

Research Article

DEVELOPMENT OF ANIMATION AS SUPPLEMENTARY LEARNING MATERIAL TO ENHANCE ENGLISH CONVERSATION SKILLS FOR VILLAGERS RESIDING NEAR UDONTHANI PROVINCE'S HISTORICAL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

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Abstract

This study aimed 1) to develop supplementary animation-based media for improving English conversation skills for the local community in historical tourist attractions in Udonthani Province, 2) to investigate the positive impacts following the dissemination of the supplementary animation-based media on enhancing English conversation skills among the local community in historical tourist attractions in Udonthani Province. The research employed a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post- tests, involving 100 participants across various educational levels (Grade 4 to Bachelor's degree) who resides near historical tourist sites in Udonthani province. The intervention utilized culturally relevant animation-based media featuring local folktales to improve those participants' English conversation skills. The results demonstrated a significant improvement in participants' English conversation abilities; with mean scores increasing from 5.46 to 11.33 out of 20 ($p < 0.001$, $SD = 1.77$). The intervention was effective across all educational levels; with higher improvements observed among participants at Grade 9 and above. Qualitative data from surveys and interviews revealed highly positive attitudes towards the animation-based learning materials; with over 85% of respondents preferring this method to traditional classroom instruction. The study also found that the use of local folktales (*Phadang Nang Ai, Usa-Baras, and Khamchanode*) in the animation version enhanced engagement and motivation for learning. Participants reported increased willingness to continue English language learning, with more than 90% expressing interest in using similar materials in the future.

Keywords: Folktales, Animation-Based Media, English Conversation Skills, EFL Learners

Introduction

English proficiency plays a pivotal role in Thailand's economic and social development, with its significance particularly pronounced in the tourism industry. As a major revenue generator for the country, Thailand tourism relies heavily on effective communication with international visitors. English, serving as the *lingua franca* of global tourism, is essential for facilitating interactions between diverse travelers and local tourism professionals. This linguistic capability not only enhances tourist satisfaction but also directly impacts business success and economic profitability (Pansa et al., 2022). The economic importance of tourism in Thailand is underscored by recent statistics: in 2022, the sector generated over 1.2 trillion baht, accounting for 7.2% of the national gross domestic product (GDP) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2023). These figures highlight a critical need for tourism professionals to effectively communicate in English, as it directly contributes to serving international customers and driving economic growth in this vital industry.

English proficiency among local populations is crucial for enhancing international visitors' experiences and promoting tourism. As the *lingua franca* of the global tourism industry, English facilitates communication between diverse travelers and tourism professionals, improving tourist satisfaction and enhancing the competitiveness of destinations worldwide. Moreover, integrating cultural competence with language skills is essential for fostering understanding and improving service quality (Prachanant, 2012). Despite its significance, Thailand's overall English proficiency remains comparatively low relative to other Asian nations (EF Education First, 2023). This gap presents a challenge for the country's tourism industry, as recent studies emphasize the specific linguistic requirements in this sector. Prachanant (2012) identified speaking and listening skills as top priorities for tourism professionals, particularly when sharing information about attractions, providing directions, and addressing complaints.

The northeastern region of Thailand, known as Isan, is recognised as a rich cultural heritage that draws significant interest from both domestic and international tourists. Udonthani province is regarded as a prominent center of cultural heritage, featuring two UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Nong Han and Ban Pue districts. The promotion of cultural tourism is seen as a key driver for economic development in the region (Kerdpitak et al., 2022). These internationally renowned landmarks draw a continuous arrival of global visitors, highlighting the essential significance of English communication skills for local inhabitants. Effectively engaging with tourists enhances their experience, supports the local economy, and fosters cultural exchange (Kerdpitak et al., 2022). However, the advancement of English proficiency in the Isan region faces several significant challenges. These obstacles stem from a combination of educational, cultural, and linguistic factors unique to the area. Tongkaw (2022) found several key issues: a deficiency of culturally pertinent educational resources, restricted chances for daily English practice, and a widespread belief that perfect speech is necessary, leading to anxiety and hesitation in conversational engagement. Additionally, there exists a deficiency of specialized English educators in tourism and a cultural and linguistic gap between the local Isan dialect and English.

