

Insights into the Internet-Mediated Contextualized English for Domestic Tourism Lessons (InConMedt): A Practical Guideline

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to propose a practical theoretical framework in constructing a prototype lesson of online-mediated lessons in English for Domestic Tourism using social constructivism theory in investigating the quality of an online prototype lesson in terms of the validity, reliability and effectiveness and exploring students' opinions towards this online lesson. The sample group consisted of 20 students, and the research instruments were InConMedt, a pre- and post-test of WBST-EFT with a rating scale and the interview. The results from priori-validation indicated that this online prototype task posed high content and construct validity and reliability. The statistical results from dependent-samples of the t-test showed a significant improvement at the .01 level in the high- proficiency group. Most importantly, the two proficiency groups had positive opinions of this online lesson.

Keywords: Online lesson, English for Specific Purposes, English for Tourism, social constructivism

INTRODUCTION

English is a significant means of communication in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 as it enables the ASEAN members and their citizens to interact with one another in both official meetings and daily communications. From

this significance, English is thus considered "indispensable to ASEAN Community" as claimed by His Excellency Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN (ASEAN SG, 2014).

Adding to this importance, English is also used in the specific occupational purposes including the tourism industry. In this context, tour guides use English to communicate directly with linguistically diverse tourists, including those from ASEAN nations. English for Tourism is a sub-category of language for

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specific purposes (LSP) that has precise language components and varies in the communicative situation. It is thus purposively selected in the present study as it is viewed as an income generator industry to Thailand. This is evident in the recent report in 2012 where a total of 965,000 million baht was received from Thai tourism, an increase of 24% from the previous year (Annual Report, 2013).

Due to this, English for Tourism is offered as a compulsory course for all Business English and Tourism Industry major students at Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University. Students are required to pass the course with adequate English speaking proficiency to be able to communicate in the tourism setting. This challenging issue leads to the need to develop an effective instructional tool that engages students to practise English outside the classroom, and ultimately facilitates autonomous learning. Social constructivism with the use of Internet technology is thus integrated in this study as a grounded theory for the effective instructional tool construction. Mitchell and Myles (1988) state that social constructivism provides how learning can be fostered effectively through interactive pedagogical practices. The emphasis is on the learners as “active constructors of their own learning environment” (p.162).

This study also combines the advantages of online technology in language instruction in providing an opportunity for students to interact with their peers, self-practise, co-create knowledge and share

experience at their preferable place and time through collaborative learning.

Responding to the need to develop an effective instructional tool that can facilitate active learning and use with a large number of students, the following objectives are formulated:

- a) To propose a practical theoretical framework in constructing a prototype lesson of an online-mediated lessons in English for Domestic Tourism (EDT) using social constructivism theory.
- b) To investigate the quality of an online lesson plan in terms of validity, reliability and effectiveness.
- c) To explore students’ opinions towards this online lesson.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language for Specific Purposes Speaking Ability

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) has precise characteristics of the language used in a particular target situation (Douglas, 2000). In other words, language varies in the context of use. Douglas (2000) stated that LSP speaking ability “results from the interaction between specific purpose background knowledge and language ability, by means of strategic competence engaged by specific purpose input in the form of test method characteristics” (p. 40). Douglas’ definition of LSP ability shows a prominent feature of background knowledge that differentiates LSP from General Purposes language (GP). The

model of LSP ability is made up of three factors: language knowledge, strategic competence and background knowledge.

Language knowledge in this model consists of grammatical knowledge, textual knowledge, functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge. Language knowledge is used in producing the language and its appropriate use in context situations. Strategic competence is made up of higher order thinking and communication strategy, which is hierarchically called upon by the users. It acts as mediator to relate both language knowledge and background knowledge in the communicative formulation process. The integral component of LSP ability, background knowledge is employed by users to relate long-term memory knowledge with present input to predict upcoming events and to make a decision.

