

Enhancing Ethnic Secondary Students' English and Cultural Knowledge through Folktales and Storytelling Using Picture Series

JUTHARAT JITPRANEE

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand

PROMMIN SONGSIRISAK*

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand

DANUPHONG CHEEWINWILAIPORN

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand

KANNIKAR KANTAMAS

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand

Corresponding author email: chiangraimusic123@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study investigates storytelling knowledge and functions embodied in different ethnic folktales and seeks to identify ethnic secondary students' attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series. Fifteen folktales were collected from storytellers belonging to four ethnic groups in Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province, Thailand. One Hmong story, adapted into a lesson using a picture series, was used to instruct 11 Hmong secondary students. Afterwards, these students reflected on their learning through the picture series by responding to a set of questionnaires and open-response questions. The data were then analyzed using a story-analysis framework, descriptive statistics, and content analysis techniques. Findings revealed that the content found in the ethnic folktales can be categorized into six major typologies: gods and goddesses, parental gratitude, love and family, magic spells and ghosts, life and destiny, and animals. These stories were divided into two primary groups. The first group consists of eight stories with multiple types of knowledge and two functions. The second group contains seven stories with a single type of knowledge and two functions. The stories with multiple types of knowledge and two functions contain moral lessons intended to promote positive actions and behavioral changes. Additionally, the results revealed that the students surveyed held positive attitudes towards using a picture series for their learning through storytelling. They perceived that picture series can reinforce language and cultural learning, develop analytical thinking skills, and increase storytelling abilities. Therefore, this study shows that Hmong students can use their local stories as a way to learn English and understand cultural values, beliefs, identities, and ideologies when communicating with others.

INTRODUCTION

From 2015-2019, Chiang Khong District developed the Strategic Plan for the Balance and Sustainable Development of the City, which is known as “One City, Two Models” (Green City). The plan aims for the integration of localization and globalization for area-based development of local communities. It focuses on community participation in urban development through the process of developmental research related to ecocultural tourism, environment, agriculture, natural resources, culture, city and societal health and well-being, education, and economy (Rak Chiang Khong Conservation Group, 2015).

The plan has been implemented at both the district and sub-district levels for the development of the community. As a result, several community developmental projects have been carried out by both government and private sectors in Chiang Khong District. These projects aim to develop and enhance the economic, social, and cultural capabilities for improving the quality of life of the Chiang Khong people. One project emphasizes preserving the local cultures of the Chiang Khong ethnic groups. According to Rak Chiang Khong Conservation Group (2015), Chiang Khong District has nine ethnic groups, including Hmong, Akha, Lahu, Yunnan Chinese, Khamu, Laos, Lu Mien, Tai Lue, and Tai Yuan. Among them, Hmong, Yunnan Chinese, Tai Lue, and Tai Yuan are the largest ethnic groups in the district. Their cultures attract visitors to Chiang Khong District for various purposes such as education, research, and ecocultural tourism. Ethnic cultures are thus considered fascinating and significant for academicians and researchers who can conduct research studies to help these groups preserve their own cultures and beliefs for sustainable development according to the strategic plan’s purpose.

Site visits to ethnic villages and interactions with local government and villagers in Chiang Khong District indicate that ethnic cultures, especially folktales, are not adequately recorded and documented for the younger generation’s learning of their own culture. These folktales are orally passed down by the elderly, making them difficult to recognize and seemingly lost gradually over time. Additionally, ethnic folktales are not incorporated into teaching materials and textbooks for ethnic students’ learning about their own culture in schools. As a result, ethnic students are unable to learn about their own culture and lack the information needed to communicate their culture and identities to people from different cultural groups.

According to Anantasant (1995), folktales are stories that have been retold from generation to generation until they are regarded as a valuable source of cultural heritage, which is both enjoyable and offers insights about ways of life, culture, and the coexistence of humans and nature. Folktales, known as ethnic tales, are not different from general tales, comprising short stories about people, animals, and miracles, and are embedded with morals that promote people’s awareness of honesty, gratitude, traditions, and reflection of experience (Leksomboon, 2009). Similarly, Thompson (1946) noted that folktales involve imagination, including magic, magical animals, magical human-like creatures, magical power, love, marriage, heroes, heroines, and gods. Folktales are embedded in human cultures and languages. They have been created, orally shared, and retold in communities (Ibrahim et al., 2014). Hence, folktales are important as they reflect the traditions, ways of life, beliefs, and values of people. They also contain cultural knowledge and functions that people can apply in their daily lives (Lee et al., 2014).

The effectiveness of conveying folktales to listeners depends on the art of storytelling and the ways in which words and actions are used by the storytellers (Soleimani & Akbari, 2013). Tone, voice, facial expressions, and gestures are considered important in storytelling, as they engage students in the learning process. Therefore, storytelling is a powerful tool to engage listeners' mental imagination of the story and foster communication between the storytellers and the listeners (Choo et al., 2020). It helps learners learn about beliefs, identities, and values by making sense of their own thoughts, experiences, and interactions with the environment and among themselves (Wilson, 2017). As a result, storytelling has been used as a tool for disseminating and exchanging knowledge and values because it is a simple and effective way to communicate and share information and experiences with one another (Smeda et al., 2014).

In Thailand, storytelling using folktales has become a part of language instruction for students' learning of language and culture. For example, an earlier study conducted with Thai EFL secondary students has shown that storytelling reinforces students' vocabulary gains and vocabulary retention in language learning (Srihasarn & Wuttipornpong, 2013). It also significantly improves students' vocabulary knowledge and their attitudes towards vocabulary learning through picture storytelling (Xiaofei & Modehiran, 2019). The vocabulary gained from the storytelling method enhances students' understanding of reading comprehension and increases their positive attitudes towards reading (Monyanont & Anurit, 2019). Additionally, the use of folktales in storytelling increases students' multicultural awareness and respect for diversity and helps them develop cultural appreciation (Chongruksa et al., 2010). Therefore, folktales are not only beneficial for education but also help record and reflect the history, ways of life, traditions, beliefs, and identities of local communities (Peng & Intaraporn, 2024).

