

# Young Learners' Attitudes towards Classroom Materials Design in Play-based Language Learning Course

Rin Cheep-Aranai

Faculty of Education, Silpakorn University, Nakornpathom, Thailand

Email: rin.eng@gmail.com

Orawan Chukaeo

The Demonstration School of Silpakorn University (Early Childhood & Elementary), Nakornpathom, Thailand

Email: tarl\_orawanny@hotmail.com

**Abstract**—Thailand's primary education has encountered a major problem of inadequate teachers. The common temporary solutions in each school are to have one teacher teaching all subjects and to teach to a textbook. Consequently, enhancing motivation has long been the continuing challenge for Thai learners in traditional English language classrooms. This study aims at exploring attitudes of young learners who participated in the 30-hour play-based language learning activities course. They were interviewed individually toward their direct experiences in manipulating of materials and activities designed for the course. Moreover, focus group interviews were conducted to investigate parents' opinions on their children's behaviors outside classrooms. Findings from the study present materials children like to play with in each play type grounded on the play and sociocultural theories. Also, the findings discuss analyses of what and how play materials influence children's interests, engagement, and language learning. They illustrate factors affecting choices of play materials including age, gender, and types of play objects. More importantly, the findings show essential implications on both learner's motivation and autonomous learning and teachers' roles and mindset toward alternative instructions.

**Index Terms**—play-based language learning, young learners, materials development, EFL

## I. INTRODUCTION

People say that your attitudes toward a goal you want to achieve is the most important mindset that leads to success. If you have positive attitude, things seem to be easy, even though you are not yet mastered it. On the contrary, you may fail when negative attitudes win. It is undeniable that learning English language is a challenge in EFL contexts where there is limited needs in people's daily lives. In primary English classroom, it is then an interesting challenge for primary teachers to rise positive attitudes and provide meaningful purposes for young learners.

In Thailand, learners have limited opportunities to expose to English in daily life since we are surrounded with Thai language context. The learners will learn English in the classroom mostly. Classroom activities then can serve as the main practices that require learners to use English as a tool to create classroom discourse. In order to encourage young learners to gain learning outcomes from the language classroom, it is recommended to increase positive motivation. [1] One of his five hypotheses known as the affective filter, which elucidates the low affective filter can increase the positive attitude toward learning and lead to the higher language proficiency. [2], [3] Thus, the language classroom should contain the characteristic of 'fun' and plausible learning environment.

This study is purposed to investigate 1) attitudes of young learners toward their learning inside the English language classroom employing play-based language learning materials and activities, and 2) opinions and reflection of the parents of young learners outside the play-based language learning classroom.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Children's Play

Most of us are familiar with the word 'play' that relates to toys, objects, and people. In different disciplines, play has been defined differently. For instance, play is recognized as an important part for examining child's development level. It brings about particular intervention for individual needs in early childhood special education. While, in psychology, children's play provides understanding of their problems especially with their emotion. Thus, the therapists can evaluate and find solutions to assist them. [4] In universal, play is seen as a natural development that all professionals can observe and gain information about their behaviors and child's developmental areas. [5] Additionally, play is referred to as an activity for children in the ages from babyhood to teenager periods, which

those activities do not have certain definitions as they can be defined by different adults from different field.

### *B. Play - Kinds and Benefits*

Most of us are familiar with the word 'play' that relates to toys, objects, and people. Play is also discussed by its categories. Many people have suggested different types of play according to particular motivation and psychological function. Some scholars categorized it by materials and activities.

