn the language, at least, English, for basic communication. The graphic below shows how a language would nurture understanding for the good membership of the community.

Figure 1: Language nurtures good community membership

Language learning on culture and religious could be helpful in communication to express caring and sharing in a community. Religious practice is one of the ways in leading one a peaceful and harmonious living.



In the meantime, the ASEAN Secretariat News posted on 24 June 2013 at a conference organized by the Ministry of Education of Thailand through the Office of the Education Council in

collaboration with the British Council Thailand. The post was on the occasion of His Excellency Le Luong Minh, a former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam, had delivered the speech on the



necessity of English to ASEAN Community. H.E. Minh was then a Keynote Speaker. The speech titled the “Global Conference on Educating the Next Generation of Workforce: ASEAN Perspectives on Innovation, Integration and English. H.E. Le Luong Minh addressed that English enables interaction with other ASEAN colleagues in the formal meetings as well as day-to-day communications. It will also be used as the working language of ASEAN. From these interactions, ASEAN is able to get to know better their regional neighbors, interests, concerns, as well as their dreams and aspirations. Through English, people are raising their awareness of the ASEAN region. With many characteristics, ASEAN share and hold dear, and further strengthen the sense of an ASEAN Community. (www.asean.org/news/asean-secretariat-news/item/asean-sg-english-is-indispensable-to-asean-community)

Respectively, the idea of Thais learning English, will be explained in Terry Fredrickson’s article. Fredrickson is the popular author of “Learning English through Newspaper” and a columnist of the Bangkok Post Newspaper. Fredrickson mentioned in an article “Mission impossible? Getting Thai students to speak English”. Why Thai students have not done well in English subject. First, it was because most Thai students go through their day with little or no need to communicate in English. That is because

the Thai language works very well—too well to have the need to speak other languages. Some government and business leaders are worried about how the country would compete in the ASEAN Economic Community scheduled to begin in 2015. (Terry Fredrickson, The Bangkok Post Newspaper, Online News) Second, English was made compulsory for all primary students from grade 1 onwards since 1996. The purpose of the revised proficiency-based curriculum is to provide the students with the opportunity to continue their English education without interruption and to facilitate life-long learning. Emphasis is placed on the development of students’ language proficiency to fulfill a number of purposes: communication, acquisition of knowledge, academic studies, and career advancement as well as appreciation of the English language and understanding of its culture. (www.moe.go.th/web/p_eng_2549-2553.doc) The earlier explanation shows necessities in carrying the research to motivate students learning English.

For more illustration, as mentioned above, Thai students in the Thai school system study English as compulsory subject from the first grade, or for some students, they even started the lessons from kindergarten level (ระดับอนุบาล) through high school. But students in mentioned system still cannot communicate in English at the standard level required by the Ministry of



Education, Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008)

Results of English test scoring from the O-NET (Ordinary National Educational Test) in the previous years, confirmed the statement that Thai students in mentioned system did not reach the standard level of English lessons required by the Ministry of Education, More elaboration, the O-NET in English test

scoring in the year 2014 showed ability of Thai students that very few students reach the score of 50 percent. Detail is as shown in the table below:-

Table 1. Scoring of English test grade six in percentage of Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET, dated 11th Feb, 2014.) (www.niets.or.th/index.php/news_events/)

Interval	.00-0.0	0.01-0.00	0.01-30.00	0.01-40.00	40.01-50.00	0.01-60.00	0.01-70.00	0.01-80.00	0.01-90.00	0.01-100.00	Total
No. of students	98	2,042	9,653	4,715	3,687	,562	,564	,248	39	7	40,55
Scoring in %	.21%	5.70%	2.50%	4.73%	.75%	.96%	.83%	.89%	.38%	.03%	0.0%

Table interpreted majority of students' scoring on the interval of 20.01-30.00. is 67.23 percent. In addition, the higher scoring interval of 30.01-40.00 is 24.73 percent. Only 3.96 percent of students could reach the 50.01-60.00 scoring interval. Scoring in percentage confirmed that most students' ability in learning English does not reach 50 percent of the O-NET scoring. Scorings of the test showed the teaching and learning English of Thai students.