While there is some work on storytelling in the Thai context, research concerning the use of ethnic folktales in education is still limited. Additionally, there is still a lack of specific methodologies for using storytelling with picture series for students' learning of their own culture in Thailand. Also, ethnic culture is not systematically documented or integrated into education even though they have a rich cultural heritage. Consequently, this study aims to collect folktales from ethnic groups in Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province, Thailand to examine the storytelling knowledge and functions embodied in the stories and to utilize one Hmong story as a lesson to enhance Hmong secondary students' English and cultural knowledge through storytelling using a picture series. The results are expected to help teachers and students better understand storytelling knowledge and functions and to improve the students' English and cultural knowledge. The results are also to give them a sense of pride in their own cultural values and to encourage them to preserve them. Furthermore, the results are expected to add knowledge to the field of folktales and storytelling. To achieve the aims of the present study, two research purposes were formulated for investigation.

1. To study the storytelling knowledge and functions embodied in ethnic folktales
2. To identify ethnic secondary students' attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series in learning English and culture

LITERATURE REVIEW

Using folktales in language teaching

Folktales contain metaphors, morals, and rich vocabulary that support the language learning of young learners (Cameron, 2001). According to Taylor (2000), a folktale is “a traditional story that has been passed on by word of mouth – told from parent to child over many generations” (p. 4). Teachers can use folktales as powerful and motivating sources to encourage students’ willingness to read and practice English and to develop their positive attitudes towards English language learning (Mantra & Kumara, 2018). Folktales stimulate students’ imagination, provide a pleasant experience, enhance their English skills (Cameron, 2001), and create a lively learning atmosphere for young learners in the classroom. Good folktales have the potential to capture young learners’ interest and motivation and help them learn vocabulary from the stories.

Taylor (2000) noted that teachers can use folktales to create various tasks and activities for students to learn the target language. These tasks and activities can be designed to develop students’ listening skills (e.g., drawing pictures from a story), speaking skills (e.g., oral retelling of a story), reading skills (e.g., individual reading from story selection), and writing skills (e.g., using pictures for story writing). Additionally, folktales designed using information gaps, language games, and drama activities can support students’ cooperative learning and problem-solving skills. Moreover, using authentic stories in storytelling encourages children to listen, understand, and respond to the teacher (Povey, 2019). The stories implemented in the classroom by the teacher also promote learners’ analytical thinking skills through evaluating and summarizing stories (Taylor, 2000) and critical thinking skills through making inferences and forming opinions (Shin & Crandall, 2014). As a result, folktales are useful in developing students’ cognitive and academic skills (Taylor, 2000).

Roles of storytelling in language learning

Storytelling is believed to be a powerful and motivating tool for engaging learners in language learning (Lucarevschi, 2016). It is an effective strategy in English language teaching for young learners (Mutiarani & Izzah, 2015). Teachers can use storytelling as a teaching approach to engage students in learning, as it encourages them to participate and become involved in the activities organized by the teacher. These activities can stimulate the use and practice of students’ language skills through storytelling. Additionally, storytelling develops students’ conceptual learning (Pennington, 2009), allows them to explore their own culture (Dvalidze, 2022), and helps them learn cultural elements and develop their cultural awareness from the stories (Taylor, 2000). In this regard, storytelling helps students make sense of stories, connect them to their language learning, and improve their cognitive skills.

Previous studies have shown that students have positive attitudes towards storytelling, and it can enhance their interest in learning and improve reading performance (Lap et al., 2022), reading comprehension and skills (Mantra & Kumara, 2018; Sudibyo et al., 2018), speaking skills (Andrian & Faudi, 2020; Hildaini & Sugirin, 2019; Inayah, 2015; Kaet et al., 2023; Sembiring & Ginting, 2019; Zuhriyah, 2017), writing skills (Imam et al., 2020), and vocabulary

(Lap et al., 2022; Mokhtar et al., 2011; Soleimani & Akbari, 2013). Storytelling can also promote students' learning of language skills in vocabulary, reading comprehension, story sequencing, and story memorization which are necessary for storytelling (Mokhtar et al., 2011). It builds students' self-confidence in sharing and communicating stories with others using the target language (Lap et al., 2022; Mokhtar et al., 2011).

Additionally, storytelling develops students' cognitive and social skills by helping them remember story plots, analyze story characters, identify the concepts and themes of the story, and create interactions between the tellers and the listeners through gestures, posture, and intonations (Soleimani & Akbari, 2013). Moreover, Aprilia and Andreani (2020) claimed that using picture series in storytelling encourages students to pay attention to their teacher and helps them arrange the sequence of the pictures effectively in their speaking. This approach stimulates their ideas, enhances their speaking skills based on the picture series, and enables them to make connections between the materials used for storytelling. Therefore, the use of picture series and storytelling is an effective technique that teachers can implement in their language classrooms (Aprilia & Andreani, 2020).

Students' attitudes and storytelling

The learners' success in English language learning is related to their attitudes (Sengkey & Galag, 2018). Gardner (1985) emphasized that attitudes play a vital role in students' learning by determining an individual student's active involvement in the process of language learning. Students with more positive attitudes towards the material are more likely to be interested in it and work harder to understand it (Gardner et al., 1985). Storytelling, an earlier study has shown that it attracts young learners' attention and makes them eager for storytelling time each week (Igudia & Ogunsina, 2015). It develops students' positive attitudes towards the short stories used for their learning by their teacher, as they perceive the usefulness of those stories in improving their oral competence and learning vocabulary and expressions from reading and listening (Mary et al., 2022). Additionally, it also makes them feel joyful while listening to storytelling (Igudia & Ogunsina, 2015). Similarly, Jitpaisarnwattana (2018) noted that, when discussing the use of digital storytelling for students' learning, storytelling makes learning more interesting, motivating, and enhances students' interest in English by making them want to learn more about it. Consequently, students' learning outcomes are affected by their attitudes (Lap et al., 2022) and may be related to their academic achievement (Gardner, 1985; Sengkey & Galag, 2018). Therefore, students' learning attitudes are critical and should be observed to identify their impact on learning outcomes.