To address educational challenges in English language learning, particularly in the Isan region, use of animation technology has emerged as a promising solution (Santuri et al., 2022). The communicative approach

to foreign language instruction has gained prominence in recent years, focusing on learner-centered activities that facilitate the application of language in authentic contexts (Zhao et al., 2024). To optimize learning, educators should select materials that align with the content. Efficient communication between educators and learners via instructional resources enhances their comprehension. When students have access to good educational resources, they can better comprehend difficult concepts and form accurate mental models of what they're learning. They actively involve students, rendering the learning experience enjoyable and less tedious. Educational media facilitates students' comprehension of abstract concepts collaboratively (Piromkae & Kanperm, 2015).

Research shows that animation is a valuable tool for teaching English. Studies indicate that students learn vocabulary more effectively when using animated videos compared to conventional teaching methods. Animation also helps students develop well-rounded language skills by showing realistic conversations where they can observe natural pronunciation, expressions, and gestures (Pujiani & Almustafikhah, 2022). Considering these advantages, animated materials may assist Udonthani residents in enhancing their English conversational abilities near historical tourist attractions. Animations engage learners in authentic interactions, rendering language practice enjoyable and pertinent. Animation provides a powerful tool for developing English conversation skills, particularly for learners in tourist areas. By combining cultural tourism elements with practical language use, this approach helps learners overcome language barriers in a more engaging way.

Animated content offers several key advantages for language learning. It demonstrates grammar in real-life situations, making rules easier to understand and apply (Regina et al., 2024). Through animated characters and scenarios, learners can observe natural conversations, helping them grasp vocabulary in context. The use of animated talking heads provides clear pronunciation models that learners can practice with repeatedly, which is especially helpful for those struggling with English sounds (Irmayunda et al., 2020). These interactive features keep learners more engaged than traditional teaching methods, leading to better learning outcomes (Huang, 2023).

This research focuses on improving English communication skills among residents near Udonthani's historical tourist sites, where effective English conversation is increasingly important for daily interactions with visitors. While traditional teaching methods often lack opportunities for practical conversation practice, animation-based materials can recreate authentic tourist interactions, allowing learners to practice real-world scenarios in an engaging way. By combining local cultural context with interactive animated content, learners can develop the specific language skills needed for tourism-related conversations.

Objectives

1. To develop supplementary animation-based media for improving English conversation skills for the local community in historical tourist attractions in Udonthani Province.

2. To investigate the positive impacts following the dissemination of the supplementary animation-based media on enhancing English conversation skills among the local community in historical tourist attractions in Udonthani Province.

