
Teaching with Sanuk: Failure and Replication of an Intervention in a Thai School

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Chapter One: Introduction, aims and purposes of this study

1.1 Introduction

My previous study (Carver, 2009a) attempted to describe the ‘sanuk’ (described by Kempner & Tierney [1996. p.64] as the “ideal that work and pleasure should go together”) element of learning culture in a school in Northern Thailand with the aim that findings would be useful for curriculum and resource designers. This current study reports on an attempt to perform such an intervention.

The first attempt was categorised as a failed intervention both in terms of pupil learning and data collection, the second attempt was widely held to have been a success. By including analysis of both, I hope to analyse the intervention planning process in a heuristic manner which can be useful for future planning.

1.2 Aims and purposes of this study

Analysis of how teachers accommodated sanuk as either a student requirement or desire for fun revealed complexities in definition and understanding. Concepts such as humour, fun, play, amusement, diversion and competition were confusing the issue.

By analysing student responses to activities which clearly excluded some of these features while accommodating others, I wanted this study to focus attention on the key factors influencing learning of the students in this intervention so that future planning can be more efficient. As the study developed, elements of change management and intervention planning became important and so the study was expanded to include discussion of how to introduce appropriate materials to a Thai audience. While interview data (Carver, 2009a) suggests that this sample is typical of

private education provision in Thailand, there is no reliable source of statistical information to assess this. Transferability should be the judgement of the reader based upon the features of the learners as described in this study.

1.3 Potential benefits of this study

While the need for spontaneity in successful presentation of fun, and specifically humorous, material has been established in professional guidance related to foreign language teaching (Schmitz, 2002), my own research (Carver, 2009b) suggests that presentation of planned humorous learning material does not necessarily reduce its effectiveness but rather increases student expectations of funniness. While there are undoubtedly many first class educators in Thailand, Thailand's English education largely depends upon a significant number of under-trained and poorly qualified teachers (Baker, 2008) to the extent that backpackers can expect to subsidise their travel with work at one of "perhaps hundreds of private language-teaching establishments in Bangkok that hire noncredentialed teachers by the hour" (Lonely Planet, 2007. p.271). This lack of experience or training combined with often high turnover of teaching staff (ibid) raises the importance of culturally appropriate learning resources which do not require adaptation to be engaging and educational as many teachers using these materials may not have the time, desire or ability to adequately do so themselves.

1.4 Research questions

In answering the question of how a cultural concept impacts on learning, and how outsiders to that culture can use it in design and implementation of resources, the following research questions were identified:

1. What learning material design and presentation factors impact the success of interventions in a Thai classroom?
2. Does the integration of fun in learning material design and presentation positively impact on affective student behaviours?
3. Does the integration of fun in teacher learning material design and presentation positively impact on student learning?

1.5 Ensuring cultural awareness in intervention design

Baker notes the need for cultural awareness in design of materials for Thailand specifically and Asia in general, that “wholesale importing of outside ELT practice and materials” reduces the effectiveness of materials (2008. p.144). A significant problem, however, is the lack of a local skills base meaning that many locally produced materials are of insufficient quality and “only lead to disaster” (Roeland, 2006) – a point supported by interview data in this school in which a senior manager stated the need to purchase very expensive materials from the UK because of no local alternative of sufficient quality (Carver, 2009a).

The lack of locally available educational expertise was equally a problem for the project as, following extensive advertising, the best applicants for curriculum design consultants were my partner and myself who had only very recently moved to Thailand. As we were starting material design from an outsider perspective, cultural

understanding therefore came gradually through a literature review (see Carver, 2009a), living in a Thai community and learning the language. Most of our understanding initially came from the expat community, although as the project matured the design team gave useful input. As Thailand is classified as a “norm-dependent” or importer of expertise in English education (Kachru, 1998. Cited in: Baker, 2008), this situation may be common.

1.6.1 Differences between existing learning materials and the materials in this intervention

A more detailed account of present teaching practice is given in Carver (2009a). Of particular relevance to the design of learning materials in this intervention are methods related to learner disinterest, particularly competitiveness and accommodation of *sanuk* and *sabai*.

1.6.2 The role of competition

Analysis of interview data and observations from my first site visit supported guidance from other professionals (e.g. Graham, 2008) where the idea of fun or amusement was often used to mean games. As competition can be used as motivation in learning either with fun and humour (Tamblyn, 2003) or without (Vizard, 2007), I wanted to limit competitiveness in activities and disentangle competitiveness from fun and humour. As a result, we attempted to make each activity fun and humorous but did not include any competitive games or use competition as motivation.