Conceptual framework

Ethnic folktales are a form of local cultural wisdom connected to the knowledge, ways of life, and identities of ethnic people. They are considered important tools for transmitting cultural knowledge, values, and ideologies to members of the same cultural group and those from different cultural backgrounds. Teachers can use folktales to design various tasks for students' learning of language skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) (Taylor, 2000), vocabulary (Soleimani & Akbari, 2013), cultural knowledge as embodied in a folktale (Boonyananta &

Imsamraan, 2022), and speaking skills (Hakim et al., 2023). One such task is storytelling using a picture series. According to Williams and Burden (1997), teachers select tasks based on their beliefs about language instruction, while learners interpret them meaningfully based on their individual learning perceptions. The task serves as an interface between teachers and learners, fostering interactions in the learning context. In this regard, it is worthwhile to observe how storytelling using a picture series affects students' attitudes towards learning.

Drawing upon these concepts, the conceptual framework of the current study is demonstrated in Figure 1.

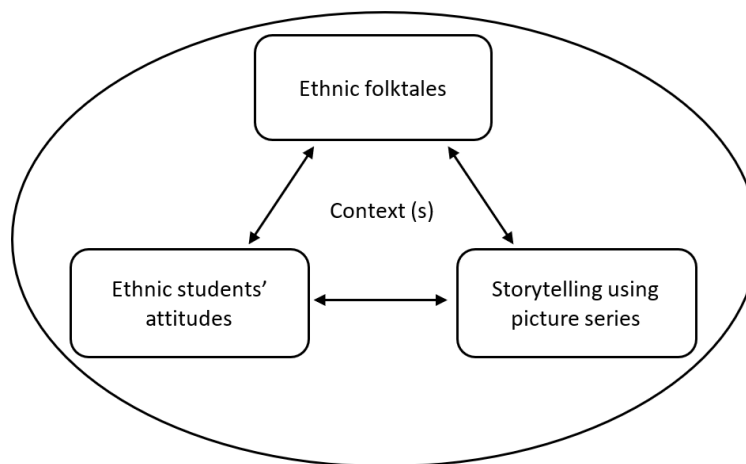


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of this study

Boonyananta and Imsamraan (2022) highlighted that folktales serve as a source of cultural learning, offering insights into settlement history, family systems, economic conditions, beliefs, values, and morals. Similarly, Mitra and Sameer (2022) noted that folktales are purposefully retold over a lifetime in order to transmit positive messages of ethics and values through the story's lessons and morals to their listeners. According to their study, folktales fulfill three functions: the "*epistemic function*" provides information about the environment of the story to the listeners; the "*motivating function*" has the power of convincing and motivating the listeners to take a particular action; and the "*ethicizing function*" conveys the "concrete ethics for ideal behavior" (p. 245) through the story's message to the listeners. It could be said that folktales contain both storytelling knowledge and functions, which are significant for research studies.

To analyze ethnic folktales, the framework for analyzing organizational stories developed by Lee et al. (2014) was adapted and employed. This framework consists of six elements for story analysis. The first element is the "*background of the story*". It reflects the context or situation that builds up within the story. The second element is the "*core of the story*". It refers to the summary of the story. The third element is the "*structure of story*". It describes how the story is structured in terms of context, build-up, climax, action, reversal, resolution, and learning points. The fourth element is the "*type of story*". Each type of story is categorized into its own typology based on the shared similar characteristics concerning context, characters, and

occurrences. The fifth element is the “*knowledge embodied in the story*”. This element, in the current study, refers to the “*storytelling knowledge*”, which conveys a message or a moral to the listeners. There are three aspects of storytelling knowledge that need to be considered for a story analysis: value, behavior, and morality. The final element is the “*function of the story*”, referring to the “*storytelling function*” in this study. It encompasses the purposes of the story being told to the listeners in three aspects: transmitting values, sharing knowledge, and sparking behavioral change. However, only elements four through six were particularly emphasized because they have interconnected relationships within a story and link to the purposes of the present study.

After the analysis of ethnic folktales, one Hmong story was selected and adapted into a lesson using a picture series for students’ learning of English and culture through storytelling. According to Lee et al. (2014), storytelling involves a dynamic interaction among the teller, listener, and the story. They noted that storytelling facilitates the transfer of knowledge, as the teller conveys messages through the story to the listener. The knowledge gained from such stories is powerful and influences the listener’s knowledge, experience, learning motivation, and attitudes, potentially leading to behavioral changes. Thus, the interplay between folktales, storytelling using a picture series, and students’ attitudes are interrelated in the process of language learning and teaching, and these are the focus of this study.

METHODOLOGY

Research setting and participants

This study was conducted in Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province, Thailand. The district is located alongside the Mekong River and consists of nine ethnic groups: Hmong, Tai Lue, Tai Yuan, Yunnan Chinese, Lahu, Akha, Lu Mien, Khamu, and Laos (Rak Chiang Khong Conservation Group, 2015). The largest ethnic groups in this district are Hmong, Tai Lue, Tai Yuan, and Yunnan Chinese, and they are rich in local cultural wisdom (e.g., folktales). Therefore, the folktales from these ethnic groups were selected for this study because of the large number of students from these ethnic groups who are attending schools in Chiang Khong and would gain benefits from the additional ethnic resource materials in their learning. As a result, fifteen folktales were collected from the storytellers from these ethnic groups who willingly shared their stories with the research team to be used as learning resources for local schools in Chiang Khong District. To promote language and cultural learning among students, one Hmong folktale adapted into a lesson using a picture series was used to teach 11 Hmong secondary students at a local school in Chiang Khong District. There were eight females and three males, with ages ranging from 13 to 15 years. These students learned English as a compulsory subject, following textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education, Thailand. From the interactions with school teachers and talks with students, the research team found that the students are proficient in basic Thai and English and can sufficiently communicate with their Thai teachers and foreigners both inside and outside of school.