Conceptual Framework

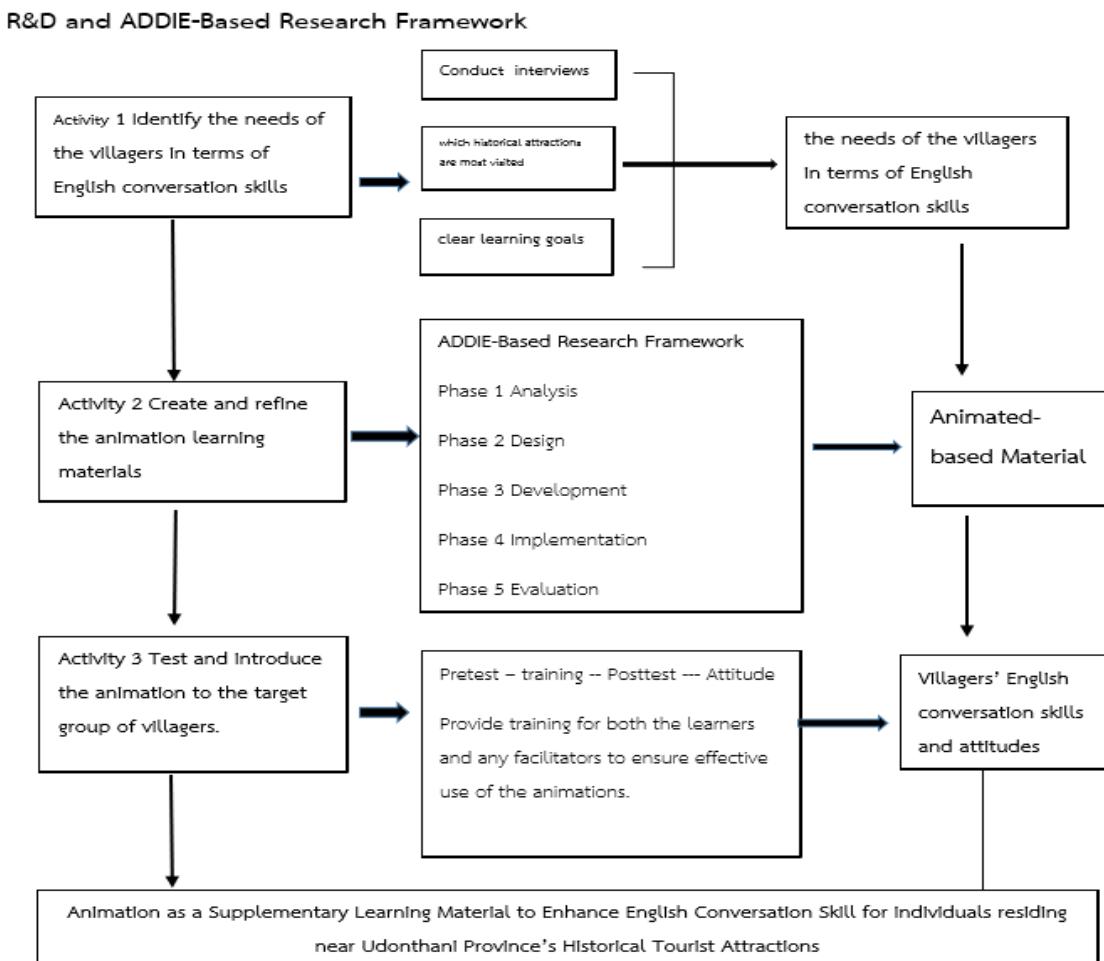


Figure 1 The diagram illustrates a research framework based on the integration of the Research and Development (R&D) approach with the ADDIE instructional design model

Research Methodology

This pretest-posttest quasi-experimental study examined how animation was effectively used as supplementary learning materials to improve English conversation skills and positive attitudes among villagers living near Udonthani Province's historical tourist attractions.

Population and Samplings

This study was conducted at Phu Phra Bat Historical Park, a cultural heritage site situated on Phu Phra Bat mountain in Muang Phan subdistrict, Ban Phue district, Udon Thani province, Thailand. The park and its

surrounding communities in western Udon Thani province form a distinctive ecosystem where historical heritage intersects with local daily life. According to the Muang Phan Subdistrict Health Promotion Hospital (2024), the total population residing near this tourist attraction is 6,308 local residents.

Using purposive sampling, the study recruited 100 participants from the area around Phu Phra Bat Historical Park. This sampling method was chosen because the research specifically focused on participants who have varying degrees of interaction with the historical park and its visitors. To ensure a diverse and representative sample within the study's constraints, participants were selected from five main categories: park staff and directly related workers (10 participants), community leaders (20 participants), park vendors and service providers (20 participants), young storytellers (20 participants), and locals indirectly involved in tourism (30 participants).

Research Instruments

This study utilized three research instruments to assess the effectiveness of animation-based media in English conversation development. Pre-test and post-test assessments measured participants' improvement in vocabulary, sentence structure, fluency, and tourism-related conversations before and after using the materials.

