



## PSU Community Development Plan

### Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Program (FRIENDS Project) of the European Union and Prince of Songkla University

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#### Project proposal details:

#### 1. Title

**Read to Learn** (Empowering English Reading Literacy through Phonics and Extensive Reading for Primary School Students in the Deep South, Thailand)

#### 2. Principle and justification

##### 2.1 Historical setbacks

The region of southern Thailand has been severely affected by the South Thailand insurgency, a separatist insurgent movement in the historical Malay Pattani Region, made up of the three southernmost provinces of Thailand. The unrest has become increasingly violent since the turn of the millennium, setting the region back in several ways, including lack of access to some educational services, and overall student achievement much lower than the national average.

The insurgency has been also affecting schools, in the form of learning management of teachers in various subjects. The resulting negative impact on teachers is often managed by relocation from the affected areas, causing teacher shortages in local schools and communities. As a result, it is more difficult for students to access sufficient levels education.

##### 2.2 The role and importance of English language

In today's world, learning a foreign language is necessary for everyday life, since foreign language fluency is considered a tool for communication, education, knowledge-seeking, occupation, entertainment, multiculturalism, education, and global community vision. Moreover, foreign language fluency facilitates friendship and cooperation with other countries to enable students to develop a better understanding of themselves and others, including differences in language and culture, customs, traditions, ideas, society, economy, politics, and governance. Furthermore, foreign language learning creates a more positive attitude towards the use of foreign languages not only for communication, but also for accessing the various bodies of knowledge readily and extensively (Office of the Basic Education Commission, 2008:1).

Because of the importance of foreign languages mentioned above, the Ministry of Education has prioritized teaching English as a foreign language at all levels to develop work potential, recognizing its value as a tool to help students become visionaries able to develop creative ideas and see the world with a broader vision. In today's society, it is expected that when students continue learning English from primary to secondary school, they will have the ability to receive and send messages, and have a

culture of using a foreign language to convey one's thoughts, knowledge, understanding, feelings, and perspectives to exchange information and experiences that are beneficial to self-development and society (Department of Academic Affairs, 2008). Particularly, reading skills are recognized as useful for acquiring knowledge to improve and develop the quality of life and society.

Foreign-language reading skills are essential, because they are key to staying up-to-date with international happenings. As one of the long-lasting skills that remains practical and useful to students even after graduation, reading should be emphasized. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education recognizes the importance of reading and fostering permanent reading habits in Thai youth by announcing the academic year 2003 as a year of promoting reading and learning. A similar initiative started in 2006, for the occasion of the 60th anniversary of His Majesty the King's accession to the throne when a policy has been enacted by educational institutions to participate in the Love Reading Books festival to honor His Majesty accordingly. In addition, scheduled on 2 April of every year to coincide with the birthday of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, is the Day of the Love of Reading, aimed to create a society of lifelong learning. Therefore, instilling positive reading habits in today's youth is important and should be continued.

It should also be noted that reading ability and reading comprehension or reading literacy are crucial. Particularly, reading literacy is very important, since readers will not gain anything if they fail to understand what they are reading. PISA, the Program for International Student Assessment, defines reading literacy as

“ the ability to understand, use, evaluate reflect on and love and engage with those written language forms by the individual, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential, and participation in society.”

Although reading is important and highly promoted, it appears that students' reading skills are currently low. The main reason could be ineffective teaching methods in the classroom, resulting in reading failures, as students are not encouraged to develop their reading skills. Since lectures focus on translation, vocabulary, and grammar rules, rather than thinking skills, students do not comprehend what they are reading and are unable to express that new body of knowledge in their own words. In addition, insufficient teaching methods rarely give students an opportunity to practice the process of reading comprehension; instead, teachers translate the material into Thai, rather than allowing students to attempt comprehension in English first. Another point to consider is that reading skills rely on experience, prior knowledge, learning experience, environment, and teaching activities, all of which contribute to learners' satisfaction with their learning.

To alleviate these issues, teachers must organize activities that are appropriate for the age, ability, and learning aptitude of students, and allow students to use English as much as possible, rather than Thai. Moreover, students should be taught the ability to use language as a tool to understand the various forms of printed matter that appear in everyday life. More emphasis should be placed on language exercises that focus on automatic language learning and language activities for students to practice communicating in real-life situations. Such activities should be as realistic as possible.

### **2.3 “Read to Learn” project: establishment and methods**

Considering the aforementioned points, project committee members have examined the most suitable methods and tools to promote sustainable reading skills for young people. As a result, the project “Read to Learn” was established to enhance English reading literacy through phonics and children’s literature in the three southern border provinces of Thailand.

There are two types of tools used to develop reading literacy skills: phonics, which is a way of learning to read, write, and pronounce English using the principles of decoding and mixing the 26 letters A to Z. Learners must understand the sounds of the letters, and pronounce them correctly so that they can combine the sounds into words. The principles of sound decoding and sound blending will help students to achieve correct pronunciation, clear English communication, and effective reading and writing. Initially, phonics learning is slower than rote learning, because learners need to understand the sound and word combinations from easy to difficult. They must practice repeatedly to remember, but numerous studies and research indicate that children learn more efficiently and quickly through phonics, and gain expertise in the language, reading habits, and knowledge-seeking, all useful skills in their future goals. The second tool is “Extensive Reading”: graded reading materials carefully selected by a team of both Thai and international student volunteers, project advisors, and project committee members, with the aim to enhance reading literacy skills.

The project aims to disseminate knowledge in phonics to interested university students, primary English teachers, parents, or people interested in attending the training sessions. The project also raises awareness of the importance of reading, among students of Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, through Read to Learn Day activities. Furthermore, the project also supplies knowledge of phonics through various video formats for dissemination via online channels to the public, to reach a large number of interested parties.