Data collection and procedures

Due to the availability of storytellers, their willingness, and their knowledge of folktales, this study was able to collect only 15 folktales from four ethnic groups in Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai Province: five stories from Hmong, three stories from Tai Lue, two stories from Tai Yuan, and five stories from Yunnan Chinese. To gain insights into these ethnic cultures, the collected stories were analyzed for storytelling knowledge and functions, reflecting on and learning about their cultures in both the past and present.

Considering the students' cultural background, one Hmong folktale was selected for their learning based on two criteria: 1) it must contain multiple types of storytelling knowledge and two storytelling functions, and 2) it must have a clear plot that reflects Hmong culture. This story was then adapted into a picture series lesson consisting of 14 pictures, some of which are shown in Figure 2. This picture series was used with Hmong students in their school. The research team conducted the lesson in a classroom equipped with a computer and a projector to utilize the multimedia (e.g., pictures and videos) for the students. The research team provided a handout to the students and explained its purposes to them before the instruction. The handout included vocabulary, the picture series, picture descriptions in both Thai and English, and an analysis activity focusing on the characters, times, events, and places in the story for students' practice.

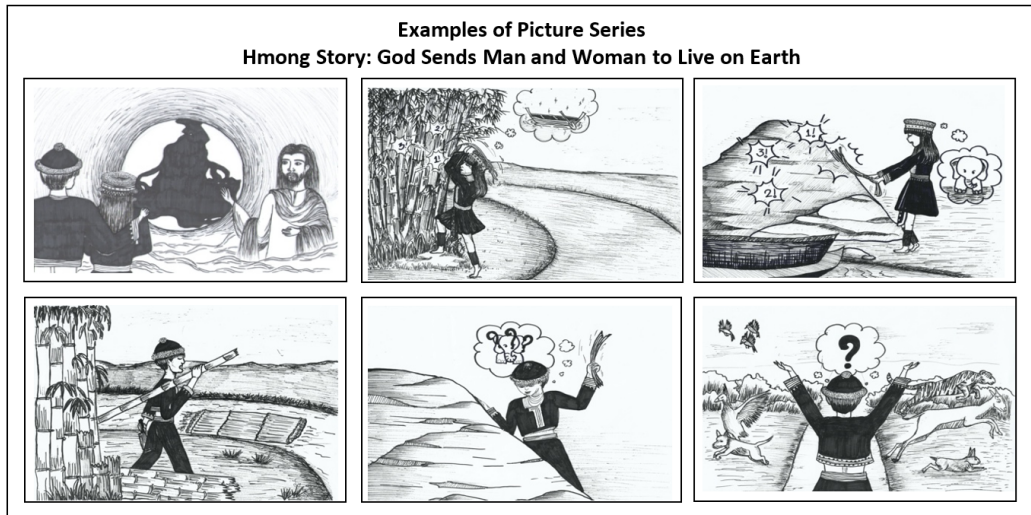


Figure 2 Example of picture series

During the lesson implementation, one researcher conducted the instruction in front of the classroom, while the other two provided assistance to students by walking around the room. The research team began the lesson by introducing the story vocabulary to the students. They used Wh-questions (e.g., who, what, where) as a teaching technique to challenge students linguistically and enhance word recognition based on the picture series. Each student was also taught simple sentences from the picture descriptions, using the learned vocabulary and plot sequencing from the story elements (e.g., characters, times, events, and places) to prepare

for storytelling. These activities maximized students' learning and understanding of the story and built their confidence in storytelling using English. Additionally, the implementation of storytelling using the picture series in English, supplemented with Thai and Hmong explanations, reinforced the teaching and learning process. This approach helped students better understand classroom instructions, created a friendly and enjoyable learning atmosphere, and gave them confidence that learning English through storytelling was not difficult.

The students were allowed to do their storytelling in pairs in front of the classroom. One student would tell the story in English, while another would tell it in Thai or Hmong. Immediate feedback was provided to the students, focusing on vocabulary, sentence structures, and plot sequencing in English to enhance their English and storytelling skills.

To measure students' attitudes towards storytelling using the picture series, a set of questionnaires was employed. This questionnaire was developed and checked multiple times by the research team before being used in the actual context. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part gathered demographic data of the participants, such as ages and genders. The second part included close-response items. This part encompassed 30 items, divided into five categories: 1) cultural learning; 2) language and analytical thinking skills; 3) learning needs and motivation; 4) awareness of cultural values; and 5) storytelling skills development. A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5) was used. The questionnaire demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.857, indicating its suitability for data collection.

To collect qualitative data, open-response questions were used. These questions were designed based on the literature review and the purposes of the present study. Six questions were formulated to gather the participants' opinions and attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series for English and cultural learning from a Hmong folktale.

The data obtained from both the questionnaires and open-response questions were collected in Thai. Later, they were analyzed, interpreted, and reported in the results. Some students' statements, translated into English, were used as evidence in this study.

Data analysis

The folktales collected from four ethnic groups were analyzed using the framework for analyzing organizational stories (Lee et al., 2014), focusing on types of stories, storytelling knowledge, and storytelling functions. Regarding types of stories, the folktales were analyzed and categorized into typologies based on the context, characters, and occurrences. For storytelling knowledge, the analysis considered three aspects: value, behavior, and morality. The term "*value*" was defined as an attitude or belief that the story intends for the listener to internalize; "*behavior*" represented how the story intends for the listener to act or not to act; and "*morality*" was a lesson learned from the story. The analysis of storytelling functions focused on the aspects of transmitting value, sharing knowledge, and sparking behavioral change. The term "*transmitting value*" was a cultural element that conveys a function to the listener; "*sharing knowledge*" meant to share some kind of knowledge to the listener when it

does not have a clear function; and “*sparking behavioral change*” aimed to motivate the listener’s behavioral change.

