

A Study on the Emergence of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and Bangkok Youth's Demography towards the Decision Making to Learn Foreign languages

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were (1) to identify whether the emergence of AEC has any influence on the decision making of Bangkok youth to learn foreign languages, and (2) to identify whether the different Bangkok youth's demography influence on the decision making to learn foreign languages as a result of the emergence of AEC. The data was collected by distributing questionnaire to 400 Bangkok youths who are Thai native speakers between July-August 2015 in Bangkok areas. The content validity of research instruments were verified by the Item-Objective Congruency (IOC) index and passed the validity test via Data Analysis Program. Data analysis used Frequency, Percentage, Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation, Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA), t-test for Independent, and One-Way ANOVA. The findings found that the emergence of AEC influences Bangkok youth in deciding to learn foreign languages, and the trend has shown that the female was interested to learn English or the third language more than male. Nevertheless, Bangkok youth: both male and female have to make improvements for their language skills, both in classrooms and outside to push their level up. English was the first language that Bangkok youth are learning and in their interest to learn, followed by Chinese, Japanese and Korean which are the languages of ASEAN +3 countries.

Keywords: AEC, Bangkok Youth, Demography, Decision Making, Foreign Languages



Introduction

The emergence of AEC, as the starting point for ASEAN community, on December 31, 2015 is to allow to move goods, services, investment, skilled labor, and capital in this region more freely. This will allow the economic migration among ASEAN countries. The communication among the ASEAN will be necessary.

Even though English is extremely important as it has been used as the official language in the international stage and as it is the second language of various countries, Thailand also regard English as the main language to use. Whereas, Thailand's geography shared borders with 4 countries - Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Malaysia, where each country is also have different official languages, some of Thai people can understand those languages from the migrants, international investments, or others. Those are the reasons why some Thai people can speak neighbor's languages.

In addition to the competition, the new economic power has emerged such as Russia and China. Chinese communities are everywhere around the world and Chinese language is widespread throughout the world, which is significant to become one of the global language as English.

The ability to communicate foreign language become one of the important qualification for the future workforce, cause of the increasing demand of multilingual workforce and this affects the opportunity in their career growth.

From previous studies found that some youths, especially in Bangkok, are learning more foreign languages whether by their own interests or the drives by family and it is possible that the emergence of AEC at the end of 2015 will urge these youths to be more interested in foreign

languages. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to know whether the emergence of AEC has any influence, and its effect on learning foreign languages on these youths.

Purposes

1. To identify whether the emergence of AEC has any influence on the decision making of Bangkok youth to learn foreign languages.
2. To identify whether the different Bangkok youth's demography has any influence on the decision making to learn foreign languages as a result of the emergence of AEC.

Hypothesis

H1 The emergence of AEC influences on Bangkok youth to make a decision making to learn foreign languages.

H2 Bangkok youth with different demographic characteristics decide to learn different foreign languages as a result of the emergence of AEC.

Benefit of Research

To know which demographic compositions of Bangkok youth influenced on their decision making to learn different foreign languages. The result of this research can also be a guideline for Thai youth to know the trend of interest and learning foreign languages, along with the reason to select foreign language for learning, especially for the education section and language institute to prepare appropriate foreign language courses for Bangkok youth.

Research Process

The Quantitative Research is considered to use for this study along with the Survey Research to study the relationship between different

demographic characteristics of Bangkok youth and the decision making to study foreign languages which are influenced from the emergence of AEC. The questionnaire was distributed to youth during July-August 2015 in Bangkok area; 4 Secondary Schools, 5 Universities, and 3 Department Stores. Then, check the accuracy of the data from completed questionnaires, summarizing, encoding and create form for computing and analyzing data.

Population and Sample

Population of this study is Bangkok youth - Thai youth in Bangkok area both living and/or studying, the age between 15-24 years old. According to the data from National Statistical Office of Thailand in 2012, there were 793,002 youths in Bangkok, Thailand.

The size of sample group in this study was calculated by using Taro Yamane equation. The result of calculation is 399.80, therefore this study collected data from 400 Bangkok youths.