For example, we used Chinese Whispers to introduce the idea of a story changing through repeated telling. The phrases used to start the whisper were humorous, and there was a clear novelty value. While this may be described as a game, it was simply used a fun vehicle to use listening and turn-taking/co-operation skills and did not

include any kind of scoring or competition between groups as feedback focussed on the reasons for changes and no time limits were imposed.

Likewise, pupils drawing what they thought would scare a dragon was a fun means to check understanding of the genre, encourage creativity and paired discussion, build understanding of characters in a narrative, etc. There was no judgement of quality and praise was given to all pupils.

1.6.3 What sanuk and sabai meant to this study

In keeping with definitions established in Carver (2009a) based upon teacher responses, I use sanuk to mean the extent to which purposeful elements of a lesson are fun and entertaining. This is measured primarily by student evaluation, but can be triangulated with recording of laughter in response to humorous or fun activities (Martin, 2007). I include the condition “purposeful elements” to avoid confusion with other ways students could enjoy a lesson, such as secretly playing with their mobile phone or baiting the teacher. Purposeful elements is also a more useful distinction than focussing upon the generator of fun or amusement. While teachers in this case study only discussed fun being productive when it was generated by the teacher (Carver, 2009a), there is no reason why students cannot develop skills to bring fun into their own learning in a purposeful manner (Carver, 2009b).

Sabai was considered in mainly negative terms in teacher interviews and professional literature (Roeland, 2008) as apathy or laziness, although its broader meaning encompasses positive ideals such as comfort and relaxation. Teachers based at this school, interviewed in Carver (2009a), either used fun or competition to motivate students away from being sabai, or lowered their own expectations and attempted to become more sabai themselves. While it still requires some refinement, a suitable

working definition of sabai is the extent to which learners are comfortable with the tasks required of them in class. As with my definition of sanuk, this excludes non-learning activity which occurs in the classroom. These distinctions are easier to express in Thai, as both sanuk and sabai can be used as suffixes.

Prompting in the evaluation form students completed reflected these definitions with the example giving high ratings for learning content and sanuk highly but a low rating for sabai. However, student responses indicate that students may conceive of these traits differently to their teachers. This issue is addressed in the discussion chapter.

1.7 Quality control methods

Considering the background of criticism that many Thai learners are by default unmotivated or apathetic (Schertzer, 2005; Schertzer, 2006), it was essential that the intervention had strong claims to legitimacy and showed clear educational merit so that it could be distinguished whether Thai learners simply like having fun and being amused regardless of educational value, or if fun is the preferred means by which learning takes place.

To ensure a legitimate purpose, the intervention was designed around the National Curriculum for England and Wales and the Primary National Strategy. This was in part to keep with the practice of the school, but was mainly to ensure that the intervention was not biased, e.g. by selection of a popular topic, or one with good links to Thai culture. Material was matched to what would normally be taught in a year 2 English classroom in the first week of the second half of the first term (usually week 8 of the school year). This had been selected four months previously to match up with an achievable pilot launch date for the commercial side of this project.

The mathematics element focussed on weights, measures and directions, while the literacy component focussed on traditional tales in general and Little Red Riding Hood in particular. This provided a stiffer challenge for the intervention as the National Strategy for England assumes some prior knowledge of the fairytale which was largely absent in the Thai class. The intervention was delivered over two hours, with ten minutes of that time being allocated to completing evaluations. As such, the intervention represented the same intensity and intellectual challenge as a comparable class in the UK.

1.8 Determining selection criteria

As the project had both altruistic and commercial elements, schools were not disregarded based on their ability to pay for high quality imported learning materials. The project manager acquired an interactive whiteboard and projector so that resourcing was not a limitation in site selection. However, significant issues of access resulted in the need for an opportunity sample (Bell, 2005) – in this case the project manager had some influence at a local school and could negotiate access. Participants within the school were chosen firstly on appropriate age for the material (a 5 day demonstration pilot had been prepared), and I selected the highest English stream largely for pragmatic reasons, such as being able to know what was happening while observing a lesson and being able to communicate with pupils without the need of a translator. The stream is also relevant to the professional interests of the teachers interviewed in my previous study, adding the benefit of transferability of results so that my previous research could be used as part of the literature relevant to this study.

1.9 Site description

The school is a large, fee-paying international school in the north of Thailand, where it is very highly regarded. Pupils are streamed based on English ability and can move relatively easily between streams. Regardless of stream or nationality, many lessons are still conducted in Thai by Thai trained teachers. English is used as a second language in the school generally and is the sole language of instruction for a number of subjects.

Approximately 70% of pupils are from wealthy Thai families, and around 30% of pupils are from mixed nationality families, the most common of these being

American fathers and Thai mothers. Despite this, the school is notably different from local rivals due to its use of the British curriculum as a form of enrichment, and UK-produced resources.