Game is a type of play that represents something fun and challenging. They are also seen as the instrument of cooperation and competition. Earlier, games include elements of movement, spontaneity, socializing community, order, ease, and relaxation. [6] Later on, competitive games have been the subject area known as Game theory that games become more a serious activity. [6] Game theory is defined as "the logic of decision-making in social situations in which outcomes depend upon the decisions of two or more autonomous agents", which the strategy of each player will be affected by his or her calculations of what the other player or players will do in pursuit of the pay-off, the desired benefit of the game. It is also conceived as ways of exercising and stretching each player's theory of mind to the limits" (p. 129). There are lots of advantages of games to use in play such as the role of chance to verbally and non-verbally practice physical and mental skills, integrate skills, develop their socializing skills. However, teacher needs to be careful that learners may perceive them as a too serious competition when they are too much into the games. Games should be taken in a not serious activity that accept voluntary, assume free interaction but balance with activities' rules. So that students learn what they know or do not know, and what the thoughts of others are that they are the main concept of the theory of mind.

Make-believe or Pretend play is a type of play that presents a natural activity children do outside the classroom using their first language, while theater or dramatic play is applied with the same idea but in bigger and more formal settings. Role-play is another term to use inside the language classroom to identify the activity facilitating the learners to use the target language. However, they contain the same characteristics of hiding identity, but act as someone else relating to the topics or situations they set or are set. As a matter of fact, Role play is seen to be adaptation of natural way of learning into natural-like setting in the classroom. It is capable to visualize that pretend play and dramatic play refer to the activity that children dress up and use their imagination pretending to be animals, princess, objects, and many other characters to be in a particular story or situation that they create. [7] Jean Piaget's notion is cited in the book 'Toys, play, and child development.' He called it "symbolic play" which "is not just a passing feature of growth through emergence of logical and orderly thought, but rather an intrinsically adaptive feature of our human condition." (p.7).

Physical play is a kind of play that is related to the bodily movement that young learners improve their physical and cognitive development. It may include the

activities such as constructive play, exploratory play, and manipulation of objects like play materials and toys. While constructive play can be seen when children build something like blocks and Legos, exploratory play is found when they investigate surrounding nature and objects. Manipulation of objects like play materials and toys is obviously seen as a part of child's play as well. There are viewpoints over toys in terms of advantages and disadvantages; gender-specific toys and gender-neutral toys. People always buy different kinds of toys according to the gender of the kids. If they are boys, it is assumed that they will like some toys such as trucks, soldiers, wild animals, helicopters, monsters, and others; whereas the girls are expected to have something more soft and girlish such as baby dolls, princess, soft pillows, dresses, make-ups. While the color of the objects is blue mainly for boys, pink is for girls. Some may argue that the kids actually do not know or realize at first what they tend to play. As a matter of fact that, it is the adults who put that favors into the children's perception. Thus, there is a suggestion for parents that their children should be exposed to gender-neutral toys that can be played by both boys and girls, such as blocks, playhouse, wooden music instruments, balls, legos, board games, and so on. [7] Pulaski's implications was cited about toys for children aged from kindergarten through second grade that the minimally structured toy materials elicited more varied themes and richer fantasy by the children than the highly structured toy materials. The minimally structured toys included drawing paper, paints, Playdough, wooden blocks, and cardboard cartons, whereas the highly structured toys are such as plastic molds, cutters for use with playdough, a metal dollhouse, Barbie dolls, and specific outfits for those dolls.

[6] The significance of language play is related to activities employing language use. It is essential for cognitive and social development. He suggests that materials constitute authentic language use that carries the great proportion of nonsense, fiction, ritual, and creative thoughts to those with great proportion of personal importance and psychological saliency of songs, soap operas, advertisements, rhyme, jokes, and prayers. Moreover, literature including haiku, proverb, epigram, nursery rhyme, the pun, the joke, the advertisement, the tabloid headline is grouped in this kind of play. It evokes emotion, promotes discussion, and requires language structure practice, for instance, when learners need a rehearsal, pay attention to wording, and repeat a model. Those texts composed of linguistically and culturally elements in the communication.