A questionnaire gathered data on participants' demographics, attitudes toward English learning, and their experience with the animation-based media. The questionnaire included sections for evaluating the media's engagement level, visual quality, and clarity, along with space for improvement suggestions. Semi-structured interviews provided in-depth understanding of participants' learning experiences with the animation-based media and its practical application in tourist interactions.

					
Baras in sketch	Baras in colors	Usa in sketch	Usa in colors	Male peasant	Female peasant
					
A soldier	Kongphan's side	Kongphan's back	Kongphan's front	Kongphan's wife	John (Time traveler)

Figure 2 The table illustrates some characters' development from animation based media Usa-Baras

Expert Validation

Three groups of experts reviewed and validated the animation. Filmmaking professionals assessed the visual design, sound quality, and storytelling elements. TESOL specialists evaluated the instructional design and confirmed its alignment with language learning principles. English language education experts verified the accuracy of language content and cultural integration. This expert validation process ensured the animation's effectiveness for teaching English conversation skills to local residents near Udonthani's tourist sites.

Procedure

The experimental group engaged with animated materials aimed at enhancing English conversational abilities in the context of interactions with tourists. The materials comprised situational dialogues, role plays, and interactive animations that simulated real-life conversations they may encounter while guiding or assisting

visitors at tourist attractions. The control group maintained their standard learning methodology, which predominantly involved oral drills, vocabulary memorization, and fundamental conversation practice.

The study had three main activities: Activity 1: Needs Analysis and Pretest: Interviews were used to identify the villagers' English conversation skills for tourists at historical attractions. The analysis also included popular tourist sites and questions. Both groups took a pretest to assess their English conversation skills and attitudes toward learning English. Activity 2: Animated Materials: The needs analysis informed the creation and implementation of animated learning materials. The materials were revised to incorporate terminology related to tourism, customer service, and historical landmarks. The experimental group utilized animated materials for learning, whereas the control group engaged in conversation-based learning. Participants were afforded several weeks to practice utilizing the animations throughout the intervention. Activity 3: Posttest and Attitude Survey: Both groups participated in a posttest to evaluate enhancements in English conversation following the intervention.

Participants also completed a Likert scale attitude survey to rate their satisfaction with animated materials and their confidence in talking to tourists. From 1 to 5, 5 meant "Strongly Agree" and 1 meant "Strongly Disagree." The survey also asked about their perceived improvement and willingness to use English with tourists. Assessment of English Conversation Skills: Participants had to role-play tourist interactions on the pretest and posttest. Fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and response appropriateness were assessed in these scenarios. A Likert scale was used to assess participants' attitudes toward English learning, particularly their views on animated materials' effectiveness. The attitude survey asked participants to rate "I feel more confident speaking English after using the animated materials" and "The animated materials made learning English easier for me."

The chief of the community near Phu Phra Baht Historical Park in Nong Pue district authorized the study. This study also recruited a local English teacher as a research assistant. Target population coordination and participation were smooth thanks to community and research assistant support. The data collection began with pretests to assess villagers' English conversation skills. Following the pretest, participants viewed animation-based media to enhance their conversational abilities. The research assistant facilitated animation media training sessions throughout the implementation phase. Subsequent to viewing the animation, post- tests were administered. Quantitative and qualitative data obtained from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews illuminated participants' English conversational abilities and learning dispositions. All data collection adhered to ethical guidelines to safeguard respondents' privacy and ensure voluntary participation.

Data Analysis and Statistics

The collected data underwent a comprehensive analysis utilizing various statistical techniques to extract significant insights. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies, were used to summarize the collected data. To compare pre-test and post-test scores, a paired-sample t-test was conducted to identify statistically significant differences in students' language proficiency before and after the implementation of the animation-based media. Additionally, students' perspectives on the learning experience

were evaluated using a 5-level Likert scale assessment to gauge their satisfaction and perceptions regarding the implemented strategies.