A number of research studies have investigated strategic competence and the effects of background knowledge. However, these topics remain controversial and need to be further investigated. This includes the study from Elder (2001) on the inclusion of strategic competence with the LSP construct. The author reported the mismatch of the test takers' LSP communicative ability between linguistic competence and non-language ability, for example strategic competence and teaching skills. She claimed that linguistic ability should be separated from non-language ability.

In regards to the central component of LSP ability, background knowledge, the study from Krekeler (2006) reports a

strong effect of background knowledge on participants' reading performances. In other words, participants had higher reading scores in the topic related to their subject areas.

Social Constructivism and Language Acquisition

Social constructivism is concerned as an increasing prominent approach in the field of second language acquisition (Lantolf & Appel, 1994). Social constructivism approach has as its belief that learning is "constructed" by learners. Learning will occur through active construction. Knowledge thus is seen as a construct that is needed to be tied together through an active process of participation and interaction with the environment. There is no other way to learn something other than to actually "do" it. This can be related to language acquisition that learning is a social process; learners learn the language through interaction and collaboration with others. They involve in the co-construction process by learning word meanings and internalising the structure of language.

According to Vygotsky (1978), knowledge acquisition consists of two kinds of activities: intercommunication, or between people, and later intra-communication or within ourselves (Wilson, 1999). Most of the time people learn through collaborative group work in a dialectical environment. Intra-communication is a process of self-reflection on different things (Luksaneeyanawin, 2008). In the classroom, intra-communication plays an important

role in language acquisition since language learning involves learning word meaning and internalising the structure of language (Schcolnik, Kol, & Abarbanel, 2006).

Another important concept in social constructivism is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Under ZPD, there are two developmental levels in the learners: the actual developmental level, which is determined by what the learner can do alone, and the potential level of development, which can be established by observing what the learner can do when supported by teachers or more advanced peers. Vygotsky (1987) puts it thus, “What the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow” (p. 211). The ZPD concept has been used with the notion of scaffolding, which refers to support from an adult, expert or another peer who has already mastered that particular function, such as teachers who act as facilitators in the classroom setting (Oxford, 1997).

Technology Assisted Language Instructions Under Social Constructivism Theory

Due to the proliferation of Technology Assisted Language Learning (TALL) including online learning, within this environment, students learn both language and culture from their peers around the world, and this encourages them to understand and look at learning from different perspectives.

As referred by Gredler (1997) knowledge, meaning and understanding of the world can be addressed in the classroom

from both the view of the individual learner and the collective view of the entire class. Yang and Wilson (2006) found that in the TALL community, learners learned the language and used various dialectical communications through computer games while they also perceived different perspectives in the real world community. The finding revealed that TALL promoted social interaction for negotiation, which supported collaboration of knowledge and allowed learners to access multiple perspectives and types of learning. By understanding different perspectives, students can increase their metacognitive ability.

Similarly, McMahon (1997) indicates that online learning provides authentic or “situated learning” for learners. Learners are enculturated to authentic practice through social interaction. He claims that Web-based learning is a good tool for collaborative learning. Moreover, a study from Barhoumi and Hamza kabl (2013) on using E-learning under social constructivism to foster lifelong learning showed a significant difference at the .05 level between the control and experimental group. The authors claim that the web is a good communication medium that increases social interactivity and offers both synchronous and asynchronous interaction. The online environment supports a more reflective understanding of the metacognitive and promotes real-time communication in collaborative learning. Additionally, Churcher, Downs and Tewksbury (2014) claim that the use of social media with 30 subjects

increases the interactive learning process in collaborative learning. The reason is because this online course provides deeper and richer participation, and engages learners in group dynamics.

However, this innovative instructional approach is not without its drawbacks, particularly in terms of strength of signals and accessibility of the Internet. Moreover, in some areas of study, the virtual environment did not seem to work as the particular subject required learners' involvement in a physical environment, as in plumbing practice (McMahon, 1997). Additionally, types of learning supports in an online environment are still questioned by experts and need further investigation. This includes the results of real-time chat on students' performance (Barhoumi & Hamza kabli, 2013). Another caution is that the use of this online and blended classroom requires "suggestion" in using all social media as instructional tools and appropriate theory in the course (Churcher *et al.*, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The current study uses both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques of the data. Sampling selection procedure, instrumentation, data collection, discussion and conclusion are presented in the following parts.