1.10 Participant description

The two classes were very similar in terms of gender split, socio-economic background, and number of pupils. The first class, where the intervention failed, was aged 7-8. The second class, where the intervention succeeded, was aged 8-9. The English ability of the latter was raised by two native English speaker pupils in the class, a feature absent in the former. The intervention occurred early in the school year.

Chapter Two: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This single-site case study used an intervention design whereby students opted-in to receive and evaluate an alternative class during their regular school time. As student assumptions and reactions to learning material had been discussed and analysed with their teachers, and analysis made of interpretations from teachers of similar groups in the same culture, this study was designed to give the students as recipients a voice and, epistemologically speaking, close the gap between supposition and truth. The bulk of data gathered related to student opinions which offered comparison with previous data regarding teacher assessments of student opinions. How closely student opinions related to the reality as enacted in the classroom (i.e. the gap between perceived learning and actual learning) was determined by observation using one main observer and two supporting observers for triangulation purposes.

Reliability was controlled by multiple observers and methods of collection, although the small scale of the study and limited site access removed the possibility of other options such as multiple sampling opportunities or member checking.

2.2 Data sources

Two classes were taught by a well-trained teacher who was unknown to the children but familiar with the teaching materials. Both classes used the same teaching material which had been created by a Thai animation team to use child-friendly characters who would guide students through the lesson (examples are given the appendix). During the lesson, I made semi-structured observations so that the general aspects of the lesson could be described. These were also subject to interpretation by the class teacher and a third observer. As part of the observations, laughter incidents were recorded based on Masten's (1986) mirth expression rating system, although only the highest rating was recorded to take account of guidance from Ekman (Ekman, Davidson, and Friesen, 1990; Ekman and Friesen, 1978; Frank and Ekman, 1993. Cited in: Martin, 2007) as in Carver (2009b). As a method of triangulation, after the teacher was debriefed she was encouraged to make any comments about student evaluations or my observations.

Student evaluations a 10-point scale for each activity in the lesson across three components (fun, ease, educational value) to form some quantitative data. These were piloted with Thai colleagues and teaching staff at the school to ensure clarity. To reduce reading requirements, pictures were used to remind students of each activity.

Key student instructions were translated into Thai, including an example of how to complete the table. The activity components were phrased in Thai due to limitations of direct translations. The components loosely translate as "lesson sanuk" (that the activity was fun/amusing), "lesson sabai" (that the activity was easy/pupils felt comfortable doing it), and "much learnt" (how much pupils felt they learnt from doing the activity).

While the latter does not directly relate to educational value of that activity (e.g. pupils may see that the activity would be educational, but they already knew what it was teaching), educational value as an abstract concept was judged too complex for young children. The same category had also previously generated useful data in a larger scale UK study (Carver, 2009b), where pupils occasionally added comments to explain their scoring.

Unfortunately, no pupils took the opportunity to add comments in this study which suggests that triangulation with pupil interviews would be necessary to justify claims and that the quantitative data cannot stand alone. With limited access and resources, such detailed triangulation was not possible. However, as studies of this size may not use any methods of triangulation (Bell, 2005), the triangulation methods in this study can be argued sufficient for preliminary claims to validity.

2.3 Analysis methods

Quantitative analysis was facilitated through the SPSS software package to test correlations and regressions. Lesson observations were coded into similar fields using atlas.ti for ease of comparison, although the software added little advantage as there were only two lessons to compare. To prevent premature conceptual closure, all incidents were analysed and coded before relevance was determined during analysis.

2.4 Generalisability of quantitative data

Students completed questionnaires anonymously and were not obliged to complete them at all, although no alternative option was offered (e.g. another activity, or leaving class early). Of the 27 pupils in the second intervention, 23 completed the questionnaire with around half of the pupils putting their names on. While this gives an acceptable participation rate of 85%, it could be argued in light of the first intervention (which technically had a zero participation rate for questionnaires) that unwritten opinions would have been negative.

2.5 Ethical considerations

In previous research with the same school, I had problems due to the high levels of trust they held in the intervention as a result of an existing relationship. While this was initially very encouraging, problems were apparent because staff were happy to sign consent forms without engaging with ethical issues or questioning the intervention. With no local equivalent of BERA, Lancaster University ethical guidelines were followed as if the study was based in the UK. Consent forms

previously approved by the university were signed by the school principal who acted as gatekeeper to consent from parents given through the application process.