Creative play is another activity that elevates young learners' imagination and engagement through the use of arts and crafts. It may consist of activities such as creating paper dolls, drawing, coloring, decorating, cutting, and different activities that require the use of fine motor skills. Some craft tools can be prepared by teachers or professional illustrators who sketch of the craft outlines. Some can be initiated and created by children themselves. Mostly, creative play is demonstrated as the first step of their own creation. Then, they use it to play

with their friends afterwards. It provides opportunity to be spontaneous in learning as there are a wide variety of materials they can select from. However, it is noteworthy that there are some times children do not have adequate knowledge of the world to initiate things. Teachers can help mediate their learning by using language and craft tools to both construct play objects and reinforce language focus.

There are a lot of benefits of play that have been discussed throughout the aforementioned information in each kind of play. [2] The benefits of Pretend play have been illustrated that it increases association in each person's imaginative theme. It is engaged with collective monologue as well as affection, especially when the children have different social background, and try to assimilate of what make sense in real lives. The careful awareness and observation from adults are needed to understand and assess their children's cognition and emotion through action and communication. [7] Those benefits have been concluded into eleven items as follows:

TABLE I. ELEVEN BENEFITS OF PLAY

- |                                             |
|---------------------------------------------|
| 1. Motor skills developed                   |
| 2. Senses sharpened                         |
| 3. Expression of emotions – empathy         |
| 4. Sharing, turn taking – harmony           |
| 5. Ordering, sequencing                     |
| 6. Delay of gratification                   |
| 7. Vocabulary growth                        |
| 8. Concentration increased                  |
| 9. Flexibility                              |
| 10. Role taking                             |
| 11. Expansion of imagination and creativity |

According to Table I, play is believed to benefit various areas of basic child development including cognitive, physical, social-affective, and language development. However, in elementary education, most studies of play focused on first language development. The main reason is primarily because of the language itself that can either motivate or block children's learning. In other words, play is mostly exploited in the class of L1. Thus, it is not necessary to explore children's language development through play. Also, it is observed that children naturally prefer play in their mother tongue. This study aims at looking into the design of play activities appropriate for enhancing foreign and second language development.

In conclusion, the most important issue of the kinds and benefits of plays and material selection are mainly depending on appropriateness to learners. Moreover, learners' need and the purposes of use are highly suggested to take into consideration for the adult caretakers. Teachers must carefully choose the ones that are socially and linguistically suitable for the learners' needs and interests, background knowledge, their proficiency levels, and other learner and learning factors in order to provide the least possibly negative outcomes or the most advantages for them. Moreover, the materials must be supporting language learning and incorporating with play.

### C. Stages of Play

[7] Play in relation to the developmental stages of learning of young learners provides important information to apply those stages appropriately into their language development.

TABLE II. STAGES OF PLAY

Stages	Description
Stage I 0-2 years	<i>Imitation</i> 1. Use of reflexes 2. Repetition of sounds and movements 3. Beginnings of symbolic imitation <i>Practice and mastery</i> 1. Sensory play – tasting, smelling, making sounds 2. Ritualistic play 3. Simple make-believe
Stage II 2-5 years	<i>Symbolic play</i> 1. Play that distorts reality; pretend, pure assimilation 2. Implies representation of absent object 3. Parallel play 4. Compensatory play
Stage III 7- years	<i>Games with rules</i> 1. Institutional, hide and seek, hopscotch 2. Board games

From Table II, it is possible to imply that play is closer to the real world when children grow older. They may be involved with more skills when they interact with different kinds of plays; for examples, the physical, coordination, social interaction, negotiation, imagination skills. In the same time, they also develop their emotional skills when encountering with different situations in different play contexts.

### D. Theories Related to Play

[3] Jean Piaget claims that children learn through the active exploration of a wide variety of objects. He is a great influence of child development with his proposal of the theory of four development stages. It explains the knowledge development that is a process including both biological and cognitive interactions. The first stage is called 'sensorimotor stage' which explains that the child experiences the world by movement and senses. This stage can increase infant's sensation, symbolic thinking, and habit formation. The second stage is known as 'preoperational stage', explaining the ability that child can correlate things in his mental process such as actions and utterances. 'Concrete operational stage' is the third stage that explains a child's capability in thinking logically with support of practicality. The last stage is 'formal operational stage' that a child thinks abstractly and can make conclusion from information they have; such as a problem-solving ability. From this theory, it was believed that a child develops their own perception, knowledge, and mental ability through his observation and exposure to the world.

