

The Youth's Perception on Local Play and Lessons Learned

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Abstract—The purposes of this study are 1) to study the ASEAN youth's perception of local play, and 2) to identify lessons learned from local play. Samples include 48 university students from Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia joining the English and Cultural ASEAN Youth Camp, in which 6 local play stations are held as a stimulus. A questionnaire is used to find out the level of their perception of local play and the lessons learned. The research findings disclose that the level of the youth's perception on 4 out of 6 types of local play is in high level. The 4 types of local play they used to play most include 'Duck Duck Goose', 'Rice Grain' or 'London Bridge is Falling down', 'Tossing Rubber Rings' and 'Running in Rice Sacks, while 2 types of local play they are not familiar with are 'Bamboo Dance' and 'Walking on Coconut Shells'. Lessons learned from local play include unity and harmony, friendship, language and culture, fun, team working, recall of childhood, background of local play, determination, cultural preservation respectively. It is, therefore, suggested that local play is beneficial to child development as well as youth's cultural enrichment.

Index Terms—Duck duck goose, lessons learned, local play, London bridge, the ASEAN youth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today various sectors in South East Asia including business, government, and non-government organizations pay high attention on preparation for the unifying of nations in the region to become Association of South East Asian Nations or ASEAN with the purposes of helping and collaborating with one another in 3 main pillars, namely the collaboration in establishing the stability of politics in the regions, the social and culture, and the economy. Particularly the creation of ASEAN Economic Community or AEC by the 10 nations in this region aims to create economic stability in the region and to increase the chances in economic competition with other regions. [1] The impact of the ASEAN economic community integration of the 10 nations in ASEAN in the year 2015 includes a reduction of regional trade barriers, and this enables South East Asia a more attractive investment destination to both ASEAN service consumers and integrates production processes within the region. [2] Moreover there will be the flow of goods, services, investment, and workforce in the region including Thailand. In terms of workforce, there will be strong needs of skilled labors with good command of English. The improvement of

the teaching of English for communication as well as for specific purposes is required to train the students for such language need. Moreover, in terms of cultural aspects, English camp, summer courses, and various intensive courses are held to enrich learners' experience and language skills.

Besides English language skills, perception of multi-culture in the member countries of ASEAN will benefit the mutual understanding among people from different countries in the region supposed to work together under AEC. That is to say learning culture and belief of people in neighboring countries can bridge the gaps of different races and languages, and can increase the efficiency of work. However, the development of learners today, who will become workforce in AEC in the future, and well-trained personnel with efficient English language proficiency, is a challenge for educators and researchers.

However, the impact of fast growing information communication technology results in the convenience and the speed of urban life styles. Parents in Globalized society have to work so hard in their offices to earn enough money for their family that they don't have time for their children. Children are left at home with the maids and with computer games or chat rooms, or Facebook. That is the reasons why lots of children and teenagers all over the world are addicted to computer games, and they spend most of their time playing online games or surfing the net. Moreover, some of them absorb the violence of the games, and this leads to copycat killing or shooting by teenagers who are obsessive players of computer games. It can be concluded that computer games and the charm of social networks consume children's as well as the youth's time, so most children and the youth today are overweight because they don't have time to exercise and they like eating junk food. However, in the past when computer games were at their initial stage, children and the youth usually spent their free time playing games or sports on streets and fields or in their homes. Children's play or game such as 'Rock, paper, scissors' – a hand game played by two in western countries, while in Thailand 'Hammer, scissors, paper' and children play such as 'Duck, Duck, Goose' or in Thailand 'Mon hiding handkerchief' and 'London Bridge's falling down' or in Thailand 'Rice Grains' have been played by children and the youth all over the world. [3] Since play benefits children and younger people alike in terms of a source of relaxation and stimulation for brain and body, it's time to bring back these kinds of play to fulfill the children and the youth's imagination, creativity and mental health. [4]

Play is essential for child and youth development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Play also offers an ideal opportunity for parents to engage fully with their children or

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for younger people with their friends. [5] In local communities of Thailand and other eastern countries, children play or local play; is universally regarded as free time activities, which have been passed on from generation to generation. Despite the benefits derived from play for children and the youth, time for free play has been reduced due to hurried lifestyle, changes caused by Information Communication Technology, cultural invasion from western countries, etc. [6] It is high time for every part and sector of societies to rethink about local play in terms of its benefits as well as the promotion and preservation of this play. This research is, therefore, conducted with the purposes of 1) studying the perception of the ASEAN youth on local play, and 2) identifying the lessons learned from the play.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Theoretical background relating to this research includes the definition of ‘local play’, the universality of local play, and the perception of local play.