In terms of the data obtained from the questionnaires, they were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations. These statistical values were used to indicate the students’ attitudes towards storytelling using the picture series for their learning. The mean scores from the questionnaire were interpreted based on Punpinij’s (2008) notion, as shown in the table below.

Score range	Meaning	Interpretation
4.51 – 5.00	Strongly agree	Very high
3.51 – 4.50	Agree	High
2.51 – 3.50	Neutral	Neutral
1.51 – 2.50	Disagree	low
1.00 – 1.50	Strongly disagree	Very low

For the data derived from open-response questions, content analysis techniques were used. The data were analyzed and classified into themes, which were then reported in the results.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are divided into two parts. The first part is the storytelling knowledge and functions embodied in the stories. The second part is the ethnic secondary students’ attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series.

Part I: The storytelling knowledge and functions embodied in the stories

Findings revealed that the 15 folktales collected from four ethnic groups can be categorized into six typologies. Data in Table 1 shows that six stories are in the typology of gods and goddesses; three stories are in the typology of parental gratitude; two stories are in the typology of love and family; two stories are in the typology of magic spells and ghosts; one story is in the typology of life and destiny; and one story is in the typology of animals.

Table 1
Typologies and descriptions of stories

No.	Type of Stories	Ethnic Groups	Name of Stories	Descriptions
1	Gods and Goddesses Story	Hmong	<i>God sends man and woman to live on earth</i>	This story reflects the relationship between God and humans and the importance of having faith in God’ s advice and guidance. Strong faith and obedience to God result in success.
			<i>The origin of Pha Tang Mountain</i>	This story focuses on the origin of geographical features, explaining physical features and special unique characteristics of a particular place.

No.	Type of Stories	Ethnic Groups	Name of Stories	Descriptions
1	Gods and Goddesses Story	Yunnan Chinese	<i>Goddess Niwa: The creator of human beings</i>	This story explains God's creation of humans and the sexes with the aim of populating the earth.
			<i>Hou Yi: The conqueror of the sun</i>	This story addresses overcoming suffering through God's intervention and helps explain the solar system.
			<i>Chang Er: The angel on the moon</i>	This story explains the importance of the moon and how it relates to the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival as an important cultural activity.
			<i>Pan Gu: The creator of heaven and earth</i>	This is an important creation myth story that explains the creation of features of heaven and earth as perceived by the Chinese.
2	Parental Gratitude Story	Hmong	<i>Chia and Chao</i>	This story aims to promote positive relationships between children and parents and how personal success can be influenced by these relationships.
		Tai Lue	<i>Nang Tang-on</i>	This story conveys a son's gratitude towards his mother, emphasizing forgiveness and the absence of malice for past actions. It also illustrates that a good person is always protected by God.
		Yunnan Chinese	<i>Bai Yuan: The grateful son</i>	This story emphasizes the importance of good character and a spirit of gratitude towards others, which will result in positive benefits.
3	Love and Family Story	Hmong	<i>A young man and a young ghost girl</i>	This story emphasizes the importance of promises and how they can result in either positive or negative outcomes according to fate.
		Hmong	<i>An orphan and a dragon's daughter</i>	This story emphasizes the consequences of jealousy and the faults of not recognizing the true quality of others. This can lead to problems and unhappiness.
4	Magic Spells and Ghosts Story	Tai Lue	<i>Suea Yen</i>	This story helps the audience understand the danger of magic spells and their consequences.
		Tai Yuan	<i>A Horse Ghost</i>	This story emphasizes a particular lifestyle and a strong belief in ghosts possessing human bodies, as well as the use of magic spells to overcome the dangers posed by ghosts.
5	Life and Destiny Story	Tai Yuan	<i>The man with no luck</i>	This story tells the audience that destiny determines your life, not your own efforts to overcome difficulty.
6	Animal Story	Tai Lue	<i>The elephant and tiger</i>	This story emphasizes the value of intelligence and how one can overcome difficulties with dangerous animals through cunning and wit.

To ensure data validity, the analysis of storytelling knowledge and functions embodied in the stories was conducted multiple times. Data in Table 2 illustrate that each story contains at least one type of storytelling knowledge and one storytelling function. The stories with only one type of storytelling knowledge and two storytelling functions aim to transmit values and share some kind of knowledge with the listeners. The storytelling knowledge and functions in these stories help the listeners understand the story's values and knowledge. They do not convey specific functions for the listeners to apply in their daily lives. Conversely, the stories with multiple types of storytelling knowledge and two storytelling functions enable the listeners to apply specific knowledge and functions in their daily lives.