Results of the study

Research Objective 1: Development of the Animated Material to Enhance English Conversation Skills Incorporating Local Folktale Elements

An approach to English conversation practice that incorporates elements of local folktales through animation was developed. Literature reviews were conducted to identify effective methods for teaching English, multimedia learning strategies, and the integration of local cultural content. This step involved the preparation of pedagogical and culturally relevant materials. Residents near the historical sites of Udonthani Province were interviewed to assess audience satisfaction.

The development of animation- based materials followed the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation). Through the analysis phase, three Isan folktales—Phadang Nang Ai, Usa-Baras, and Khamchanode—were selected as the cultural foundation for the animated content.

In the design phase, two contemporary characters, John and Emmy, were created to connect traditional folktales with modern tourist interactions. The storyline blended cultural elements with practical English conversation scenarios. During development, the animation was produced with English dubbing and Thai subtitles to support learner comprehension. The final product was a 2D animated series incorporating interactive conversation practice exercises. Expert validation of the materials yielded a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.92, indicating strong agreement among TESOL specialists, English language educators, and instructional design experts regarding the content's quality and pedagogical effectiveness.



Figure 3 QR code for watching movie via Youtube platform

Source: <https://youtu.be/7vvLF-zkzw0?si=VceF7g5YUmwl4c9v>

Research Objective 2: To investigate the positive impacts following the dissemination of the supplementary animation-based media on enhancing English conversation skills among the local community in historical tourist attractions in Udonthani Province.

The third objective of the study focused on examining the beneficial effects of supplementary animation-based media in improving English conversation skills within the local community at historical tourist sites in Udonthani Province. The findings demonstrate notable enhancements in English conversational abilities as well as favorable perceptions of the materials used.

1. Enhancement of English Conversational Abilities: The investigation demonstrated notable positive effects of the additional animation-based media on improving English conversation abilities within the local community at historical tourist sites in Udonthani Province. The results derive from a quasi-experimental study employing a pretest-posttest design (T1XT2) involving 100 participants from diverse educational backgrounds.

Table 1 The results of Pretest posttest: Overall Statistics

Statistic	Pretest	Posttest
Mean	5.46	11.33
Median	5.00	12.00
St. Dev.	2.24	4.02
Minimum	2.00	5.00

Table 2 The results of Pretest posttest: Statistics by Education Level

Education Level	N	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Improvement
Up to Grade 4	20	3.15	6.30	3.15
Up to Grade 9	40	5.75	11.70	5.95
Up to Grade 12	35	5.94	13.34	7.40
Bachelor Degree Up	5	9.60	15.80	6.20

The local community showed significant enhancement in English conversational abilities after exposure to animation-based media. Average scores increased from 5.46 to 11.33 out of 20, indicating a 107% improvement. The improvement was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and showed a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.77$). The intervention benefited participants at all educational levels, ranging from Grade 4 to Bachelor's degree. Participants with higher educational qualifications (Grade 9 and above) demonstrated more significant progress. The notable enhancement in conversational skills indicated an improved capacity among locals to

engage with international tourists. This enhancement proved especially relevant for participants employed or residing near historical tourist sites. The animation-based media showed a consistently positive effect across the sample, suggesting its wide applicability within the local community. The use of supplementary animation-based media improved English conversation skills within the local community surrounding historical tourist attractions in Udonthani Province. This enhancement suggested positive implications for local interactions with international tourists, potentially improving the overall tourism experience in the region.