A. The Definition of ‘Local Play’

‘Local Play’ is perceived in different ways depending on players’ background; experience, cultural differences and regions. The term ‘play’ is defined by Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary as ‘things that people, especially children, do for pleasure rather than as work’, [7] and by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as ‘recreational activity; especially: the spontaneous activity of children and the conduct, course, or action of a game.’ [8] Here ‘Play’ is defined as recreational activity for pleasure of people or children, for example ‘Chinese Jump Rope’ resembling the western game ‘hopscotch’, ‘hide and seek’, ‘duck, duck, goose’ and etc. This type of play is sometimes characterized as ‘traditional children’s games’ played by children without adult organization, and it is sometimes classified as part of ‘children’s street culture.’ [9] On the contrary, since time goes by, the conduction of these kinds of play has been passed on from era to era; from medieval period and late 19th century up to now. Such traditional children’s game includes ‘Hark the Robbers or Watch the Chain’ or ‘London Bridge is Falling Down’. Moreover, the same game varies from one region to others – from Europe to Asia. The children’s play called ‘London Bridge’ is also played in Thailand, but is called ‘Rice Grains’ or ‘Re Re Khaw San’ with different lyric and rhyme, but the same rule of game. In this research these kinds of play is termed ‘Local Play’, and is defined as any recreational activity played by children or people for fun and relaxation, and it can be conducted in any particular season or occasion with the purposes of entertainment and collaboration. It can be done indoor or outdoor and with or without lyric and rhyme.

B. The Universality of ‘Local Play’

‘Local Play’ is recreational activity for anyone in the communities with the purposes of entertainment and relaxation, and is regarded as activity or game for all commonly known universally in terms of its characteristic. That is to say no matter who and where you are, and what language you speak, you can happily and smoothly join with

one another to conduct the same local play. Local play is therefore a universal recreational activity passing on up until now.



Fig. 1. Peter Bruegel's painting 'children's game' 1560.

Picture 1 is Peter Bruegel's painting in 1590 called ‘Children’s Game’. This painting represents various types of children street play in Europe dated back to Medieval period, however some are still played nowadays nearly everywhere in the world. This type of play includes ‘Running with a hoop’, ‘Duck, Duck, Goose’ or ‘Johnny on a pony’, in which one player leaps over others’ back, ‘Steal the Bacon’ – a tag-based children game, in which teams try to steal a flag or other item (the bacon) from the field without being tagged, ‘London Bridge is falling down,’ a children’s singing game existing in a wide variety of forms dated back to the late Middle Ages. The most common is that two players hold hands and make an arch with their arms while the others pass through in single file. The ‘arch’ is then lowered at the song’s end to catch a player. [10] Based on the picture, it can be concluded ‘Children’s Game’ in the past is passed on up to the present time, and can be recognized by nearly all of us regardless of our nationality or language. However, it’s difficult or inconvenient for children and the youth to initiate the play these kinds by themselves due to lots of limitation. Nowadays children’s play will be organized by adults in some special occasions for children or young people or anyone in the community. Children’s game has, therefore, become ‘local play’ or traditional cultural activity now.



Fig. 2. Girls playing ‘London Bridge’ in 1898.

‘Children’s game’ in the past or ‘Local Play’ today is regarded as universal cultural activity for enjoyment and relaxation, and it has been passed on with some variation based on player’s language, belief, and geographical location. Let see the variation of ‘Children’s game’ shown on Peter

Bruegel’s painting and that in Thailand including some countries in ASEAN.

Picture 2 shows girls in Great Britain playing a singing game called ‘London Bridge’ or ‘London Bridge is falling down’ in 1898. [9] In this play two players hold hands to make an arch with their arms, and this arch represents ‘London Bridge’ while the others pass through the arch. The arch is then lowered at the end of the song at the words ‘My Fair Lady’ to catch a player or the fair lady.



Fig. 3. Playing ‘rice grains’ by local Thai people of different ages in Thai traditional costumes.

Picture 3 shows another variation of ‘London Bridge’, which is played in Thailand and is called ‘Rice Grains.’ The rule of the game is the same as that of ‘London Bridge’, but the ‘arch’ is replaced by the ‘gate of the rice mill where rice grains are kept’, and the gate will lower to catch a player at the end of the rhyme at the words ‘the last person.’ Moreover, from the picture players of this local play can be local people of different ages.