Table 2
Storytelling knowledge and functions embodied in the stories

No.	Type of Stories	Name of Stories	Storytelling Knowledge	Storytelling Functions
1	Gods and Goddesses Story	<i>God sends man and woman to live on earth</i>	➤ Value ➤ Behavior ➤ Morality	➤ Transmit value ➤ Spark behavioral change
		<i>The origin of Pha Tang Mountain</i>	➤ Value ➤ Behavior ➤ Morality	➤ Transmit value ➤ Spark behavioral change
		<i>Goddess Niwa: The creator of human beings</i>	➤ Value	➤ Transmit value ➤ Share knowledge
		<i>Hou Yi: The conqueror of the sun</i>	➤ Value	➤ Transmit value ➤ Share knowledge
		<i>Chang Er: The angel on the moon</i>	➤ Value	➤ Transmit value ➤ Share knowledge
		<i>Pan Gu: The creator of heaven and earth</i>	➤ Value	➤ Transmit value ➤ Share knowledge
2	Parental Gratitude Story	<i>Chia and Chao</i>	➤ Value ➤ Behavior ➤ Morality	➤ Transmit value ➤ Spark behavioral change
		<i>Nang Tang-on</i>	➤ Value ➤ Behavior ➤ Morality	➤ Transmit value ➤ Spark behavioral change
		<i>Bai Yuan: The grateful son</i>	➤ Value ➤ Behavior ➤ Morality	➤ Transmit value ➤ Spark behavioral change
3	Love and Family Story	<i>A young man and a young ghost girl</i>	➤ Value	➤ Transmit value ➤ Share knowledge
		<i>An orphan and a dragon's daughter</i>	➤ Value ➤ Behavior ➤ Morality	➤ Transmit value ➤ Spark behavioral change
4	Magic Spells and Ghosts Story	<i>Suea Yen</i>	➤ Value ➤ Behavior ➤ Morality	➤ Transmit value ➤ Spark behavioral change
		<i>A Horse Ghost</i>	➤ Value	➤ Transmit value ➤ Share knowledge
5	Life and Destiny Story	<i>The man with no luck</i>	➤ Value	➤ Transmit value ➤ Share knowledge
6	Animal Story	<i>The elephant and tiger</i>	➤ Value ➤ Behavior ➤ Morality	➤ Transmit value ➤ Spark behavioral change

According to the data in Table 2, the stories can be categorized into two groups based on their storytelling knowledge and functions. The first group comprises stories with multiple types of storytelling knowledge and two storytelling functions, while the second group consists of stories with one type of storytelling knowledge and two storytelling functions. One example from each group is provided to illustrate how storytelling knowledge and functions are presented.

The first group comprises eight stories with three storytelling knowledge types and two storytelling functions. For example, the story entitled “*The Origin of Pha Tang Mountain*” illustrates

the belief that God sent Nam Kong (Mekong River) and Nam Wue Ja (A river assumed to be in Laos, in the Hmong language) to create their own straight-flowing waterways on earth. However, Nam Kong did not follow God's instructions and was irresponsible in the assigned duty. He enjoyed gambling and forgot what God had told him to do. When he realized that he needed to build his waterway according to God's instructions, he then quickly built it. As a result, his waterway did not go straight and had many curves, was full of rocks, and had high riverbanks, while Nam Wue Ja successfully built her waterway on earth according to God's instructions. This story illustrates that misbehavior and disobedience to God can lead to trouble and failure in life. Therefore, God could be metaphorically inferred from the story as parents and the two rivers as children. The lesson from this story suggests that children should obey their parents' suggestions for success in life.

... One day, God said, "Both of you [Nam Kong and Nam Wue Ja, they are husband and wife] go down to earth and create your own straight-flowing waterways without any riverbanks." ... However, when they arrived about midway at the casino in Chiang Saen District, Nam Kong saw Chinese people who had come there for trading, enjoying gambling, and lying in beds while smoking the opium, which caused fragrant smells to spread throughout the areas. Therefore, Nam Kong stopped and started trading and gambling with the Chinese people there. As for Nam Wue Ja, the mother river, she disliked gambling. Thus, she flowed ahead before Nam Kong. Nam Kong was busy gambling from morning until dusk. When he finally realized that God had told him to build his own waterway, he thought to himself, "Why am I gambling here? God told me to build my own straight-flowing waterway, so what should I do now?" ... Nam Kong then hastily flowed and collided with the riverbanks in the areas of the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge in Chiang Kong District, extending to Wiang Kaen District in Chiang Rai Province. As a result, the riverbanks along his waterway in these areas are full of holes and rocks, with high riverbanks and curved waterways as we see them today.

(Excerpted from The Origin of Pha Tang Mountain Story)

To illustrate the findings based on the aspects of storytelling knowledge and functions of this story, the data were analyzed, interpreted, and displayed in the following table.

Table 3
Aspects of storytelling knowledge and functions

Name of the Story	Storytelling Knowledge and Functions	
	Aspects of Storytelling Knowledge	Descriptions
<i>The origin of Pha Tang Mountain</i>	Value	The story reflects the belief that God created both the Mekong River and Nam Wue Ja (A river assumed to be in Laos, in the Hmong language) on earth for the listeners
	Behavior	The story aims to teach the listeners to avoid misbehavior and disobedience to God, as these can lead to trouble and failure in life.
	Morality	Children should be responsible for their duties and obey their parents' suggestions for success in life.

Name of the Story	Storytelling Knowledge and Functions	
	Aspects of Storytelling Knowledge	Descriptions
<i>The origin of Pha Tang Mountain</i>	Aspects of Storytelling Functions	
	Transmit value	The story intends to convey the belief that God created both the Mekong River and Nam Wue Ja on earth to the listeners.
	Spark behavioral change	The intent of this story is to motivate the listeners to obey and follow God's or parents' instructions for success in life.

For the second group, there are seven stories with one type of storytelling knowledge and two storytelling functions. For example, the excerpt from the story entitled “*Pan Gu: The Creator of Heaven and Earth*” illustrates the storyteller’s knowledge and beliefs about God and the creation of the world. The storyteller believes that heaven, earth, natural resources, physical features, and the solar system (e.g., sun, moon, sky, etc.) were created by God. This story typically lacks a specific function or motivation to change or influence the listeners’ behavior. The primary purpose is to transmit values and share knowledge with them.

...When Pan Gu died, his left eye turned into the moon, and his right eye turned into the sun. His hair and beard transformed into the stars in the sky. His head, arms, and legs became the north, south, east, west, and high mountains. The blood that flowed out from his body turned into rivers, and his muscles formed the ground. His skin and body hair became flowers, grasses, and trees. His teeth and bones were melted and turned into gold and silver. The last breath that escaped from his body became the winds and clouds. The final sound from his mouth turned into thunder. All of these reflect the beliefs about the birth of heaven and earth.