2. Positive Attitudes Toward the Materials

The use of animation-based media enhanced skills and promoted favorable attitudes toward learning English. Surveys conducted after the intervention and semi-structured interviews indicated: Participants expressed a preference for the folktales of *Phadang Nang Ai* (Retold by Thongsai Soparat), *Usa-Baras* (Phu Phrabat Tourist Center), and *Khamchanode* (Written by Nutchanart Srakart). The material became more relatable, thereby promoting English practice. Familiar narratives from local culture enhanced motivation for language learning. Multimedia, integrating visual, auditory, and interactive components, has been recognized for its capacity to engage audiences effectively. Students exhibited a preference for animation compared to traditional language learning methods. Over 85% of participants concurred that animations rendered the process of learning English more enjoyable and less daunting compared to traditional classroom instruction. Participants largely concurred that animation-based media facilitated language acquisition. The materials enhanced English conversation skills, as measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 represents "Strongly Agree" and 1 represents "Strongly Disagree," yielding an average score of 4.7. This indicates a strong level of satisfaction and support for the teaching method. A significant number of respondents expressed a desire to continue learning English using comparable tools. Over 90% of participants expressed a greater willingness to learn English with the availability of these materials, indicating that animation-based learning resources enhance motivation over time. In summary, animation-based media enhanced English conversational abilities and fostered positive attitudes toward English learning. Local folktales, presented in an engaging multimedia format, addressed linguistic and cultural needs while exemplifying language learning within the historical tourist attractions of Udonthani. The results indicate that culturally responsive and visually engaging educational tools enhance language acquisition and foster positive attitudes toward lifelong learning.

2. 1 Learner Feedback on Animation-Based Media for English Conversation Skills Enhancement

A notable percentage of respondents reported satisfaction with the existing content, with many providing no recommendations for enhancement. This indicates a significant degree of satisfaction with the media as presented. Additionally, several participants provided explicit praise, emphasizing the engaging nature and effectiveness of the media. Respondents characterized the content as engaging and comprehensible, and expressed appreciation for the visual elements, remarking that the cartoon images are appealing. The media's overall creativity received commendation, with several participants employing superlatives like "excellent" to characterize their experience. Although the reception was largely positive, feedback revealed

several areas needing improvement. The primary recommendation pertains to content length. Several respondents noted that the existing version was excessively lengthy, which could impact engagement and attractiveness. Feedback indicating that "*It's too long, making it boring and unappealing*" and suggestions to "*make it a little more concise*" or "*summarize the story a bit more*" highlight the necessity for more succinct presentations. This feedback indicates that concise and targeted content may enhance learner engagement and improve material retention. It was suggested to include nearby tourist attractions for enhanced content relevance. This suggests a preference for content that is more locally relevant, which may enhance engagement and offer participants more directly applicable language practice.

Two primary areas for improvement in the presentation of the media were identified. Audio enhancements were proposed, including the addition of sound effects and a more engaging narration of the story for increased enjoyment. A comment was made regarding the enhancement of the accent utilized in the narration. The suggestions highlight the significance of audio quality and engagement in multimedia learning materials. Secondly, a recommendation was made to develop versions in both Thai and English, which could accommodate a broader spectrum of language proficiencies within the local community and potentially enhance understanding and language acquisition. Some respondents positively noted the impact of the media. Feedback suggested that the media improved comprehension and effectively conveyed local history in a way that was accessible to non-natives. One participant remarked that it provides an engaging presentation of local history, facilitating a better understanding of local narratives for foreigners. This feedback supports the goal of improving communication between the local community and international tourists.

Discussions

The findings of this study demonstrate the significant potential of animation-based materials in enhancing English conversation skills, particularly for residents near historical tourist sites in Udonthani province. The observed 107% increase in average scores, from 5.46 to 11.33 out of 20, aligns with a growing body of research supporting the efficacy of animated content in language learning.

Engaged learners' vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension have improved with animated films in EFL instruction. Multimedia tools provide visual and contextual cues for vocabulary learning. Since animated films help students connect new vocabulary to real-world contexts, research shows that they perform better than traditional learners in vocabulary retention and comprehension (Younas & Yan, 2024). Animated movies improve pronunciation. Learners improve the pronunciation of voiced, unvoiced, and silent words, though short and long vowels remain challenging to distinguish (Liew & Aziz, 2022). Animation improves language comprehension by motivating and engaging students, leading to enhanced language learning outcomes (Ridha et al., 2022). Animation in EFL classrooms exposes students to authentic language use and diverse cultural contexts, improving their understanding of linguistic nuances (Komang et al., 2023). Animation in EFL classrooms is a dynamic and effective way to improve language proficiency, benefiting both teachers and students.

