

Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language: A Case Study on the Use of Board Games to Enhance Undergraduate Learning Achievement

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Abstract

This study aims to develop the board game “*Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language*” designed to enhance undergraduate learning achievement of foreign loanwords in the Thai language. The board game emphasizes interactive and engaging learning, integrating knowledge about the origins, meanings, concepts, and usage of loanwords from various languages such as English, Chinese, Khmer, and Pali-Sanskrit into a creative and challenging format. The researcher meticulously compiled the content of foreign loanwords in the Thai language to design various game activities. Results from using the board game with a sample group of Thai undergraduate students indicated that it effectively increased their learning achievements. The board game also contributed to enjoyable learning and interaction. Participants provided positive feedback on the board game’s design and content, further guiding improvements to enhance learning achievement. This board game is one of the modern teaching tools, promoting active learning and effectively facilitating knowledge related to foreign loanwords in the Thai language.

Keywords: board game, foreign loanwords, Thai language, learning achievement

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Introduction

The dynamic nature of the Thai language reflects continuous linguistic evolution, much of which is influenced by foreign loanwords from languages such as English, Chinese, Khmer, and Pali-Sanskrit. These loanwords play a significant role in shaping communication across domains including education, technology, media, and culture. Despite their prevalence, the pedagogical treatment of foreign loanwords at the undergraduate level in Thai language curricula remains limited, often relying on traditional didactic methods that emphasize rote memorization rather than conceptual understanding or linguistic awareness. Consequently, students frequently exhibit low engagement and limited retention of knowledge related to the etymology, semantic transformation, and contextual application of such words (Saengboon, 2021; Wongsuwon, 2019).

In response to the shifting landscape of language education, recent pedagogical approaches advocate for the integration of interactive and student-centered learning tools. Game-based learning (GBL) has emerged as a promising strategy to enhance learner motivation and academic performance, particularly among digital-native undergraduate students (Gee, 2007; Prensky, 2001). Games, by their nature, promote engagement, collaboration, and experiential learning, which are all conducive to deeper cognitive processing. Studies have demonstrated that GBL can foster critical thinking, improve knowledge retention, and increase students' affective involvement in learning (Plass et al., 2015). However, there exists a research gap in the application of such pedagogical innovations to the specific domain of loanwords in Thai, where most instructional methods remain static and teacher-centered.

The lack of innovative instructional materials targeting the understanding of foreign loanwords constitutes a notable void in language education research and practice. While several studies have focused on the sociolinguistic impact and structural integration of loanwords in Thai (Thammasathien, 2020), few have explored how modern instructional media can support students' comprehension of their linguistic origins and functions. Moreover, the conventional perception of loanwords as a dry and technical topic has led to diminished student enthusiasm and engagement. There is a critical need for a didactic tool that is not only content-rich but also motivationally effective and pedagogically sound—addressing both linguistic knowledge and learner-centered engagement.

This study is underpinned by several theoretical frameworks, including constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through active involvement in meaningful tasks (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, the principles of active learning and game-based learning provide a robust foundation for the design of educational interventions that are participatory, problem-based, and cognitively stimulating. According to Bloom's revised taxonomy, engaging learners at higher-order cognitive levels such as analysis, evaluation, and creation is essential for developing transferable knowledge (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). These frameworks collectively inform the development of a board game designed to facilitate the understanding of foreign loanwords through play, inquiry, and reflection.

The impetus for this research arose from the researcher's sustained academic interest in foreign loanwords and observed challenges faced by undergraduate students in mastering this content. Students often exhibit difficulties in grasping the linguistic and cultural nuances of loanwords, leading to surface-level understanding and underdeveloped critical perspectives. Drawing from both pedagogical theory and classroom experience, the researcher identified

the potential of educational board games to transform passive learning into active exploration. The current study, therefore, seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by designing and evaluating a board game as an instructional innovation. Through this game, it is anticipated that students will not only acquire linguistic knowledge but also develop a more appreciative and analytical view of language change and contact in the Thai context.

Objectives

1. To develop an educational board game “*Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language*” to enhance undergraduate learning achievement.
2. To examine the effectiveness of the board game in enhancing undergraduate students’ learning achievement in the study of foreign loanwords in the Thai language.
3. To analyze the students’ satisfaction provided by the “*Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language*” board game.