Sampling

The population in this study was 70 second-year students majoring in Tourism Industry at Nakhon Ratchsiama Rajabhat

University who had registered for 2017363 English for Domestic Tourism in the first semester of the academic year 2014. From this population, 20 students were randomly selected to participate in this study. This group of samples passed a pre-requisite course of English for Local Tourism. They were classified into 'high-proficiency group' and 'low-proficiency group' from their pre-test scores using a web-based speaking test in English for Tourism (WBST-EFT).

Students with means ranging from band 2.20 to 2.45 were assigned to the high-proficiency group, while those in the low-proficiency group had earned means ranging from band 1.20 to 1.60. This resulted in a total of 10 in the high-proficiency group and 10 in the low-proficiency group. They were required to take the pre- and post-test using WBST-EFT, an online test that posted high content and constructed validity and reliability (Phaiboonnugulkij & Prapphal, 2011).

Instrumentation

The internet-mediated contextualised English for domestic tourism lessons (InConMedt). The Internet-Mediated Contextualised English for Domestic Tourism Lesson (InConMedt) is an online lesson in a 3-credit course, 2017363 English for Domestic Tourism, at Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University (NRRU). This course has a pre-requisite of English for Local Tourism. The course is offered in the first semester of every academic year. It is a compulsory course for Tourism

Industry and Business English major students (Curriculum for Bachelor of Arts in English and Tourism Industry, 2008).

The InConMedt includes five lessons from English for Domestic Tourism. These lessons consist of giving a welcoming speech to the tourists, presenting Thai historical periods, the Emerald Buddha Temple, a tour itinerary and dealing with tourists' enquiries and complaints. This is a 12-week course. These lessons are selected due to their importance by subject specialist informants, and the highlight of the course requires a number of recursive practices with comments to achieve behavioural objectives of each lesson. The use of Internet technology provides an opportunity for students to practise their presentations at their own pace and time (Fulcher, 2003) is thus used in this study. The InConMedt is posted on Facebook, which is mostly used by all of the students in the course to be certain that no student would be left behind without a mentor and guidance from the lecturer.

In the present study, in-depth details on the construction procedures, validity evidence and reliability of a prototype lesson and giving a welcoming speech to tourists, are presented in four main phases in the data collection part.

Web-based speaking test in English for Tourism (WBST-EFT) and the rating scale. A web-based speaking test in English for Tourism (WBST-EFT) is the online achievement test in 2017363 English for Domestic Tourism. It consists of six test tasks in total. Only part of the first test task

on giving a welcoming speech to tourists, pertinent to the InConMedt's prototype lesson, was used in this study. The test was delivered via Facebook at NRRU laboratory and removed right after the students had completed it for the security of test items.

Students were required to speak into a microphone, and their speech was recorded. They then submitted the test via the "message" device in Facebook individually. Their speech performance was graded by two raters for valid and reliable test scores. This online test posted a high quality of content and construct validity at IOC value of 1 while the inter-rater reliability value from Pearson correlation coefficient was .94, reflecting high reliability of the test (Phaiboonnugulkij & Prapphal, 2011).

The analytical rating scale was employed in the present study due to its appropriateness to the lesson. The criteria for this prototype lesson were ranged for accuracy in linguistics components and content and fluency of speech production. The rating scale was made up of three components: content knowledge, accuracy in vocabulary and grammatical structure and fluency of speech performance. Each component consisted of five ability bands, starting from band level 0 (very poor user), 1 (beginner), 2 (fair user), 3 (good user) to 4 (very good user). The ability band was derived from the summation of the averaged scored from two raters. Rater training was arranged before the pilot study for reliability and consistency in scoring methods (Phaiboonnugulkij & Prapphal, 2013).