I established additional safeguards, including the stringent definition of possible harm to pupils being an educational experience in the intervention lower than they would otherwise have received. Safeguards under my control (high skill level of the main teacher, option of using myself as a backup teacher if needed, quality control of resources) were maintained and a senior manager agreed to ‘look in’ periodically on the class to add an impartial quality control measure. However, his observations were largely cursory, even during the lesson I classified as a failed intervention. While this may be a cause for concern by standards in UK schools, the management openly discussed the lower quality of regular tuition compared even to the ‘failed’ intervention. As I had defined harm as providing education lower than usually experienced, such comments satisfied my ethical concerns – the education provided by the failed intervention was not to the desired quality, but was still in excess of that which would have otherwise happened.

In order to make the intervention more attractive to the school, and to address our ethical desire to provide the opportunity for reciprocity and make the research “more of an exchange” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003. p.64), additional learning materials to complete the unit of learning started in the pilot were donated to the school. This was also important as this was the first research the school had permitted and so I felt an additional burden of responsibility to not ‘wear out the welcome’ for future researchers (Johnson, 1984. Cited in Bell, 2005).

Chapter 3 First attempt analysis and discussion

3.1 Classroom behaviour

The first intervention lesson initially had much in common with observations made of the regular class teacher during the first site visit. Children entered the classroom noisily at various times without any established rituals, but settled in their places following a formal welcome routine. Attention was regularly won and lost through transitions between activities, with short video clips being the main source of attention gaining (occasionally with a volume boost). The attention level was low for any activity that was not simply watching a video clip, regardless of type of activity.

Attention was completely lost, and never fully regained, after the mid-session break, where no more than 4 of the 27 pupils were listening to the teacher or videos. Gathering pupil evaluations was now deemed useless and virtually impossible, the class had only completed one activity in its intended format and had paid poor attention to video clips, failing to follow directions given by the characters.

Aside from the lack of activities for students to comment on, the pragmatic issue of getting students to sit down and write a score was beyond the means of any of the three teachers in the room. In the final few minutes, the main teacher surprisingly gained the attention of all the girls in the class with a clapping game. The boys, however, had been completely off-task since the break and were wrestling/Thai boxing each other, doodling, or else wandering around the classroom and balcony outside. One boy had to be removed from the room and kept under constant one-to-one supervision to prevent further disruption.

The intervention was judged a failure shortly after the break. The observer and assistant (both trained teachers) tried to help salvage the lesson to save face with the school.

3.2 Discussion

The transition into chaos focussed on two distinct events in the classroom. The most apparent was the mid-session break, after which attention was not regained. Explaining student actions using the ideas of *sabai* and *sanuk*, students felt more comfortable continuing what they had been doing in the break and would only be won back to learning by something of higher *sanuk* value, as was true for the girls who were later captivated by the clapping game.

The second key point was shortly after the video narrative ended and students were required to answer 3 questions in their workbooks. The previous *sanuk* value from the video did not appear sufficient to carry the enthusiasm of the majority of students through to the next task. Again, comfort or ‘*sabai*’ seemed the alternative. Rather than being actively disruptive, pupils either became completely passive (e.g. doodling or gazing at nothing in particular) or else continued with the previous activity, which was more enjoyable.

3.3 Observations informing the second attempt

Either of these interpretations set a challenge, that each activity in the lesson would have to be *sanuk*. Moreover, each activity may have to be more *sanuk* than the one preceding it, so that the teacher is locked into constant one-upmanship of activities.

Planning for the return visit made use of many of these interpretations despite their speculative nature, as they were the best information available at the time. It was decided that there should be no times when students were passive. Each activity and transition had to be altered to ensure that it was challenging and fun with immediate payoff. This was assisted by general behaviour management best practice methods, such as using a large-display countdown timer for all activities and having all materials ready on desks for the start of class (Johnson, 2006). By allowing no downtime, speeding transitions, and cancelling the break, it was intended that the students would never have ‘sabai time’ and would be constantly moved from one activity to the next so that there was never an easy option. This decision was based on guidance that “transition periods must be seamless and controlled because changing between activities is an opportunity for pupils to relax” (ibid. p.14).

The final issue of sanuk one-upmanship was met in part by sharpening the focus of transitions to speed up the movement to the fun part of the lesson or the pleasing payoff of achievement, but it was also decided that some of the better material was best near to, but not at, the start of the lesson to hook attention and give the impression of an increase in enjoyment rather than starting high and going down. These judgements are summarised by what I have termed the “high-stakes” learning environment, where failure in any one transition or activity results in the failure of everything which was intended to follow.

Chapter 4 Second attempt analysis

4.1 Classroom behaviour

The second intervention used a similar class to the first, although the ability level was slightly higher. Students were given a simple task (writing their name and then copying the teacher's name onto their workbook) to complete upon entry so that they were active from the start of their time in the room. This was designed as a "settling activity" (Johnson, 2006. p.7). This progressed into the formal introduction as in previous observations before the video began.