(Excerpted from Pan Gu: The Creator of Heaven and Earth Story)

To illustrate the findings based on the aspects of storytelling knowledge and functions of this story, the data were analyzed, interpreted, and displayed in the following table.

Table 4
Aspects of storytelling knowledge and functions

Name of the Story	Storytelling Knowledge and Functions	
	Aspect of Storytelling Knowledge	Descriptions
<i>Pan Gu: The creator of heaven and earth</i>	Value	The story reflects the belief that God created the heavens, earth, natural resources, physical features, and the solar system (e.g., sun, moon, sky, etc.) for the listeners.
	Aspects of Storytelling Functions	
	Transmit value	The story aims to convey the belief that God created the heavens, earth, natural resources, physical features, and the solar system (e.g., sun, moon, sky, etc.) to the listeners.
	Share knowledge	This story shares the knowledge of how God created the heavens, earth, natural resources, physical features, and the solar system (e.g., sun, moon, sky, etc.) with the listeners.

Part II: Ethnic secondary students' attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series

According to the data in Table 5, students showed highly positive attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series for their learning. The findings indicated that the picture series supported students' learning of culture ($\bar{x} = 4.91$, $SD = 0.17$), enhanced their language and analytical thinking skills ($\bar{x} = 4.79$, $SD = 0.41$), matched their learning needs and motivation ($\bar{x} = 4.73$, $SD = 0.43$), raised their awareness of cultural values ($\bar{x} = 4.81$, $SD = 0.34$), and provided the opportunity for them to develop their storytelling skills ($\bar{x} = 4.66$, $SD = 0.52$). These results underscore the importance and usefulness of storytelling using the picture series to enhance students' English, cultural knowledge, and storytelling skills in school.

Table 5
Students' attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series

No.	Students' attitudes	Mean	SD	Level of Agreement
1	Cultural learning	4.91	0.17	Very high
2	Language and analytical thinking skills	4.79	0.41	Very high
3	Learning needs and motivation	4.73	0.43	Very high
4	Awareness of cultural values	4.81	0.34	Very high
5	Storytelling skills development	4.66	0.52	Very high
Overall		4.78	0.37	Very high

To provide more concrete details on the statistical data, the students' attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series, as obtained from the open-response questions were examined. Regarding cultural learning, the students perceived that the picture series encouraged them to learn cultural knowledge (e.g., morals and identities), and the origin of their own culture. They also gained insights into different places and water resources from the folktale. For example, the statements from some students, translated into English, were used to illustrate these perspectives.

I have learned about the origins of local wisdom, culture, and my own ethnic group. (Students 1 and 9)

I have learned about the origins of human, places, and water resources. (Student 6)

Folktale helps me gain more knowledge and learn about moralities. (Students 3 and 9)

Folktale preserves my identity and culture. (Student 3)

Additionally, one student emphasized the importance of the moral learned from the picture series for her life. She expressed that she would adopt this moral as a guiding principle and to ensure that she consulted others before taking an action. This view was supported by the following statement.

I have learned the principle of doing many good things. Before I am going to do something, I will think about it or consult other people. (Student 2)

In terms of students' language learning and analytical thinking skills, the findings showed that the use of picture series was beneficial for students' learning of stories in English, supplemented by Hmong and Thai explanations. Having access to these two languages was helpful in stimulating their cognitive skills and making learning easier, especially when communicating and analyzing about setting, characters, plot, and morals in the story. These findings were supported by the students' statements as follows.

I have learned more English vocabulary and culture. (Student 5)

I have learned English, Hmong, and Thai and how to analyze folktales. (Student 1)

I have learned different languages, how to analyze the events of a story, and acquired new vocabulary. (Students 6, 7, and 9)

I have learned about the story elements and how to separate them into parts. (Student 3)

Regarding students' learning needs and motivation, data indicated that the picture series made students' learning fun, engaging, and enhanced their interest in learning. As a result, students' motivation was increased and their desire to learn more folktales was improved. They showed more interest in community storytellers and were impressed with sharing their local stories with others. The following statements highlight these findings.

Folktales create high motivation in learning. (Student 5)

When I learn about folktales, it motivates me to learn languages, analytical skills, and share my own local cultural stories with others. (Student 7).

Learning folktales inspires me to be a community storyteller and also encourages me to learn more about the cultures from different contexts. (Student 6)

Moreover, the findings highlighted that the picture series raised students' awareness of and appreciation of their cultural values. The students perceived that culture is valuable and beautiful. As a result, they wanted to be part of preserving and disseminating their culture to others. For instance, some students expressed these views.

I realize that all ethnic groups have their own cultures and they are all beautiful and good. (Student 1)

I have learned the values and culture of my own ethnic group. (Student 9)

I want to learn many folktales and disseminate my culture to other people. (Student 6)

Lastly, the picture series can improve students' capacity to use English for storytelling. It enabled them to memorize vocabulary, recognize meanings, and understand the plot of the story, which facilitated their skills and increased their confidence in telling a story to people from different cultural groups. For example, some students said:

*I think I can tell the story to tourists and people who are interested about local stories.
(Student 3)*

*After learning about folktale, I think I can become a storyteller because I remember
the story and can retell it to other people in my community. (Student 9)*

DISCUSSION

The findings clearly showed that the ethnic groups in Chiang Kong District had a variety of folktales. These folktales described the birth of heaven, earth, humans and sexes, the solar system, physical features and environments, and the interrelationships among them. They were connected to the beliefs about gods and goddesses, gratitude towards parents, love and family, magic spells and ghosts, life and destiny, and animals. These beliefs had a strong connection to the ethnic people's ways of life, ideologies, and values, and they reflected their attitudes and practices in both the past and present times. In other words, folktales help people learn about their cultural beliefs, values, and identities (Wilson, 2017). They also enabled people from different cultural groups to gain a better understanding of ethnic traditions and beliefs and to make sense of ethnic identities through stories.