Multiple studies show that animated films with regional folktales can improve English language proficiency. By incorporating culturally significant narratives into language instruction, digital storytelling using local folktales, particularly in Indonesian EFL contexts, improves speaking skills and provides a creative and engaging learning experience (Almustaflikhah & Pujiani, 2022). "Timun Emas," an animated Indonesian folklore video, improves listening and speaking skills, vocabulary, sentence structure, and character education (Yusfika, 2021). Students' linguistic competencies and motivation improve when using animated films to learn English, suggesting that this medium may enhance the educational experience (Prachanant, 2012). Animated folklore, like "Malin Kundang," improves vocabulary and learning outcomes, showing the benefits of combining local cultural content with modern technology (Sabilly & Suryadi, 2022). These studies show that animated films based on local folktales can improve English language proficiency, especially speaking, by engaging students with culturally relevant and technologically enhanced material.

The integration of Udonthani's folkloric heritage into animated English learning materials presents a unique opportunity to enhance language proficiency and raise awareness of cultural tourism. Utilizing familiar local narratives such as "Usa-Baros," linked to the Phu Phra Bat Historical Park, enables students to enhance their contextual vocabulary and speaking skills relevant to interactions with tourists. The narrative of "Phadaeng-Nang Ai," associated with the Nonghan district and the Ban Chiang World Heritage Site, provides authentic cultural contexts for the examination of romantic and historical narratives in English. The "*Legend of Naga at Khamchanod*" offers valuable resources for improving descriptive language skills and clarifying the supernatural and spiritual aspects of local culture for global audiences.

Technology enhances the integration of folklore into education by providing virtual learning packages and digital teaching materials. These resources make folklore more accessible and engaging through interactive formats, such as virtual puppet shows and e-books, which positively impact students' learning experiences. The animation of local narratives serves two primary functions: it provides engaging language learning resources and enables local residents to acquire the linguistic skills required to communicate their cultural heritage to international audiences. This innovative approach to combining local folklore with English language education through animation improves educational outcomes and fosters tourism, creating a sustainable model for community-based language learning in tourism-dependent regions (Segaran et al., 2014). As such, future research could explore the long-term retention of conversation skills acquired through animation-based materials and investigate how these skills translate to real-world interactions with tourists at historical sites. Additionally, developing animation content that specifically incorporates local historical and cultural elements of Udonthani province could further enhance the relevance and effectiveness of the learning materials.

In conclusion, the remarkable improvement in English conversation skills observed in this study underscores the potential of animation-based materials as a powerful tool for language learning, particularly in the context of tourism-focused regions like Udonthani province. By capitalizing on the engaging and visually rich nature of animations, learners can develop their confidence and language skill necessary to communicate effectively with foreign visitors, ultimately contributing to the growth and success of local tourism industry.

Recommendations

1. Suggestions for applying the research findings

Below are some recommendations for utilizing the outcomes of this study:

1.1 Extend the use of animation-based media to other regions and educational settings to further explore its potential in enhancing language skills.

1.2 Develop additional animations incorporating different local folktales to maintain student interest and cover a broader range of conversational topics.

1.3 Provide training for teachers on how to effectively integrate animation-based media into their teaching practices to maximize its impact.

2. Suggestions for the further research

Below are some suggestions for advancing this area of research:

2.1 Investigate the sustainability of the skills acquired through animation-based media over an extended period. Study the long-term impact of the benefits of enhanced speaking proficiency and positive attitudes.

2.2 Expand the scope of the investigation to explore how animation-based media impact not only speaking skill but also other skills of language learning, such as listening, reading, and writing.

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