Vygotskian's sociocultural theory has devoted to concept of internalized process development transformed by the external activities depending on each person's cultural background. That is directly applicable to child's play. The child play is regarded to the external activity, either with objects or human or both, which will be

transformed into a child's brain for the internalized process of what each is exposed to, who each is dealing with, how each is solving the problems, and so on. Through this process, knowledge is built, and developed. [6] Moreover, Vygotskian learning theory and variable competence models are cited that "they are particularly compatible with the notion of play as a use of language in which form, meaning, and function are in dynamic and mutually-determining interaction" (p.175). This notion has provided the socially-constituted "scaffolding" activities. Learners will be guided by others, and internalized from what they have practiced. It is described by what Vygotsky called "Zone of proximal development (ZPD)," which learners develop their new behavior by their existing knowledge and experience and scaffolding and support from others to create new knowledge and problem solutions.

In this study, the development of play-based language learning is grounded on sociocultural theory. It is designed for children to play socially with other playmates. They are encouraged to interact with play materials and activities in order to elicit their schemata, experience, and motivational environment, and scaffold what is already know and what is new.

#### *E. Children's Motivation*

[1] The lower the affective filter, the more positive emotions people have especially in learning. Play is seen to be the activity that lowers children's affective filter. It is possible to explain that they feel free to become any characters, say non-sense words and sentences, do any activities without fear of punishment or negative consequences. Furthermore, play promotes cooperative and relaxing learning environment. Cooperative play is associated directly with motivation as it maximizes benefits of learning with peers. Also, it is embraced with the increase of communicative interaction in the classroom. [8] Benefits of cooperative learning with play were mentioned that "it enhances learner motivation and reduce learner stress and to create a positive affective classroom climate", and "it seeks to develop classrooms that foster cooperation rather than competition in learning" (pp.193-195). [9] Moreover, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory posited the processes of learning that people learn well when cooperating and conversing with the more-knowledgeable others. They are critically thinking and internalizing their idea to be more understanding in their mental knowledge.

Less stressful activities on accuracy of a language are realized to carry out accomplishment of a learner because of they have low anxiety and affective filter. [8] Those activities and the achievement are supported to be motivational which improve learners' motivation and therefore promote learning.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### *A. Aims*

This study has purposed to investigate the attitudes expressed by young learners towards the English language classrooms instructed by play-based language

learning (PLL) materials and activities in EFL contexts in Thailand.

#### *B. Setting*

The participants of this study were 16 people. They enrolled to attend the PLL course according to their parents' beliefs and interests in English language learning course known as activity-based course. All of them were combination of primary levels grades one to six whose ages were in the range of 7-12 years old. They were grouped into two groups according to their grade levels. Half of them were studying in lower primary (grades 1-3) and upper primary (grades 4-6). Fifteen of them studied in Bangkok. One came from the South of Thailand. Although all of them had experienced studying in cram schools during school breaks, none had heard about PLL that integrated children's play into the English language course. There were two main leading teachers for each group including three Thai and one foreign teachers. English was the main medium of instructions which was used throughout the whole course during class hours and recesses. Play-based language learning (PLL) was designed based on sociocultural and play theories. It is characterized by mental and physical activities that have purposes and/or situations to make play and language learning meaningful, joyful, spontaneous, and absent from fear or punishment. The content was arranged into eight themes. Each theme took three to four hours that lasted 30 hours of learning in total. All sessions were held inside the play classroom except one session that children were taken outside the classroom to use the language learned in real-life situations. Inside the play classroom, each lesson was divided into three learning stages namely circle time, centers, and crystallization. Language play and physical play activities were designed for circle time, while creative play, games with rules, and pretend play activities were placed into three centers stage. Crystallization was the time when children produced and reflected their own learning after each lesson.