Research Hypotheses

1. The board game “*Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language*” significantly improves undergraduate students’ learning achievement regarding foreign loanwords in the Thai language.
2. Undergraduate students have a high level of satisfaction with the design, content, and learning experience provided by the board game.

Methodology

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) methodology with the objective of developing and evaluating an educational board game titled “*Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language*.” The development of the board game was based on the ADDIE Model, which consists of five stages: Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. The methodology was divided into two main phases as follows:

Phase 1: Development of the Board Game Using the ADDIE Model

Analysis

In the first stage, a needs analysis was conducted to identify problems and challenges in learning foreign loanwords among undergraduate students. The analysis was carried out through document reviews, curriculum analysis, and in-depth interviews. The target group consisted of 29 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Education, Srinakharinwirot University. The researcher also reviewed academic sources related to loanwords in Thai from English, Chinese, Khmer, and Pali-Sanskrit origins to determine appropriate content for game development.

Design

Based on the analysis, the game structure and learning activities were designed in alignment with the research objectives. The board game included components such as a game board, question cards, challenge cards, player tokens, and a scoring system. Game activities were designed to promote interactive learning, critical thinking, and contextual usage of

loanwords. Storyboarding and content mapping were conducted to ensure coherence between gameplay and learning objectives.

Development

A prototype of the board game was developed and tested. The prototype included both visual and educational components. Experts in Thai language, instructional design, and game-based learning were consulted to validate the content and design of the game. Feedback was used to revise and improve the prototype. A small-scale pilot test was conducted with a few students to evaluate the usability and functionality of the game.

Implementation

The final version of the board game was implemented with a sample of 29 undergraduate students over four weeks. The board game was integrated into regular classroom activities. The researcher acted as a facilitator during gameplay and observed students' engagement, collaboration, and learning behavior.

Evaluation

The evaluation phase included both formative evaluation, which was conducted during the development and pilot stages, and summative evaluation, which was conducted after the full implementation. The evaluation tools included:

- A learning achievement test (pre-test and post-test)
- A student satisfaction questionnaire (using a 5-point Likert scale)
- An observation checklist and group interview protocol

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (paired sample t-test) to assess the effectiveness of the board game.

Phase 2: Assessment of Learning Achievement and Student Satisfaction

Sample Group

The sample consisted of 29 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Education, Srinakharinwirot University. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who had prior exposure to the concept of foreign loanwords in the Thai language.

Research Instruments

1. The educational board game: *"Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language"*
2. A 30-item multiple-choice learning achievement test
3. A satisfaction questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale
4. Observation checklist and semi-structured interview guide

Data Collection and Analysis

A pre-test was administered before the game-based intervention, and a post-test was conducted after four weeks of game use. After the sessions, students completed the satisfaction questionnaire and participated in group interviews. Quantitative data were

analyzed using SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis to provide deeper insights into students' learning experiences and feedback.

Results

Learning Achievement Results

The comparison between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students is summarized in the following table

Table 1
Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Test	N	Mean	S.D.	t	Sig
Pre-Test	29	17.52	2.81	13.62	.000**
Post-Test	29	24.48	2.36		

Note: ** indicates significance at the .05 level

The results indicate a statistically significant improvement in learning achievement after using the board game. The mean score increased from 17.52 (pre-test) to 24.48 (post-test), and the paired sample t-test showed a significant difference ($t(28) = 13.62$, $p < .005$), suggesting that the use of the board game had a positive impact on students' knowledge and understanding of foreign loanwords in Thai.

Student Satisfaction Results

The satisfaction questionnaire revealed a high level of student satisfaction with the game. The results are summarized in the table below

Table 2
The Satisfaction of Students

Aspect	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Design and attractiveness	4.63	0.49	Very satisfied
Content and relevance	4.51	0.54	Very satisfied
Interactivity and enjoyment	4.68	0.45	Very satisfied
Overall learning experience	4.57	0.48	Very satisfied
Total Satisfaction	4.60	0.49	Very satisfied

The overall mean satisfaction score was 4.60, indicating that students were highly satisfied with the game. The highest satisfaction ratings were for interactivity and enjoyment (mean = 4.68) and design and attractiveness (mean = 4.63). This suggests that the game successfully engaged students and made learning more enjoyable.