Project committee members will collaborate with volunteers to supervise the training and develop the English reading skills of students participating in the project. All working groups will continually receive training from lecturers on phonics knowledge, the use of fables and children's literature in storytelling, and the development of reading literacy skills for the target groups. This project is expected not only to improve reading literacy skills for students in the area, but also to develop English communication between students from various areas, in addition to enhancing collaboration skills, problem- solving skills, and reading skills for the committee members and volunteers as well. The cooperation of volunteering Thai and international students will create a working network, and solve social problems among students, leading to sustainability in the development of communities, countries, and international regions.

### **3. Locations**

Thailand’s Deep South, namely Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Songkhla

#### **4. Objectives**

- 4.1 To improve the English pronunciation skills of students.
- 4.2 To instill reading habits in students.
- 4.3 To increase a positive English learning attitude among students.
- 4.4 To enhance the quality of life and educational opportunities for students.
- 4.5 Project participants, including teachers, students, and parents, to be able to use knowledge of phonics and extensive reading or graded reading books as a medium to teach and develop students' reading skills, or to further their careers in the future.

#### **5. Participants**

- Group 1: primary school students
- Group 2: student volunteers from Prince of Songkla University
- Group 3: students from Prince of Songkla University
- Group 4: primary school English teachers
- Group 5: anyone who are interested to join the training session

#### **7. Methodology**

- 7.1 Meeting, planning, and drafting the project
- 7.2 Preparing online video media about phonics
- 7.3 Contacting and coordinating the relevant parties and facilities for project participants
- 7.4 Recruiting students, teachers, parents, and the general public to attend the training
- 7.5 Surveying the willingness and readiness of students at targeted schools
- 7.6 Selecting trained volunteers
- 7.7 Organizing project orientation for volunteers
- 7.10 Running activities according to the plan
- 7.11 Evaluating the project
- 7.12 Organizing a meeting to summarize the project for all participants, including students, volunteers, speakers/project advisors, project committee members, etc.

## Activity

No.	Activity	Note
1.	Recruit volunteers, and share knowledge about Phonics and reading children's literature	Responsibility of the project committee
2.	Contacting the administrators of targeted schools	Responsibility of the project committee
3.	Organizing a workshop on “Phonics Principles for Developing Reading Skills for Children”	Responsibility of the expert speakers, project advisors, and the project committee
4.	Selecting trained student volunteers	Responsibility of the project committee and project advisors
5.	Organizing a one-day orientation program for volunteer students	Responsibility of the project committee and project advisors
6.	Visiting targeted schools to organize training on phonics reading and storytelling from fables and literature to students	Organized by volunteers organizing committee
7.	Organizing “Read to Learn Day” to arrange English language activities	Organized by the project committee
8.	Follow up, meeting, and reflecting among volunteers, project advisors, and the project committee members	Responsibility of the project committee and project advisors
9.	Evaluation and summary of project outcomes	Organized by the project committee
10.	Organizing a meeting to summarize the project for all project participants, including students, volunteers, speakers/project advisors, project committee members, etc.	Organized by the project committee

## 8. Achievements

**8.1 General achievements:** Ensure equal and inclusive education, and encourage lifelong learning for the students in the three southernmost provinces affected by the South Thailand insurgency

- Students are able to read and pronounce in English correctly.
- Students realize the importance of reading and gained reading habits.
- Students have a better quality of life and had more educational opportunities.
- Students have a more positive attitude towards learning English.

- Students can use their knowledge of English reading to further the community and society around them.

### **8.2 Student network-expanding achievements**

- Students realize the importance of reading literacy skills for sustainable self-development.
- Students have the opportunity to know, exchange, and learn different opinions or attitudes of both domestic and international participants.
- Students have the opportunity to share their knowledge and can continue to build on the community and other societies.

### **8.4 Sustainability achievements**

- This project can be extended in the future to other schools in the three southernmost provinces that lack opportunities for learning English reading skills.
- Students have the skills to read English correctly and gain knowledge from reading whether it is a story, a literary piece, or a conversation, leading to lifelong learning.
- Those who have passed the training can apply their newfound knowledge to further teach students or children.

### **8.5 International Competency Development Achievements**

- Students can develop English communication skills.
- Students are conscious of developing a global community together as global citizens without racial, religious, or ethnic discrimination.

## **9. Evaluation methods**

Project achievements will be evaluated through questionnaires.

## 10. Implementation plan

<b>Project methodology</b>	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.
1. Meeting, planning, and drafting the project								
2. Contacting the administrators of targeted schools								
3. Organizing a workshop on “Phonics Principles for Developing Reading Skills for Children”								
4. Selecting trained student volunteers								
5. Organizing a one-day orientation program for volunteer students								
6. Visiting targeted schools to organize training on phonics reading and storytelling from fables and literature to students								
7. Organizing “Read to Learn Day” to arrange English language activities								
8. Follow up, meeting, and reflecting among volunteers, project advisors, and the project committee members								
9. Evaluation and summary of project outcomes								
10. Organizing a meeting to summarize the project for all project participants, including students, volunteers, speakers/project advisors, project committee members, etc.								

## 11. Budget

This project is supported by Prince of Songkla University and co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme (FRIENDS Project) of the European Union.

## 12. Coordinators

§ Project Advisor:

Miss. Fatimah Jeharsae, Lecturer of Bachelor of Arts Program, English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

§ Executive Project Coordinator:

Asst. Prof. Dr. Montira Leelakriangsak, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Pattani Campus

§ Project coordinator at the staff level:

Miss Hongkwan Ongwuthiwat

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