#### *C. Instruments and Data Collection*

The main research instruments were semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. For one, semi-structured interview was employed to collect children's attitudes toward PLL materials and activities. Children were asked to share the extent they learned through direct experience in PLL classroom as well as to compare it to their regular classrooms at schools. For another, three focus group interviews were conducted to explore parents' opinions and observations of their children's behaviors outside the classroom after the first, middle, and final sessions. Note taking and video cameras were used to record parents' opinions and their observable expressions to ensure validity and reliability. Also, the video recording could show the parents' reactions toward the change of their children's behaviors over the period of PLL classrooms.

#### *D. Data Analysis*

Data from both semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews from both young learners and parents, respectively, were analyzed using content analysis.

#### IV. FINDINGS

Findings from the semi-structured interview revealed attitudes of the young learners that can be divided into attitudes towards materials of each PLL activities and their influence on the English language learning. Besides, parents' opinions and expressions showed their children's behaviors of the language use outside the classrooms.

##### A. Play Materials of Young Learners' Preferences

There were a great number of play objects, children play toys, as well as instructional instruments designed for language learning in PLL classrooms. Children naturally reacted positively to play toys as they have experienced engaging with different toys at home before they entered schools. PLL materials consisted of different features, layout, forms, and directions of use regarding each play type. Table I showed the summary of play materials that were ranked the most in each play activity according to genders.

TABLE III. PLAY MATERIALS ACCORDING TO EACH PLAY TYPE

Play type	Boy	Girl	Both
Language play	- Ball	- Unscramble word cards - Song - Story books	- Colorful flashcards
Physical play	- Balls - Jigsaw puzzles	- Picture cards for I-spy	- Human-size clock
Creative play	- Miniature 3-D paper house and decoration	- Colored pencils, markers, stampers - Small decorations like flowers, buttons, stickers	- Playdough - Cootie catcher
Games with rules			- Bingo - Sports equipment - Food toys - Scavenger hunting mission
Pretend play	- Fake money	- Dolls - Food toys - Cooking tools	- Detective clothing and tools - Puppets

People normally buys toys and play objects according the children's gender. They assume to buy cars and wild animals for boys, while dolls, make-up, and dresses for girls. Also, color difference signifies play objects for gender. From Table III in this study, different gender showed their different choices of interests in play materials. Boys indicated their favors for balls, jigsaw puzzles, 3-D paper house, and fake money. On the other hand, girls liked to play with songs, story books, word cards, picture cards, stationery, small and soft decorations, puppets, and dolls. However, some play materials were reported to be gender-neutral toys. Those included colorful flashcards, human-size clocks, playdough, cootie catcher, Bingo, sports equipment, food toys, scavenger hunting mission, detective clothing and tools, and puppets.

[2], [7] Age difference is realized as a major consideration when choosing play materials for young

learners because it is related directly to stages of child development. Table IV in this study demonstrated that children of different age groups stated the choices of their favorite play materials.

TABLE IV. PLAY MATERIALS ACCORDING TO AGE GROUPS

Play type	Lower	Upper	Both
Language play	- Ball - Song	- Word cards for unscramble activity	- Colorful flashcards - Story books
Physical play	- Balls - Human-size clocks	- Picture cards for I-spy	- Jigsaw puzzles
Creative play	- Small decorations like flowers, buttons, stickers - Cootie catcher	- Miniature 3-D paper house and decoration	- Colored pencils, markers, stampers - Playdough
Games with rules	- Bingo	- Scavenger hunting mission	- Sports equipment - Food toys
Pretend play	- Dolls	- Detective clothing and tools - Fake money	- Food toys - Cooking tools - Puppets

The older children grow, the closer to the real world the play materials are to be chosen. Besides, older children tend to assign more complicated rules when playing. As shown in Table IV, it is found that younger learners had favor for materials that had direct meaning and purposes assigned to their appearance. For example, balls were used to throw or pass, songs were for singing and dancing, human-size clocks were for telling time, small decorations for the craft were for decoration, and dolls were for playing pretending. Whereas, the older learners at upper primary levels stated their interests in word cards for them to unscramble, picture cards, 3-D paper house, scavenger hunting mission, detective clothing and tools, and fake money. At the last column, the findings presented that some play materials could attract both age groups including colorful flashcards, storybooks, jigsaw puzzles, stationery, playdough, realia such as sports equipment and cooking tools, food toys, and puppets.