Discussion

The results of this study provide strong evidence that the “*Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language*” board game was effective in improving students' learning achievement and increasing their satisfaction. The significant improvement in post-test scores ($t(28) = 13.62$, p

< .001) indicates that the game successfully enhanced students' understanding of foreign loanwords in Thai, supporting the findings of previous studies that emphasize the effectiveness of game-based learning in promoting cognitive achievement (Anderson & Dill, 2000; Gee, 2003).

The high levels of student satisfaction reported in the questionnaire (mean = 4.60) align with the literature on the benefits of interactive and engaging learning tools. Games, particularly those that encourage active participation and competition, have been found to improve motivation and learning outcomes (Prensky, 2001). In this study, students appreciated the game's design, which made the learning process both enjoyable and educational. These results support the argument that educational games can reduce anxiety and create a positive learning environment (Vogel et al., 2006).

Moreover, the content of the game, which integrated loanwords from multiple languages, helped students gain a more comprehensive understanding of the origins and usages of foreign loanwords. This reflects the findings of Dewaele and Li Wei (2012), who note that understanding the origins of loanwords contributes to deeper language learning and retention.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the “*Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language*” board game is an effective tool for enhancing undergraduate students' learning achievement in the Thai language, particularly in understanding foreign loanwords. The significant improvement in learning outcomes, as indicated by the pre-test and post-test comparison, suggests that game-based learning can play an important role in facilitating knowledge acquisition.

Furthermore, the high levels of satisfaction expressed by the students reflect the game's ability to engage and motivate learners. These findings contribute to the growing body of research on the benefits of using game-based learning in higher education (Gee, 2003; Prensky, 2001). Future research could explore the long-term effects of game-based learning on language retention and investigate other aspects of student engagement, such as collaboration and critical thinking.

Ultimately, the “*Foreign Loanwords in the Thai Language*” board game is a promising educational tool that not only enhances learning but also makes the process more enjoyable, fostering an interactive and student-centered learning environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations for future research are proposed to further explore the potential of game-based learning in the context of language education:

- 1. Long-term Impact of Game-Based Learning**

This study focused on short-term improvements in learning achievement and student satisfaction. Future research could investigate the long-term effects of using board games in language learning, particularly whether the knowledge gained from such interactive methods is retained over time. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to assess the sustained impact of game-based learning on language proficiency and retention of foreign loanwords.

2. **Comparative Studies with Other Learning Tools**

Further research could compare the effectiveness of board games with other traditional or modern learning tools, such as digital games, mobile apps, or traditional textbook-based learning, in promoting the understanding of foreign loanwords. A comparative analysis could provide deeper insights into the advantages and limitations of each learning tool and guide educators in selecting the most effective method for different learning contexts.

3. **Exploring Collaborative Learning in Game-Based Environments**

This study primarily focused on individual learning outcomes. Future studies could explore the role of collaboration and peer interaction in game-based learning environments. Research could examine how cooperative game mechanics, where students work together to solve problems, affect both the learning achievement and the social dynamics of the classroom. Collaborative game-based learning might enhance students' communication skills and foster a more engaging learning environment.

4. **Incorporating Different Language Groups**

While this study focused on foreign loanwords from English, Chinese, Khmer, and Pali-Sanskrit, future research could expand the scope to include loanwords from other languages that have influenced Thai. Researchers could examine how the inclusion of a wider range of languages affects students' understanding of the complexities of loanwords and their use in modern Thai. This could also allow for comparative studies between loanwords from various linguistic backgrounds.

5. **Exploring the Role of Gamification in Motivation and Engagement**

Future research could explore the specific elements of gamification (such as rewards, levels, and challenges) that contribute to students' motivation and engagement in learning. By conducting experimental studies with different gamification strategies, researchers could identify which aspects most effectively encourage students to engage with the learning material and improve their performance in language acquisition.

6. **Cultural Contexts and Adaptation**

The current study focused on Thai undergraduate students. Future studies could explore how game-based learning is received and adapted in different cultural contexts. Research could examine how educational games, particularly those involving loanwords, are perceived by students from different countries and languages, and how cultural factors influence their learning outcomes.

By addressing these areas, future research could contribute to a deeper understanding of how game-based learning can be optimized and applied across various educational settings, providing valuable insights for educators and instructional designers in the field of language education.

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