Rather than being controlled by the teacher, transitions between video and interactive elements were controlled by an assistant to replicate the seamless integration of the final product, in which video would progress instantly to interactive screens hence removing the need for the teacher to manage transitions.

A key event occurred in the opening video when the picture froze but the audio continued. However, as the teacher was able to quickly switch to supporting flashcards, the video was quickly resumed without disruption. With teacher and assistant aware of the high stakes nature of each activity, such events had been anticipated.

With the children engaged from the start, the lesson activities progressed smoothly and had the desired effect of moving students willingly through the lesson material. Despite the lesson being 2 hours long, I recorded consistent attention levels throughout the class. While classroom noise was still regularly a problem, students were quick to settle once they appeared to have trusted that the next activity would be fun.

Activities were completed within the target time and the lesson ended with 20 minutes for completion of questionnaires which formed the quantitative data for the intervention. This was a slight increase on the time initially allocated for student feedback, a decision I made based upon observed writing speed in the first intervention attempt.

4.2 Student evaluations

As three ratings were given for each activity, the table of results is extensive and so is included at the end of this chapter as table 4.1. Graphical representation of average scores is provided in chart 4.1.

I had initial concerns, based on seven evaluations which rated every element of every activity as 10/10, that students had rated activities without sufficiently understanding the instructions. Analysis of standard deviation for the remaining 13 students, however, showed sufficient standard deviation scores (an average of 0.8 and a range of 3.8) to suggest that distinctions had been made. Student ratings were universally high with an average of 8.7. The least popular activity was the final activity in which a synopsis was provided by the teacher (despite my observation that it was a high quality synopsis which used visual aids expected to be captivating), while video segments received consistently high ratings.

The strongest correlation (.437, a moderately strong Pearson r correlation according to Muijs [2004] with a p -value $<0.01\%$) was between ratings of sanuk and sabai, supporting the argument that students viewed a link between relaxation and enjoyment. Further triangulation is necessary to determine the direction of this relationship, although the much greater intensity of work required than otherwise

expected of these learners suggests that enjoyment reduced stress and so improved comfort scores.

Both sanuk (.356) and sabai (.375) showed moderate to strong correlations with learning evaluations at <0.01% reliability. These suggest that learners viewed a link between the factors, but that there was an extra unmentioned element which they attributed to learning. Pupil interviews may help unravel this, or the gap could be related to krengrjai (Baker, 2008) – pupils are not familiar with evaluating learning as that is the responsibility of the teacher who should not be questioned.