##### B. Play Materials and Other Influences on Language Learning and Engagement

When children play, they spend time playing and learning the same way as adults do to their serious work. As for learning, play can be applied to promote both first and second language development. When learning in PLL, children were informed the purpose of the language use. This study revealed important findings to show play materials that enhanced children's language learning and engagement. Firstly, realia such as cooking tools and 3-D paper house and decorations influenced children to use the English language purposefully and in their real-life situations.

*"We can visit a mall to buy real food in English and come back to cook for real. I get such an authentic experience of learning" (PY1)*

*"I can go out to the real situation and use the learned vocabulary in my real life." (NM2)*

Apart from materials, teachers and playmates were the key people who stimulated young learners to engage with the PLL activities enthusiastically and communicate in English.

*"I liked to speak English and play with teacher X because he is funny."* (PY1, MN1, KH2, TE2)

*"Teacher Y is funny. I like to play with him."* (NM2)

*"I speak English all the time with teachers and my friends in this class."* (JL2)

Lastly, learning environment in PLL classroom was mentioned to support children engagement and language learning.

*"I have freedom to think, do, play, and speak English without being afraid of making it incorrectly."* (PY1)

*"I can sit and lay down on the floor."* (ETH1)

### C. Comparison to Regular Language Classrooms

This question item asked young children's attitudes toward the PLL classroom in comparison with their direct experiences learning in regular language classrooms. All young participants agreed that they preferred the PLL classroom because of several reasons including playmates, plausible contexts of learning, and English language use as the main medium of instructions.

*"I can play with friends in the classroom and learn English in the same time."* (DN1, MA2)

*"It is a fun environment and there are fun teachers. I got to practice English all the time."* (JL2, NM2, TE2)

When comparing to the regular classrooms, all young participants mentioned the same classroom rules and activities that demotivated their interests and engagement.

*"Thai teachers at our school never allow us to play. I feel shy so I only sit and am afraid of expressing or acting out."* (MA2)

*"I don't learn a lot of vocabulary."* (JL2)

*"I'm forced to write such as a report and no other activity."* (MA2, TE2)

On the contrary, young children's attitudes toward PLL classroom showed positive experiences. They signified the differences of PLL classroom from their regular language classrooms in aspects of fun and active learning, improvement of vocabulary and language structure, and more confidence.

*"It's more fun than at school because there is more to play."* (PY1)

*"It makes the lesson easier to understand for me."* (TE2)

*"I speak English better."* (ETH1)

### D. Influences of PLL on Language Learning Outside the Classroom

Not only were young participants' behaviors observable and reflected inside the PLL classroom, but they were also shown outside the classroom. The findings from focus group interviews with the parents revealed the evidence of influences of PLL on children's language learning outside the classroom.

*"She came back home and talked to me in English."* (PY1's mother)

*"It was the first time she has ever spoken English at home. She spoke with her sister, even though it was*

*ungrammatical. Another time, she just said the vocabulary she learned from the PLL class to what she saw on the television. Everyone in the family was surprised."* (MW1's father)

*"She spoke a lot at home with me and her dolls. She was very enthusiastic and had a lot more confidence. She remembered things she learned and played each day."* (DN1's mother)

Children reacted to what they learned from PLL classroom. They found more opportunity to apply the language learned into their real life outside the classroom. Thus, parents stated the surprising language behaviors and motivation of their children. They felt encouraged to support their children to participate in language classroom where joyful environment and purposeful activities were included since PLL activities showed the proof of their beliefs.

