

Abstract

Thailand's primary education has encountered a major problem of inadequate teachers. The common temporary solutions in each school are to have one teacher teaching all subjects and to teach to a textbook in traditional English language classrooms. Another major problem is that children in Thailand have rare opportunities to either use English inside and outside traditional language classrooms or be exposed to creative learning environments in classrooms. Play activity is considered a significant mediation of all children's developmental areas, especially in language development. Even though the play-based language learning activities are designed to implement in language classrooms, its impact reaches beyond classroom learning. This study aims at 1) investigating the effects of play-based language learning on English language skills of young learners, 2) exploring the influence of play-based language learning on learners' affective outcomes, and 3) exploring the opinions of the parents of young learners outside the play-based language learning classroom. The research presented the effects of a 30-hour course of play-based language learning on 16 primary learners who participated directly inside the learning space by means of pre-posttests. Their attitudes were explored by an individual interview at the end of the course. Moreover, the focus group interviews were conducted to investigate parents' opinions on their children's behaviors outside classrooms.

Findings from the play activities on children's learning and affective outcomes were also shown. The post-test scores of students in both lower and upper elementary displayed the improvement on English oral language proficiency as the scores were significantly different from the pre-test scores ($p < .05$). Next, the findings discuss analyses of what and how play materials influence children's interests, engagement, and language learning. They reveal materials children like to play with in each play type grounded on the play and sociocultural theories. According to parents' opinions, they expressed their beliefs in English language importance, different means of supports for their children, and positive motivation after the play-based instruction. In conclusion, the implications of play-based language learning are vast. We can use play-based language learning with a wider array of content and skills to stimulate creative ideas for language lessons. Most importantly, authentic practices in schools and at home are easy to use and should be applied to create plausible learning environments for all children.