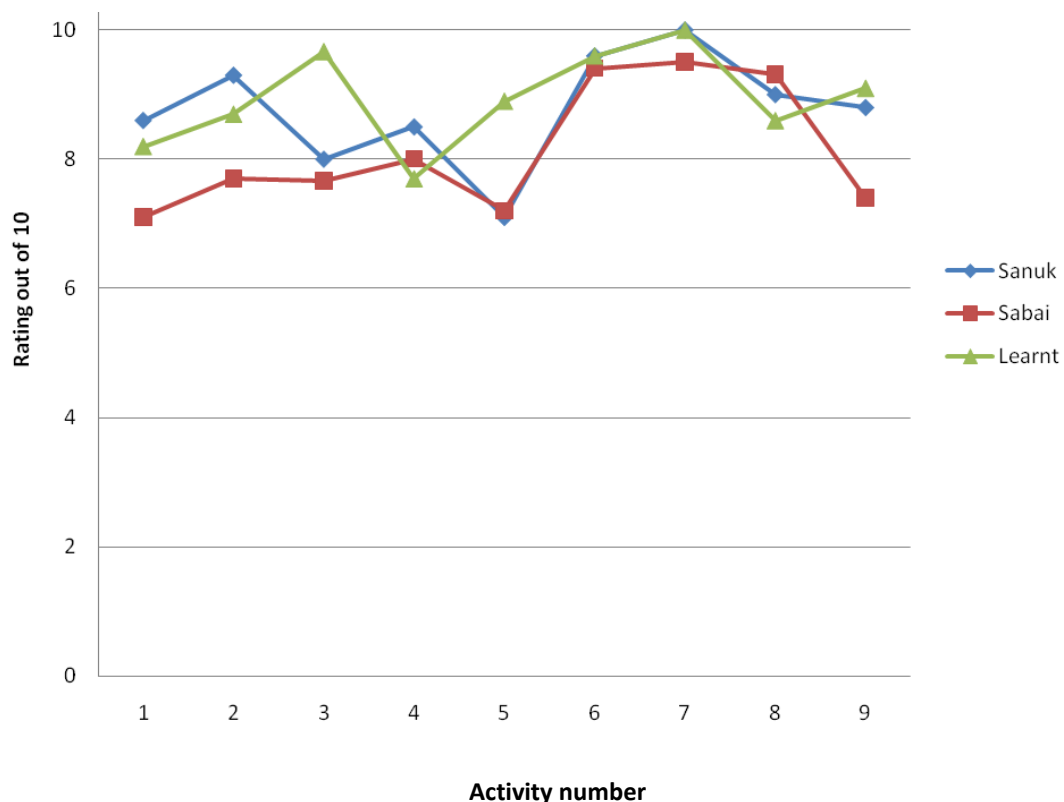


Chart 4.1, average student ratings graphed in chronological order of activity.

Pupil No	Nutty chased Sanuk	Nutty chased Sabai	Nutty chased Learnt	Talking about picture Sanuk	Talking about picture Sabai	Talking about picture Learnt	Fairytales morals Sanuk	Fairytales morals Sabai	Fairytales morals Learnt	Chinese whispers Sanuk	Chinese whispers Sabai	Chinese whispers Learnt	Talking about measurements Sanuk	Talking about measurements Sabai
1	10	9	9	10	9	9	7	7	6	10	5	6	7	6
2	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
3	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
4	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
5	9	7	6	7	5	5	8	9	9	9	6	9	5	5
6	9	10	10	8	10	10	6	9	9	10	10	10	8	10
7	10	10	10	8	10	10	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
8	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
9	10	0	10	10	0	10	10	0	10	10	10	10	10	10
10	10	9	9	10	9	9	10	9	10	10	9	10	10	10
11	5	3	5	7	1	6	7	8	10	9	3	4	10	9
12	4	1	6	9	6	3	2	8	10	1	1	1	5	4
13	9	8	8	10	5	9	9	7	10	10	10	10	7	6
14	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
15	10	10	10	10	10	10	8	8	9	10	9	10	10	10
16	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
17	10	9	9	8	8	10	9	9	10	10	10	10	1	7
18	10	10	9	10	9	10	10	9	10	10	9	10	10	9
19	9	7	8	9	9	10	7	8	9	8	9	10	7	8
20	10	5	8	10	10	10	10	.	.	10	10	3	2	4
21	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
22	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	10	10	10	10	9	5
23	9	8	9	10	9	9	8	7	9	7	9	9	10	10
Average	9.28	8.07	8.96	9.39	8.24	9.13	8.52	8.32	9.59	9.28	8.67	8.78	8.30	8.35

Table 4.1: Detailed student ratings (continues next page)

Interactive packing Sanuk	Interactive packing Sabai	Interactive packing Learnt	Packing own basket Sanuk	Packing own basket Sabai	Packing own basket Learnt	Song Sanuk	Song Sabai	Song Learnt	Lengths Sanuk	Lengths Sabai	Lengths Learnt	Ave sanuk rating	Ave sabai rating	Ave learning rating	Average rating
10	9	7	10	10	9	10	9	8	9	8	6	9.17	7.83	7.33	7.86
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	10.00	10.00	9.71
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	10.00	10.00	9.75
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	10.00	10.00	9.79
10	7	8	9	5	9	7	9	7	8	7	6	8.00	6.67	7.11	7.18
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	8.72	9.83	9.89	9.36
10	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9.06	10.00	10.00	9.59
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	10.00	10.00	9.93
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	6.67	10.00	8.89
10	10	9	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	9.33	9.56	9.64
10	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	5	9	10	8	8.56	7.00	7.11	7.68
10	10	10	10	10	10	6	10	2	8	4	8	6.11	6.00	6.67	6.46
9	5	8	10	10	10	10	7	10	9	7	10	9.22	7.22	9.44	8.79
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.14
9	9	8	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	9	9.56	9.56	9.11	9.61
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.21
8	10	10	10	10	10	6	8	10	9	9	9	7.89	8.89	9.56	9.07
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10.00	9.56	9.67	10.04
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	8	7	8	8.67	8.33	9.44	9.18
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	6	3	10	8.67	7.75	8.88	8.88
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.39
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	5	10	9.78	8.22	10.00	9.79
10	10	10	10	10	10	9	8	9	10	9	10	9.22	8.89	9.44	9.68
9.83	9.54	9.57	9.87	9.52	9.91	9.41	9.61	9.17	9.30	8.65	9.26	9.24	8.77	9.27	9.20

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Discussion of analysis

While no statistical comparison could be made between the two interventions in terms of student opinions (because it was not possible to obtain written evaluations from the students in the first intervention), hence it would be difficult to decide which intervention was preferred for fun or comfort, it is evident that much greater learning occurred in the second intervention.