Interview of students' opinions of the InConMedt. The interview was used to gain qualitative data on the insight of the students about the InConMedt and the data was used as additional validity evidence on this online lesson. The interview consisted of three open-ended questions adapted from Fulcher (2003)'s framework of the interface design of an online instrument and the concept of social interaction in social constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

These interview questions are on appropriateness of content and order of language presentations in facilitating students to use English to give a welcoming speech to the tourists, levels and appropriateness of interaction among lectures, student themselves and peers who provide support in giving the welcoming speech and quality of sound, picture and graphic in the InConMedt. All the questions were translated into Thai and students also responded to the questions in Thai for the mutual understanding and for obtaining in-depth information.

Similar to the previous two instruments, the interview questions and script were validated by three experts in the field using the IOC index, with values ranging from .75 to 1.00, showing high content and construct validity. Inter-coder was used to triangulate the data from the interview. Coder training was arranged prior to the pilot study to ensure consistency in data categorisation.

Data collection

The research methodology consisted of four main phases as follows.

Phase 1: Needs analysis development. Following Douglas (2000), LSP has precise characteristics in which only people who are in the field would have a thorough understanding of the language used in a target situation. The first stage to obtain this precise feature of language is to analyse the target language use situation (TLU), and one of the best ways to do this is to consult a "subject specialist informant" (pp.253–254) using the needs analysis procedure. Needs-analysis questionnaires were constructed and sent to the subject specialist informants: 13 bronze card licence holders tour guides, 8 English for Tourism lecturers and 10 English for Tourism trainees. The TLU tasks that were considered important and pertinent to the English for Domestic Tourism course were selected for constructing the InConMedt. These TLU tasks were: giving welcoming speech to the tourists, presenting Thai historical periods, the Emerald Buddha Temple, tour itinerary and dealing with tourists' enquiries and complaints. Then the lesson plans were written and converted into online version in the next phase.

Prior to the administration procedure, needs-analysis questionnaires were validated by three experts in the fields using IOC table with values ranging from .75 to 1 for three parts of the questionnaire: TLU situations in Thai domestic tourism, criteria for tour guide speech assessment and open-ended questions.

Phase 2: Lesson plan construction and online conversion. The results from needs-analysis questionnaires were used in lesson-plan construction to ensure that the language used in the target situations resembled that used in real tourism situations (Douglas, 2000). This included the analysis of English for Domestic Tourism course description. The content on the prototype lesson plan was related to giving a welcoming speech to tourists. The learning goal and behavioural objective were then set. The learning goal for this lesson was to use English to welcome foreign tourists to Thailand. The behavioural objective of this lesson was at the end of the lesson, where the second-year Tourism Industry major students were able to give the welcoming speech by getting at least band level 2 as measured by the WBST-EFT.

The instructional methods were designed following social constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Churcher et al., 2014). The online version of the prototype task was based on Fulcher (2003) and Winke (2014) on the Interface design.

In this hybrid classroom, students were required to self-study the lesson on giving a welcoming speech to the tourists, via a video clip posted on Facebook. Then they come to the class the following week to share what they had learnt, problems they had in the learning process and things that would make their learning in this topic better.

The prototype lesson consisted of three main instructional stages: inter-

communication, intra-communication and didactic learning. The three stages were interrelated and sometimes overlapped. The teacher in this learning environment acted as the facilitator. Details of the three stages of instruction are presented below.

Stage 1 – Inter-communication. This stage aimed at eliciting students' background knowledge through collaborative learning with peers to allow them to interact in group using inter-communication. They were firstly asked questions using a picture of a tour guide talking on the coach. The questions were "What should the guide say to the tourists when they first meet?", "Now, from your experience, what are expressions that the tour guide used during the trip?" Students shared their answers on the wall. In this way, they would have a chance to interact with the language through either live chat with their peers or in the asynchronous form of a post. After they had completed the task, they moved on to the presentation of useful expressions with a full explanation by the lecturer.

Stage 2 – Intra-communication. In the second stage, students self-studied the expressions used in giving a welcoming speech to the tourists with detailed explanation about the context of use and the necessary grammatical features. Then they were required to create their own welcoming speech following the framework provided by the lecturer and most importantly, adding their own expressions from their ideas or the expression that they had gathered themselves. They then sent the

audio recorded speech in message for privacy, and lecturer would return the comment individually.