It can be concluded that one type of ‘Local Play’ can be found in different versions all over the world. Moreover, the lyrics of the play reflect social situation and geographical state of the players’ regions. Since Europe is the origin of local play called ‘London Bridge is Falling down,’ London Bridge can, therefore, refer to the great fire of London in 1666. [9] However, since Thailand is known as a rice growing country, it is not uncommon for players of an alternative version of ‘London Bridge’ to call their play ‘Rice Grains.’

C. The Perception of Local Play

Perception is the process of gathering information through our senses, organizing and making sense of it. Previous experience and learning, attitudes and interests, needs and feelings, and the current situation all affect perception. Perception is, therefore, part of the process of understanding visual images. [11] Perception is an idea, a belief or an image you have as a result of how you see or understand something. [7] In psychology it is defined as a single unified awareness derived from sensory process while a stimulus is presented. [12] The perception of local play is, therefore, defined as when the youth join local play, which is held as a stimulus, how much they know, recognize, and gain from the activity. Moreover, in this study, a questionnaire and an interview are used as tools for the players of local play to express their perspectives on their perception of local play in terms of their experiences, awareness and satisfaction of the activities.

III. RESULTS

The results of the youth’s perspectives on local play can be divided into two parts – A. their perception of local play and B. the lessons learned.

A. The Youth’s Perception of Local Play

The ASEAN youth’s perception on local play includes such items as their previous experience, their awareness, their satisfaction, the value and the preservation of local play. The items concerning their previous experience and their awareness of local play are classified by types of local play as shown in Table I.

TABLE I: AWARENESS OF LOCAL PLAY

Their awareness of local play	Level of perception		
	Mean	S.D.	Level
1. Rice grains	4.27	0.82	highest
2. Mon hiding the handkerchief	4.17	0.92	high
3. Tossing rubber rings	4.08	0.85	high
4. Running in rice sacks	4.06	0.98	high
5. Walking on coconut shells	3.75	1.12	high
6. Bamboo dance	3.69	1.11	high

Based on Table I, the level of the ASEAN youth’s perception in terms of their awareness of local play, it is found that the level of perception of the ASEAN youth on local play in terms of their awareness of one out of 6 types of local play is in highest and the other 5 are in high level. The type in highest level is ‘Rice grains’. The types in high level with highest mean scores are ‘Mon hiding the handkerchief’, ‘Tossing rubber rings’, ‘Running in rice sacks’, ‘Walking on coconut shells’, and ‘Bamboo dance’ respectively. These findings disclose that the level of the ASEAN youth’s perception on the awareness of local play is in higher level than that on the previous experience of local play. Moreover, the types of local play with lyrics and rhymes – ‘Rice Grains’ and ‘Mon hiding the handkerchief’—gain higher mean scores in terms of the awareness and previous experience than those without lyrics and rhymes.

B. The Lessons Learned from Local Play

To find out the lessons learned from local play, research tools employed include an open ended question in a questionnaire and an interview. The results of the questionnaire and interview analysis are shown in Table III.

TABLE II: LESSONS LEARNED

No.	f (scores)	Lessons Learned
1	24	Unity and harmony
2	15	Friendship
3	13	Language and culture
4	8	Fun
5	6	Team working
6	6	Recall of childhood
7	5	Background of local play
8	5	Determination
9	5	Cultural preservation
10	4	Concentration
11	3	Self-confidence
12	2	Team working
13	1	Care for others
14	1	Exercising

Table II shows the results of the ASEAN youth’s perspectives on the lessons learned from local play taken

from the questionnaire and interview analysis ranging from high to low frequency. The findings disclose 14 items of the lessons learned from local play. The item with highest frequency scores is unity and harmony followed by friendship, language and culture, fun, team working, recall of childhood, background of local play, determination, cultural preservation, concentration, self-confidence, team working, care for others and exercising respectively.

IV. FINDINGS AND LIMITATION

The research findings disclose the ASEAN youth's perspectives on 2 main points; A. their perception of local play, and B. the lessons learned from local play. Here are these findings.