As this study did not follow an experimental design, comparisons between the two groups cannot be made in a statistical way. However, staff at the school assured us that the second class was only “marginally” better behaved than the first class and so some qualitative comparisons can be made to evaluate which changes in intervention design were responsible for the desired effect.

On the premise of sanuk one-upmanship, the use of a dull settling activity was evidently useful. As a result, the first activity was keenly received as it was an alternative to copying rather than (as was the case with using the video to start in the first attempt) an alternative to messing around with friends.

Anticipating high levels of student passivity based upon the first attempt and teacher comments from an earlier site visit, videos became important not only for presentation of learning material but also delivering instructions (e.g. open your workbook, work with a partner). Similarly, in the first attempt I observed a need for pupils to focus on something visual (perhaps because they were used to watching a teacher at the front writing on the board, or from using their books) and so voiceovers with images or sounds on their own did not captivate students. The second attempt

used altered videos with character movements or subtle slideshows to allow better focus.

Statistical correlations support the opinion from observations by myself and the class teacher that students enjoyed and gained educational benefit from the lesson, and that despite the intensity of the lesson still considered it to be comfortable. However, similar correlations may be due to misunderstanding of the task or students following the principle of krenjai – that the teacher should not be criticised (Baker, 2008). This would be a problem regardless of data collection method, and arguably anonymous written evaluations provided the most reliable means of limiting the effect of such cultural traits compared to more direct methods such as interviews.

The strong correlation between scores for sanuk and sabai suggests that pupils saw a link between the two and that the wider concept of sabai as ‘comfort’ seemed more common amongst students. Consequently, student ratings reflected how stress-free they saw the activity (possibly related to factors such as clarity of instruction, relevance to recent learning material, time given for task, etc.). The actual quantity of work – which would have been an indicator of sabai being regarded as the opportunity for laziness – did not appear to be a factor in ratings.

5.2 Limitations of transferability

As the intervention relied upon high quality animations for lesson instructions, an element of ‘wow factor’ could limit the transferability of my conclusions. However, there is some evidence from student evaluations that the workbook task in which students worked in groups to pack their own basket was the most popular – an activity which did not use any interactive or video resources. This rating also supports the

validity of student responses against the warning from Berk (1998) that high ratings for educational content can relate to a simple desire for entertainment.

Limitations are also possible as this was a short-term intervention, hence this study may be better read as a pilot which suggests that ethnographic study is worthwhile to test my conclusions in a long-term naturalistic setting.

There is some support from the view that the first session with a new class is the most difficult (Johnson, 2006), and the failed first attempt further shows that there is no grace period from learners. The success of the second attempt in such a negative learning environment suggests that future lessons may be comparatively easier as students will be more “on your side” (ibid. p.11).

There are also limitations in how far the quantitative data can be attributed to beliefs and values based upon a sample of one lesson as triangulation was performed with observations of pupils rather than pupil interviews. A small number of pupil interviews to check how and why pupils had scored as they had would have increased the validity of inferences made in this essay, but access would have to be facilitated through an interpreter. Given the limitations of student access and cost implications, this was not an option for a study of this scale.

Finally, this intervention used a feature which I argued in chapter one was in very limited supply in Thailand – a well-trained teacher. As the teacher was the same for both attempts, in some respects she was held as a constant. There still remains the possibility, however, that the activities and materials could have failed with a less skilful teacher. From my own observations of the second attempt, however, the skill of the teacher was only required for initial class control and during technical

problems. As we used pilot materials, it could be reasoned that teacher skill would become less of a prerequisite for success as the materials were refined.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

The evidence in this intervention strongly suggests that activities designed with cultural sensitivity to be fun and humorous can significantly improve the affective behaviour of Thai learners without the need for competitiveness, creating a much more purposeful learning environment than presently exists in many cases.

Both interventions, and the reasons attributed to the greater success of the second, suggest a model of student attention where there is a starting point which rises and falls based on classroom events, but which cannot be recovered if it drops below a certain level. Thankfully, the evidence of the second intervention attempt suggests that a large proportion of this delivery can be made through the medium of video, hence reducing the teacher burden.

The experience in this intervention broadly supports the judgement by Bryant and Zillmann (1989) that successful learning with humour depends, amongst other things, upon properly motivated and receptive pupils. However, this study has also shown that such problems are not insurmountable when the quality of learning materials is sufficiently high. An issue for replicability, perhaps more so given the commonplace nature of intellectual piracy in Thailand, is that materials of a comparable quality may not be possible on a commercial basis and could rely on sources such as government or charity sponsorship.