Stage 3 – Didactic learning. Students were required to go on the “live chat” session by making an appointment with the lecturer. They presented their welcoming speech in groups following the simulated situation provided by the lecturer, one taking the role of tour guide while the rest acted as tourists. Each group would get different scenarios to present the welcoming speech. Then they came to class to reflect on their learning face to face.

The lesson plan was converted into an online version using online freeware in a video clip. As mentioned earlier, as this study aimed to provide a practical guideline for academia, only available freeware and user-friendly programmes were used in the InConMedt construction in the following details.

First, Photoscape, an editing programme, was used in pictures and photographs as decoration from a number of sources. Then the audio of the lecture and explanations related to content and expressions were recorded through mobile phone using a voice recorder and the free trial programme Sound Forge by Sony Creative. After that, the audio and graphics were combined using the Windows Movie Maker programme, which allowed the researcher to adjust the content and order of presentation in a few minutes. Finally, this first prototype lesson was posted on Facebook to avoid problems related to unfamiliarity of the platform that could affect learning.

The prototype lesson was piloted with the sample group. The results from the pilot study are presented in the following section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phase 3: Validation Procedures. To ensure the quality of this online prototype task and obtain the validity evidence, both priori- and posteriori-validation procedures were conducted.

Priori-validation. The InConMedt was validated by three experts in the field for content and construct validity using the IOC table with a value of .75, indicating that this instrument poses high content and construct validity. The two experts were English lecturers at NRRU with teaching experience of 25 and 28 years in English for Tourism. They both hold a Master’s degree in English study. Another expert was also an English lecturer with a Ph.D. in Education and has conducted research on tour guide speeches. This lecturer has teaching experience of 10 years. The InConMedt was revised for the clarity of sound, contents, order of presentation and movies before the pilot study.

Posteriori-validation. Prior to the posteriori-validation, 20 students were pre-tested using the WBST-EFT in the first semester of the academic year 2014. They were required to present the welcoming speech to a group of tourists during the trip. The results of the pre-test band score showed that the means of the high-proficiency group was 2.35 ($\bar{x}_{\text{Highpre}}=2.35$, $SD=.13$) and that of the low-proficiency

group was 1.45 ($\bar{x}_{Lowpre}=1.45, SD=.21$). The standard deviations between the two groups differed largely, indicating greater variation in the scores of the low-proficiency group than that of the higher-proficiency group.

The InConMedt was then piloted with the same groups. After that they were post-

tested by the WBST-EFT, in a test similar to the pre-test. The dependent-samples t-test were employed to identify the differences between the pre- and post- test scores of the two proficiency groups. The results are illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Scores of the Two Proficiency Groups

Source	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD.	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
High	-93	.20	.12	-1.45	-.41	-7.76	2	.01*
Low	-.70	.36	.20	-1.59	.19	-3.36	2	.07

*p≤.05

In Table 1, the results from dependent-samples t-test show that the comparison between the pre- and post-test scores of the high group is $t(2)=-7.76, p=.01$, indicating a significant difference of the test scores in this group. Specifically, the p value is .01, showing a great significant difference of the speaking performances of this group. In other words, this proficiency group had significantly improved their LSP speaking performances.

The descriptive statistics showed that the pre-test mean of the high-proficiency group was 2.35 whereas their post-test mean was 3.32 ($\bar{x}_{Highpre}=2.35, SD=.13, \bar{x}_{Highpost}=3.32, SD=.12$), showing significant progress of the LSP speaking ability. Their standard deviations were almost similar for the two tests. The pre-test minimum and maximum scores of this group were 2.20

and 2.45 respectively while those of the post-test were 3.20 and 3.45, showing an increase in band level by one band from fair user to good user.

In contrast, the statistical result of the low-proficiency group did not show any statistical significance between the two tests. The results were $t(2)=-3.76, p=.07$, indicating no significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores in this group. This means the performance of this group did not significantly change before and after the study.