Instrument

The questionnaire is the instrument to collect the data of the sample, it was passed IOC (Index of Item Objective Congruence) and trial test for validity of the questionnaire, and reliability test via SPSS.

Data Analysis

This research is analyzed the data via SPSS 11.5 the statistical analysis are as follows: (1) Descriptive Statistics: Frequency, Percentages, Arithmetic Mean (\bar{X}), and Standard Deviation (σ), (2) Inferential Statistics: t-test for Independent, Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA), and One-Way ANOVA.

Conclusion

Part 1: Demographic Information on Survey Respondents

The majority demographic characteristics of the respondent for this survey is female (60%), aged between 21 - 24 years old (52.5%), education level is Bachelor's Degree (71.3%), religion of Bangkok Youth in the survey is Buddhism (90.8%), native habitat is Bangkok (72.3%), and all respondents of the survey are whether live and/or study in Bangkok.

Part 2: Knowledge and Interest in AEC

Bangkok youths have learned about AEC in classrooms, or from the news and feel that AEC affect directly to them in High level, but they are seldom interested and enthusiastic when talking about AEC. The conclusion of knowledge and interest in AEC of Bangkok Youth is in the moderate level.

Part 3: Knowledge and Interest in Foreign Languages

1) Influence of AEC on the interest in English - Bangkok youths want to learn more English, and think that English is important for stepping into the AEC in very high level. When they are learning more English by their own and looking for extra English courses in high level, learning more about extra English courses is in the moderate level. The conclusion in overall of the influence of AEC on the interest in English is in the high level.

2) Influence of the AEC on the interest in Third Languages - Bangkok youths want to learn more Third Language and they are learning more about Third Language by their own with the thought that Third Language is important to step into AEC in

high level. When they are looking for and learning extra Third Language courses in moderate level. The conclusion in overall of the influence on AEC for the interest in Third Language is in the high level.

3) The top foreign languages which Bangkok youths are learning and interested to learn more is English, while 94.3% of Bangkok youths are learning English, it has only 54.5% are interested to learn more. Refer to previous studies of Kummongkol (2013) and Phomphaibul (2012) about the learning foreign languages of Chiang Mai University's students, it was which found that English is the top language that students are interested to learn most. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, and Spanish are also ranked in the similar order to this study. About this consistent

finding, it is possible, because English is the required subject to study from kindergarten to high school which the students learn in classroom.

The top of third languages that Bangkok youths are learning and interested to learn more are Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. The interesting point is that they are national languages of ASEAN+3. This finding can be explained by the study of Kullavanijaya and Surasiangsunk (2006) that from the opinion of business segment, English is the most requirement foreign language, followed by Chinese and Japanese. As these three languages are the wanted qualifications for working, it is not amazed why Bangkok youth interested and want to learn these languages.

Table 1 Foreign languages which Bangkok youths are learning

Rank	Learning Language	Count of Learning	Percentage of Learning
1	English	377	94.3%
2	Mandarin Chinese	92	23.0%
3	Japanese	88	22.0%
4	Korean	48	12.0%
5	French	30	7.5%
6	German	22	5.5%
7	Spanish	10	2.5%
8	Malay (Bahasa Melayu)	7	1.8%
8	Lao	7	1.8%
10	Pilipino / Tagalog	5	1.3%
11	Cambodian	4	1.0%
12	Burmese	3	0.8%
13	Bahasa Indonesian	2	0.5%
14	Tamil	2	0.5%
15	Vietnamese	2	0.5%
16	Russian	2	0.5%
17	Cháozhōu Chinese	1	0.3%
18	Italian	1	0.3%
19	Arabic	1	0.3%

From this study, the rank of learning foreign language of Bangkok youths is shown in Table 1 and the rank of interesting foreign language for Bangkok youths is in Table 2.

This finding also shows that most Bangkok youths tend to be interested in a similar group of languages. If they are learning Chinese, Japanese, or Korean, there are high trend that they will be interested to study other languages in the same language group. For example, if they are now studying French, Germany, they will be interested

to study Spanish too.