Teachers and educators must look for the effective methods to motivate students in learning English up to the level of, at least, basic communication.

III. The Language Learning Approach

There are many different approaches and theories in learning a foreign language. Those can be largely divided into two types, according to acquisition setting, 1) natural and 2) classroom. Each acquisition setting has



advantages over the other. Communication skills in the target language are best acquired in a natural setting.

Fxarh and Karsper pointed out that communication is more efficient if one learns a target language in a natural setting. First, the natural setting can supply more input. Second, the informal environment is rich in information and activities. It is in a variety functions that learners can be exposed to.(Fxarh. C., & Karsper, G., 1989: 85) Rivers also showed that communication in the target language can force one to make a serious effort to communicate. There is an example of an adult learning a sixth language, Spanish, in a natural setting. The learner spent five weeks in a Spanish speaking community in South America. The five-weeks stay helped the learner to acquire the ability to “survive” orally and comprehend graphic forms. This example seemed to show that learning a language in a natural setting helps acquiring a language. Rivers also explained that the learners took a six two-hour lesson with a university faculty member and his assistant, before the experiment. (Rivers, Wilga M., 1983: 199-163)

Ellis suggested that conversation interaction similar to one that takes place in the natural setting can also occur in the classroom setting. The advantage of the classroom setting

is that input can be arranged to be optimally comprehensible for the students. (Ellis, Rod, 1985: 150)

Conversely, the natural setting cannot always supply comprehensible input to the older second language students. There has been a study of a foreign language comprehensible input by Krashen & Terrell in the late nineties. The study illustrated that the focus of input in the natural setting is on communication, not on helping learners, especially older ones to learn. Moreover, input from the natural setting is more grammatically complicated. The classroom setting can arrange the quantity and quality of input so that learners can acquire the language effectively. Arranging the input quantity and quality for the classroom setting could be done by supplying input and giving learners tools to manage conversation. In doing so, learner progresses in language acquisition. (Krashen & Terrell, 1983: 32-33, 58-59)

The Natural Approach is one of a language teaching approach proposed by Krashen. The Natural Approach aims to foster naturalistic language acquisition in a classroom setting, and emphasizes communication, and reduced unimportance on conscious grammar (Krashen, S.D., 1982:58-61)

IV. The Development and Implementation of Lesson Plan



The Natural Approach is one of a language teaching approach aims to foster naturalistic language acquisition in a classroom setting, This topic would express on Buddhism based context English lesson. Due to the reason presented the needs of morality and integrity, and the students' lack of motivation in learning English. The first is necessary for leading the good lives and contributing to the growth and the salability of society.(P.A. Payutto, 2002:5, 6) The latter is important because of the necessity of international integration, the ASEAN Community. Ability in communicating in English is needed. This idea is arising from the interchange of the world views, products, and other aspects of culture. (www.asean.org/asean/asean-structure/asean-community-councils/) All the reasons can be concluded that learn the language and the culture at the same time. The reasons stated above can be concluded that learning the language based on the local culture would be a helpful way to the students. That is because the learners have already known the content; they will have to learn only words and sentences.

Conclusion

Why the article proposed the practice of morality and integrity by

using English as a medium of learning? Morality and integrity in Thai society is at a critical period as we all hear, see, and are involved in the situation, in our every life. Studying and learning fundamental concepts of morality, ethics and principles of Buddhism or those of learners' religions would promote learners' peaceful and harmonious coexistence, ability to do good deeds, acquisition of desirable values, continuous self-development as well as giving services for social and common interests and concerns. In addition, Thai students could be motivated to study fundamental concept of morality and integrity in English, so as to communicate with the non-Thai speaking, the ASEAN community or other visitors. Sriwilai Ponmanee described in the "Foundations of Teaching Thai as a Foreign Language that learning a language based on culture is an interesting motivation Sriwilai Ponmanee stated an example of an American who wanted to study Thai expressed that, the person planned to live in Thailand as a second home because he likes Thai culture. The above statements explained that learning a language could be motivated and influenced by the power of culture.



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