A. The ASEAN Youth's Perception of Local Play

The ASEAN youth's perception of local play includes their awareness of local play. The findings disclose that 1 out of 6 types of local play is in highest level, and 5 types are in high level. This reflects that the ASEAN youth know of these types of local play even though they don't have much direct experience playing them. Moreover, 'Rice grains' or 'London Bridge' gains the highest mean scores followed by 'Mon hiding the handkerchief' or 'Duck, Duck, Goose'. These findings confirm the assumption about the universality of local play, and that it has been passed on and preserved up until now. However, when considering the lowest mean scores, it is found that 'Bamboo dance' and 'Walking on coconut shells' gain the 2 lowest mean scores. These findings also support the previous assumption and conclusion.

These findings reflect that the youth regards local play as valuable and enjoyable after joining local play. They believe these types of local play are worth playing and preserving. That is because these types of local play are rooted from children's game or children play or street game originated from the Middle Age, and are still exist in most parts of the world with different versions, the involvement of these intangible cultural activities not only enriches players with their everlasting charm but also challenges players to be aware of their roles to help preserve and pass on local play. Moreover, since local play is a source of relaxation and a stimulus for the brain and body, local play is common among players of all ages – children, the youth, and adults – and those in all cultures.

B. The Lessons Learned

The research findings concerning the lessons learned from local play disclose 14 lessons. The lesson with highest frequency is unity and harmony followed by friendship. That is because most types of local play require a group of at least 5-10 players or more, and all players are required to help one another to complete a task. Let's take an example of 'Steal the bacon', or in Thailand 'Crow hatching her eggs' which is a tag-based children's game. In 'Crow hatching her eggs' one player takes the role as a crow trying to protect her eggs, while the other players cooperate with one another to annoy the crow in different ways, and then when the crow is busy driving away invaders, one player will take an egg from the crow. This game requires the unity and harmony of players,

and since the purpose of the game is just for fun, and is not really focused on stealing the 'eggs', friendship among players flourishes. These findings support the notions that play connect us to others so that joy, laughter, and fun are shared with others bonding and strengthening a sense of community. [9]

Moreover, based on the findings that the lessons learned from local play include language and culture, it reflects the literary and cultural value of local play. Since local play today has been passed on from the past, the words used in the lyrics of some types of local play are beautiful and meaningful with easy to remember rhymes. A good example of this kind of value is 'London Bridge' accompanied by the classic children rhymes – 'London Bridge is falling down', which has been sung all over the world. And a good example in Thailand is 'Rice grain' or 'catching the person at the back', the lyrics of which reflects traditional way of life of Thai local people relating to paddle rice fields. Since nowadays most people live in cities or towns, they spend most of their time in high rise buildings. The imagination of rice paddy field enriches the player's cultural experience.

In terms of the limitation of this study, it is the case of sample size, which is not large. That is because to organize local play, which is regarded as a stimulus for samples, it consumes time and budget. In this study, a 3-day English and Cultural ASEAN youth camp was organized at a hotel by Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Suan Sunandha Rajbhat University, Bangkok, and six types of local play are included. Some foreign students in ASEAN studying in University in Thailand are invited to join this camp with some Thai students from SSRU. However, only 10 foreign students accept the invitation. Furthermore, only six types of local play, all of which are common in ASEAN countries, are selected to be held at the camp. The chosen types include 2 types with lyrics and rhythms, and 4 types with playing kits taken from natural objects.

V. CONCLUSION

The study of the youth's perception of local play and the lessons learned can be beneficial to educators, researchers and learners. For educators and researchers, the findings about the ASEAN youth perception on local play in terms of their previous experience on some types of local play, which is in medium level, imply the necessity of the campaign to bring back local play into the light. That is to say since children and the youth nowadays do not initiate the activities of local play in their daily life like those in the yesteryear, it's the educators' job to initiate the campaign to encourage children, the youth, and anyone in the community to take part in local play in various occasions continuously. Moreover, educators are supposed to support and help the communities to be aware of passing on local play to their younger generation. Furthermore, the use of social network and ICT to promote the knowledge about local play – the origin, the background, the rules, the lyrics and rhymes, with the YouTube presenting various local play in action – should be implemented.

Based on the findings disclosing the lessons learned from local play gaining highest frequency including unity and

harmony with friendship, it is, therefore, beneficial for children, the youth, and anyone in the society to join one another to play local play. Since local play allows players of all ages to connect with one another to complete a task or a game, it's worth to use local play as a bridge to close generation gap.

For further research, it is suggested that the study of the connection of local play from the west to the east or Vic versa should be conducted. Moreover, the study concerning the variation of local play, and the language and culture of local play should also be explored.

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