Findings also confirmed that ethnic stories contained both storytelling knowledge and functions. The stories with only one type of storytelling knowledge and two storytelling functions were aimed at transmitting cultural knowledge and beliefs about the creation of heaven, earth, humans, the solar system, physical features, environments, and existing entities to the listeners. These stories did not have a clear function intended to motivate the listeners to change their behaviors. In contrast, the stories with multiple types of storytelling knowledge and two storytelling functions aimed to transmit cultural values and spark behavioral change through the core values of the story, such as beliefs, morals, and lessons learned. These core values are considered powerful, motivating, and reflective of ethnic people's ideologies of living, good character, and practices related to their families, ghosts, gods, goddesses, and sacred things.

Additionally, the Hmong students showed highly positive attitudes towards the use of the picture series for learning English and culture. They perceived that the picture series based on their own ethnic story was linked to their cultural background and learning needs. It made learning fun, enjoyable, motivating, and engaging. These findings are in line with the notions, that indicate that storytelling meets students' learning needs, makes interesting changes in their learning in English classes (Lap et al., 2022), and enables them to gain a pleasant learning experience (Cameron, 2001). Storytelling creates a positive learning atmosphere for students and enables them to learn their culture from the beliefs, ideologies, values, and morals embedded in the stories. As a result, students felt appreciative of their own culture, desired to learn more about it, and wanted to preserve and disseminate their culture and identities through stories to people outside their own cultural groups.

In regard to students' learning, the study highlighted that the students perceived that the picture series could enhance their English, analytical thinking skills, and ability to tell a local

story in English. The findings showed that the use of Hmong and Thai as supported languages in the teaching and learning process made students feel comfortable telling a story, and they liked learning stories from the picture series in English since it made learning a pleasant experience. The findings are consistent with previous studies (Andrian & Faudi, 2020; Hildaini & Sugirin, 2019; Sembiring & Ginting, 2019), which indicate that storytelling can improve learner's language skills, especially speaking skills. When the students listen to the story from their teacher, they will remember the story and learn new vocabulary, which is useful for their storytelling. The students can also develop their comprehension, sequencing, and memorization of the stories (Mokhtar et al., 2011), improve vocabulary learning (Lap et al., 2022; Mokhtar et al., 2011; Soleimani & Akbari, 2013), gain necessary ideas and contents in storytelling (Aprilia & Andreani, 2020), and build their confidence to communicate and share stories (Lap et al., 2022; Mokhtar et al., 2011) with others using the target language. Thus, it could be remarked that picture series can be considered significant and powerful for students' learning of English and storytelling skills.

CONCLUSION

The purposes of this study were to identify the storytelling knowledge and functions in 15 ethnic stories transmitted by significant local ethnic storytellers for ethnic students' learning of their own culture and to gather their attitudes towards the use of picture series in their learning of storytelling in English. The findings indicated that the ethnic stories contain both storytelling knowledge and functions, and they reflected ethnic people's ways of life, identities, beliefs, values, moralities, and ideologies in relation to gods and goddesses, gratitude towards parents, love and family, magic spells and ghosts, life and destiny, and animals. These stories are considered an important cultural resource for educating students about their ideologies, social behaviors, and good character at the present time. They also serve as a tool to facilitate understanding of ethnic people's culture and identities through storytelling.

Additionally, picture series are considered significant and can support students' learning needs and understanding of cultural aspects of the stories. Learning these cultural aspects not only makes students feel proud and appreciative of their own culture but also motivates them to learn more about it. Although ethnic communities possess a wealth of cultural knowledge and wisdom in a unique way, their cultures are often not documented appropriately. Consequently, some of their cultures, especially traditional folktales, are no longer known by ethnic young generations today. Moreover, their cultures are influenced by the economy, global societies, modern cultures, and lifestyle changes, which affect ethnic students' learning of their own cultures in schools. These students are sent to school to learn national and international cultures with which they are not familiar, and their own cultures are not taught. As a result, ethnic students are unable to learn about their own cultures and identities and lack the cultural information necessary to express themselves to national and international audiences.

This study suggests that teachers and school administrators should consider using ethnic folktales as an important resource for enhancing ethnic students' learning outcomes. Integrating folktales into school resources and learning activities can promote the quality of ethnic

students' learning of languages and cultures, raise their awareness of their own cultural values and identities, and develop their potential and desire to learn in school.

Although this study highlights the importance of using folktales and storytelling for students' learning of English and culture, there are three limitations that should be considered for future research. Firstly, the research participants in this study were rather small in number and consisted only of Hmong students, making it difficult to generalize the results to other groups of ethnic students. Future research should include a larger group of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Secondly, only a Hmong folktale was adapted into a lesson using a picture series for students' learning of storytelling, resulting in a lack of diversity in students' cultural learning resources. Thirdly, this study was limited by the instruments used to gather students' attitudes towards storytelling using a picture series. Future research should employ different tools (e.g., interviews, tests) to collect a variety of data from the participants to measure the effectiveness of storytelling using a picture series in enhancing students' English and cultural knowledge.

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THE AUTHORS

Jutharat Jitpranee is a lecturer at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand. Jutharat received her Ph.D. in English language and literature from Xiamen University, China. Her research interests include cross-culture communication, linguistics, and English language teaching.
jj2510181@gmail.com

Prommin Songsirisak is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand. He has been teaching at the university for more than 10 years. His research interests are L2 writing, intercultural communication, task-based teaching, English language teaching, and teacher professional development.
chiangraimusic123@gmail.com

Danuphong Cheewinwilaiporn is a lecturer at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand. He received his Ph.D. in World History from Zhengzhou University, China. His research interests include Chinese language teaching and world history.
cheewinwilaiporn@hotmail.com

Kannikar Kantamas is a lecturer at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Thailand. She received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Phayao, Thailand. Her research interests include English language teaching, English for mass media, and English for airlines.
kantamasnick27@gmail.com

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