Results from descriptive statistics indicated that the pre-test mean of the low-proficiency group was 1.45. An increase was found in the pre-test mean at 2.25 ($\bar{x}_{Lowpre}=1.45, SD=.21, \bar{x}_{Lowpost}=2.25, SD=.57$), showing that this group had also

progressed in LSP speaking performance, but the evidence was not significant. However, their pre-test standard deviations were more than half of the post-test, an indication of a great variation in scores between the two tests.

The pre-test minimum and maximum scores of this group were 1.20 and 1.60 respectively while those of the post-test were 1.60 and 2.70. Although the low group's performance was not significantly different, their post-test minimum scores were quite different from the max score at more than one-band level, indicating that their performance had improved from beginner to almost proficient learner.

The results correspond with the study of Barhoumi and Hamza kabli (2013) on using E-learning under social constructivism to foster lifelong learning, which showed a significant difference at .05 between the control and experimental group. The results are also reconfirmed by the recent study of Churcher, Downs and Tewksbury (2014) on the use of social media i.e. that it supports students to learn better.

The reasons that the low-proficiency group did not significantly improve their LSP performance may be due to their low language ability that should be guided more by proficient learners so that they can move from their actual stage to their potential stage (Vygotsky, 1978). Although their ability did not significantly improve it had actually increased. More guidance from lecturers will be taken into consideration for revision of the next lesson plans of InConMedt.

The qualitative results from the content analysis of students' opinions of InConMedt from the interview are presented as follows. Their verbal reports were transcribed and categorised into the following interview questions.

Content Analysis of Students' Opinions Towards InConMedt from Interview

The majority of the students from both high- and low-proficiency groups had positive comments on appropriateness of content and order of language presentation in facilitating students to use English to give a welcoming speech to the tourists. The evidence was obvious from the high-proficiency group that the content was easy for them to comprehend; they added that if they missed some points they could review the section. Positive comments also came from the low-proficiency group on the way the content was presented with the use of multimedia, which made it interesting for them to learn and rehearse their speech from the clip.

Concerning the levels and appropriateness of interaction among lectures, student themselves and peers, most of the students praised this learning environment for being able to support them to learn the lesson. They thought that this learning environment was less stressful and they could study at their preferred time. They could contact and interact with friends using Facebook as the platform.

However, a few students commented that this prototype task should be more interactive by adding more interesting

motion pictures and that the task should elicit and stimulate students to respond to the task more. This also contributes as the limitations of this technology, which will be adjusted for the next online lessons.

Moving to quality of sound, pictures and graphics in the InConMedt, negative comments were found from the low-proficiency group on the clarity of sound. One student stated, "I can't figure out some parts of the lecture because the sound was in buz bus, for example, let me intro (pause) well, into..(pause) maybe intodukt [introduce]." This problem was also noticed by one student in the high-proficiency group, who stated, "I missed the last part of the clip, just can't catch up, but at least I can read from powerpoint then." No negative comments were found on the clarity of graphics and pictures.

Phase 4: Revision of the instruments.

These data will be used in the rest of the lesson construction, particularly with regards to clarity of sound and time for presentation. More interaction in the lesson will be considered with the use of current technology to improve the quality of the final version of the InConMedt.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to propose a practical guideline on the construction and implementation of an online lesson in English for Domestic Tourism, to investigate the quality of an online lesson plan in terms of validity, reliability and effectiveness and to explore students'

opinions of this prototype online lesson. The results showed that this prototype online lesson was developed under social constructivism and online technology instruction and that it is of high quality in terms of content and construct validity and reliability. This online lesson is also proved to be highly effective in supporting students' progress, specifically with high-proficiency students.

Although the evidence was not significant, it is considered a useful instructional tool in supporting low-proficiency students to develop their LSP speaking ability. Most evidently, it assisted students to move from their actual stage of performance to their potential stage at their own pace, time and place. Ultimately, this guideline will particularly be useful in other ESP courses with the integration of an online technology to provide students to self-access and self-practise their ESP speaking ability in the interactive environment.

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