## V. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Implications from the Findings

Materials in PLL classrooms were collected from various sources including the real toys from home, the merchandise from the shops, in-house production specifically for the planned lessons, as well as authentic goods in real-life use. To investigate what play materials should be effectively employed in the language classrooms for young learners, the important findings showed some play materials that were in favor of both genders and age groups. They included colorful flashcards, playdough, food toys, cooking tools, sport equipment, and puppets. One explanation is that young learners respond well with big-sized pictures and colorful objects. [7] Also, it can be seen that the above play materials are considered minimally structured toys. They allow children to use imagination more than highly structured toys.

Specifically to the play materials for different ages, they should be chosen according to familiarity and complexity. The findings showed that younger children tended to play with what they were familiar with. It is possible to explain that children have been exposed to these materials before. They can identify what and how to handle these familiar objects easily. On the contrary, older children felt bored of the familiar objects. The possible explanation is that older-age children have developed more cognition. They are at the age of getting interested and excited with challenging and unfamiliar situations. To elaborate from this study, older children enjoy hunting mission, 3-D paper house, and detective clothing and tools. It is possible that older children are intrigued to think more critically when manipulating of more complex materials. Also, they are developed more world knowledge than younger children and more closely to adult ages, which can explain the reasons they like to use realia to imitate real-life situations of adults. In terms of authenticity, the play materials that were incorporated with this feature attracted young learners the most. [10] It is supported by several studies that authentic materials increase opportunities for learners to apply it in everyday

life. It is possible to view that in this study, lower primary play and learn with upper primary friends. Older children tend to help teach younger friends to use the realia they are familiar with at home.

Another type of minimally structured toys are those created by children themselves. Children tend to enjoy, engage in the activities, and be enthusiastic when they are assigned to create their own materials such as creative movie posters, storybooks of their own stories, funny menu of their restaurants, and their scripts of their fantasy movie scenes. [2] it is supported that children can use imagination well for stories or situations they create. With this finding, it is recommended that adults should look for play materials that are minimally structured and those created by themselves. Additionally, not only should children at the same age learn together, but also the mix of different ages is suggested to scaffold children's cooperative, social, and cognitive development.

In the classroom for young learners, teachers should consider prepare gender-neutral materials, which children can learn to play with other friends in different gender. It also promotes mixed abilities in the classroom. To elaborate, boys tend to play materials related to physical strengths, while girls like to play with soft and small objects. In this way, children may develop understandings and caring for others. Grouping boys and girls together is one way that teachers may take it into account to promote paying respect of different others.

Apart from materials, language use as the medium of instruction in the class showed influence on children's second language development. In the PLL class, the findings illustrated that young participants used English almost all the time. It can be explained that they are informed directly about the purpose of PLL class and of the English language use. Also, children are commonly influenced by peers and teachers. Once, few people are using English, everyone else tend to follow. Another important explanation is that they do not feel fear to make mistakes when playing and learning in the PLL class. Therefore, it is recommended that primary teachers use the English language as the medium of instructions as much as possible. Young participants can perform beyond teacher's expectation when their mental stage is not blocked. Besides, play materials and activities can provide context clues for children to comprehend and achieve language learning goal.

The findings demonstrated how English language was developed in PLL classroom and it had influenced children's learning outside the classroom as evidenced from focus group interviews. It can be explained that young learners have freedom to control their own learning and playing in the facilitating environment. Thus, they learn to find contexts to use the language to meet their own purpose and desire in their time and pace. [6] In the same way, playing games allowed players to make decision, which led to learner's autonomy. Therefore, it is suggested that parents can be crucial stakeholders who provide continuous language learning environment and support. Parents can employ any play toys or materials at home to play with their children using the language focus.

According to the aforementioned topics of toys, the minimally structured toys are more highly recommended than the structured toys. Thus, different kinds of realia that are available at home can make meaning for children to play and learn in their individual way.

In conclusion, young learners' attitudes toward PLL course revealed key findings to the extent of effective materials and activities that should be provided to them in the language classroom. It is beneficial to unlock too much controlled learning environment. Thus, it shows real potential of young learners' learning inside the classroom that influences their continuous learning outside the classroom.