4) The reason to select foreign language for learning - Bangkok youths selected the foreign language to apply in a workplace or business purpose 61.5%, for studying in a higher level 61.0%, for communication in daily life 60.5%, for entertainments 47.3%, as a required subject 38.5%, for using the time wisely 29.8%, family suggested, pushed, and/or supported 28.0%, and other 1.5% that 7 respondents have explained as they were forced to learn when they were an exchange student

Table 2 Foreign languages which Bangkok youths are interested

Rank	Interested Language	Count of Interest	Percentage of Interest
1	English	218	54.5%
2	Japanese	194	48.5%
3	Mandarin Chinese	181	45.3%
4	Korean	133	33.3%
5	German	106	26.5%
6	French	98	24.5%
7	Spanish	56	14.0%
8	Russian	43	10.8%
9	Vietnamese	30	7.5%
10	Burmese	28	7.0%
10	Lao	28	7.0%
12	Malay (Bahasa Melayu)	16	4.0%
12	Pilipino / Tagalog	16	4.0%
14	Cambodian	11	2.8%
15	Bahasa Indonesian	10	2.5%
16	Tamil	6	1.5%
17	Arabic	3	0.8%
17	Not interested in any language	3	0.8%
19	Cantonese and Cháozhōu Chinese	1	0.3%
19	Italian	1	0.3%
19	Gaeilge	1	0.3%
19	Latin	1	0.3%
19	Modern Hebrew	1	0.3%



in Spain and had to speak Spanish, and they continue learning until present, to communicate with relatives who were abroad and did not use Thai as main language, the language was interesting, it was a personal preference, if they wanted to speak some languages they would take a self-learning by watching movies or YouTube. Travelling or going abroad was interesting, and to test Language Proficiency.

To decide to learn some languages does not depend only on one factor, and it also has different reasons. The most influencing factor is the ability to use in daily life (Phomphaibul, 2012), English learners in Bangkok have a purpose for improving English skill, when the purpose of preparing for the emergence of AEC is the least influencing factor (Siamthong & Sutamuang, 2013). Motivation factors that influence on the selection of Chinese language is because of the benefit to find a job in the future 96.52% (Jangjai, 2009), and students decided to learn Japanese at Japanese Language Schools for preparing themselves for University Entrance Examination (Eadkhao, 2011).

Part 4: Hypothesis Testing

Bangkok youth who has a knowledge and are interested in AEC trends to learn different foreign languages. This findings can be inferred that the emergence of AEC influence on Bangkok youths to make a decision to learn foreign languages. Bangkok youths are very interested and enthusiastic when talking about AEC, they will also be interested in foreign languages, Bangkok youths who learned about AEC in classrooms, or from the news, they will be interested in English more, and if Bangkok youth feel that AEC affect on them directly, they will be more interested in the third Language.

At any rate, the influence of AEC on the interest the third Language is higher than English.

Bangkok youth with different gender decide to learn different foreign languages as a result of the emergence of AEC. Different gender between male and female of Bangkok youths decide to learn different foreign languages as a result of the emergence of AEC. Moreover, female tends to be interested to learn English and the third language more than male. This result is inconsistency from the study of Phomphaibul (2012), if was found that gender did not affected while a level of academic year and their grade affected in their decision making. The possibility of this inconsistency is because of the different populations between Chiang Mai University's students and Bangkok youth with a different demography and may be a different factor of interest and incentive.

Recommendation

As English is the first required language to learn in every school, and also most spending time in learning and for extra courses. This may be a signal that learning English in the school is not enough for many youths.

Some languages that were not listed in the questionnaire, such as Cháozhou Chinese, Italian, and Arabic, the students learn by themselves.

As such, for the industry applications can use the finding of this study to prepare appropriate foreign language courses for Bangkok youth that the trend of learning language is still be English, followed by Chinese, Japanese, Korean, German, French, and Spanish. The Ministry of Education should work together with educational institute, instructors and students in order to find the solution to improve the study courses, especially

in schools and universities to improve and focus more on the foundation of learning. The quality and the standard should be discussed while the extra courses should be provided only for those who have specific interest.

The recommendation for future study issue is to beware of the selection target population

and their ability to understand the questions completely. Also go into more detail, expand the population size in overall. The interest, purpose, reason, or other factors which influence them to make a decision in learning foreign languages, including the level, type of skill, and interests.

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