Likewise, transferability depends upon the nature of *sanuk*, whether it is simply a desire for entertainment or is a cultural ideal. Learners who share “the ideal that work and pleasure should go together” (Kempner & Tierney, 1996. p.64) may have a similar experience to the material. However, the complexity of examining a culture

from only a limited insider perspective raises the possibility of a more complex disposition being missed.

Considering ratings and arguments related to what it means to be sabai, there is a strong suggestion that learners in this setting (and arguably in Thailand generally) are less goal-orientated than UK learners. Whether this is a reflection of a corrupt system (Roeland, 2005) or Buddhist ideals (Forman, 2005) is a point of contention. However, it increases the relevance of transferability to specific groups of learners who believe that work should be fun and do not appropriately respond to traditional motivational tools such as competition or extrinsic rewards (e.g. grades or the promise of gainful employment).

As was suggested by the teachers interviewed in Carver (2009a), this disposition is a cultural difference from Europe and not necessarily something that needs to change – it may even be a welcome attitude to adopt. Consequently, the benefits of a programme sensitive to such ideals may find appeal with a wider audience than initially anticipated and could be produced cost-effectively.

Word count: 5,849

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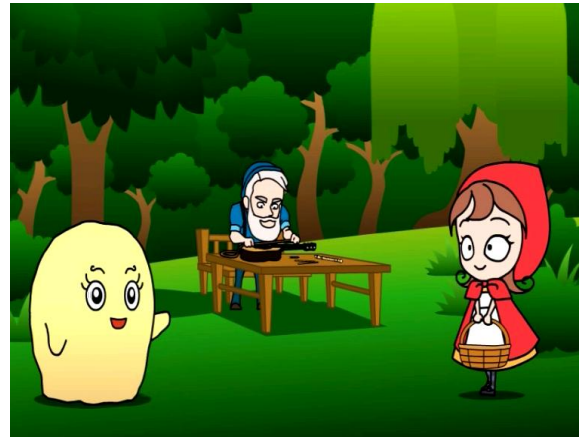
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Appendix Screenshots from the intervention materials: Mr. Roesti and Friends

Explanatory animations



Fairytale contextual information

Mash introduces Little Red Riding Hood to a woodcutter for a measuring activity



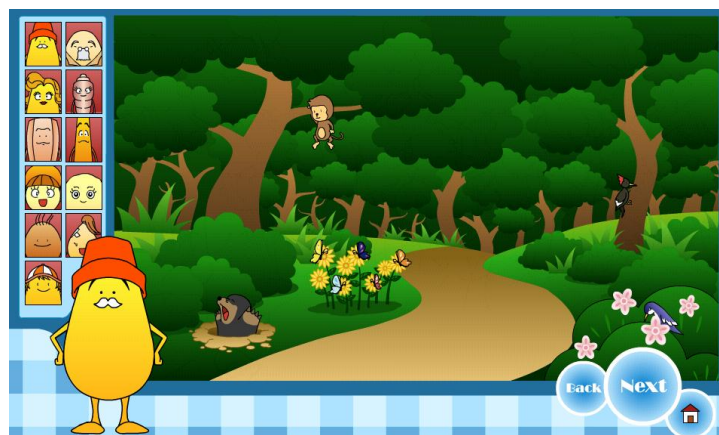
Nutty is chased by a dragon to set up a creative activity

Karaoke screen for Spud's Forest Song, in which a monkey proclaims his love to a butterfly

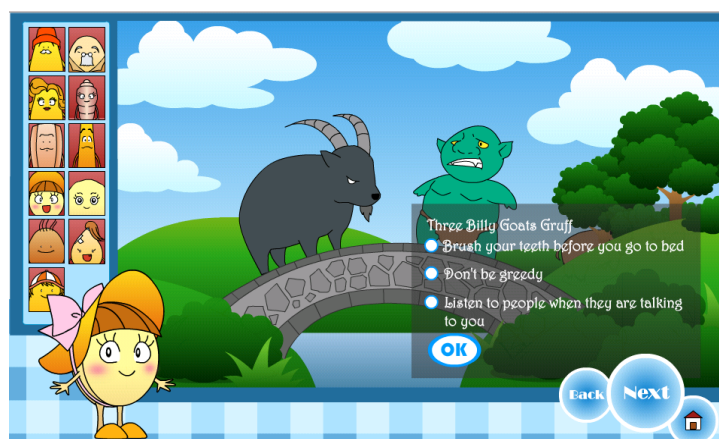
Interactive screens



Weights and measures activity with Crisp and Dauphy



Musical rhythms activity with Mr. Roesti



Literacy comprehension activity with Crisp