### B. Recommendations for Further Study

It is suggested that further study conduct with different contexts such as integrating PLL activities into regular English classrooms in order to shed more light on the impact of PLL. Besides, English is important language for international communication. Thus, it is recommended to conduct a study that applies play-based English language learning into different content areas. It will be beneficial for young learners to extend more purposes of language learning. Moreover, it may provide more insightful information when developing other courses. In addition, PLL should be studied with other age groups to acquire information in depth and breadth.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work is contributed to my family, Associate Professor Punchalee Wasanasomsithi, Ph.D., Jutarat Vibulphol, Ph.D., my students, my colleagues and supports from the Faculty of Education, Silpakorn University, and the participants of the study. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who believes in me and my work, and who comes to play and learn together.

### REFERENCES

- [1] S. D. Krashen and T. D. Terrell, *The Natural Approach*, New York: Pergamon, 1983.
- [2] L. McMahon, *The Handbook of Play Therapy*, London: Routledge, 1992.
- [3] G. Landreth. (September 2010). What is Play? *Eureka*. [Online] Available: [http://www.eureka.org.uk/Play\\_and\\_learn/what\\_is\\_play](http://www.eureka.org.uk/Play_and_learn/what_is_play)
- [4] Jrank (September 2010). Child Development Reference Vol.6: Play—What is Play? The Importance of Play, Elements of Children's Play. *Net Industries* [Online] Available: <http://social.jrank.org/pages/492/Play.html>
- [5] J. Linton. (September 2010). What is Play? *Children's Play Information Service National Children's Bureau* [Online] Available: [http://www.ncb.org.uk/dotpdf/open%20access%20%20phase%201%20only/factsheet\\_whatisplay\\_cpis\\_20060728.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/dotpdf/open%20access%20%20phase%201%20only/factsheet_whatisplay_cpis_20060728.pdf)
- [6] G. Cook, *Language Play, Language Learning*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- [7] J. L. Singer, "Imaginative play and adaptive development," in *Toys, play, and child development*, J. H. Goldstein, Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 6-26.
- [8] J. C. Richards and T. S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 193-195.
- [9] L. S. Vygotsky, "Play and its role in the mental development of the child," *Psychology and Marxism Internet Archive*, August 2002.

- [10] N. Anderson. *Exploring Second Language Reading: Issues and Strategies*, Canada: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1999.

**Rin Cheep-Aranai** was born in Bangkok, Thailand. She graduated doctoral degree in English as an International Language from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. Her dissertation was the invention of Play-based Language Learning for young EFL learners. In her master degree, she graduated in English as a Foreign Language from Thammasat University in Bangkok, Thailand. She is an English Lecturer in the Foreign Language Teaching Division at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Silpakorn University, Thailand. She teaches content courses in the fields of children's language learning and ESP. Her main research interests include second language acquisition, young language learners, English for business, and curriculum design. Her recent publications are on English for young language learners, digital storytelling, business English, and extensive reading.

Dr. Cheep-Aranai was granted by Fulbright to conduct part of her research at the University of Utah, United States of America in 2015. Her personal hobbies include playing sports and doing volunteer work.

**Orawan Chukaeo** lives at 130/1 Moo 8 Tambon Phosadet, Muang, Nakhon Si Thammarat 80000, Thailand. She was born on March 6, 1983. She is 34 years old. Her religion is Buddhist and her nationality is Thai. She received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Silpakorn University in 1996 and her master's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Silpakorn University in 2013. After she graduated the bachelor's degree, she had worked as an English Tutor at Smart Nakhon Si Thammarat from 1997 to 2002. After that, she has been an English teacher for grades 1 to 3 at The Demonstration school of Silpakorn University (Early Childhood & Elementary) from June, 2010 to present. Her publications are on English for elementary education and phonics.

Miss Chukaeo enjoys riding bicycles and reading as her hobbies.