

**Thailand in the Mekong Region Countries' Newspapers****Rattana Chanthao**

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Abstract

The Southeast Asian Countries launched the ASEAN Economic Community policy in 2015 that was the cause of news awareness in these countries. This article displays the topics of Thailand published on the international newspapers of Mekong region countries. The data were collected from popular international newspapers in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam that were online published in 2016. This research is in the linguistic perspectives and use the content analysis as research framework. The research finding totally found 662 news that were published in 5 contents; society, economic, foreign relationship, sports, culture and education. More than half of Thailand's news was published at Cambodia following by Vietnam, Myanmar, and Laos. Most topics in Thailand were society following by economy, sports, foreign relation, and culture and education, respectively. The society topic was highlighted in government activities and the central policy impacting Thai people. The economic topic was the most often published in Cambodia and Vietnam while the politic and society topics were more published in Laos and Myanmar than others. The economic topic was continuously published in all countries especially in Cambodia. The topic of sports was mostly published in Vietnam particularly football. There was not many news in the topics of foreign relationship, culture and education; however, they were presented the educational development participation and joined similar cultures between Thailand and Mekong region countries. The news of Thailand is not only to know what is happening in Thailand, but it also is implying how each country in the Mekong regions emphasize in Thailand. The future research should study the Thailand's contents published in local language newspapers.

Keywords: Thailand, Newspaper, ASEAN countries, Newspaper contents,**1. Background**

Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, (CLMV) and Thailand as Mekong region countries located in mainland of Southeast Asian of which have country area link. Thai government pays attention to role the CLMV countries in terms of economy and neighboring country relationship. Convenient travelling and opening country policy provide an increasing investor,



tourist as well as cooperation of each other in this region. These activities were reported in mass media between countries. Thailand's news was perennially acknowledged to have shaped people's opinion toward Thailand. According to McCombs (2014) reveals an influence of news media that can shape people's opinion by repeating the news every day. Newspaper influence its readers by choosing the topics and repeating them. According to Babalola (2002) proposed that newspapers can promote critical thinking, retention of information, problem-solving thus newspaper is able to build literate communities in Nigeria. The newspapers of each country report about Thailand to their readers in various topics depending on readers' interest and what the country or newspaper prefer to report about Thailand. International newspapers in CLMV countries work under their government agent, therefore, Thailand's news imply to what these governments would like their people to see about Thailand.

The news reported in a newspaper is not only to know what is happening in a country, but it also implies what are topics being people interest. Salotong (2009) presented that the climate change topic continually reported in Thailand's newspaper can arise people awareness; therefore, news in public media effects people cognition. Taiwo (2007) presented that language in newspapers' headline or on first page has an important role in reader's opinion and attitude of editor. Wanta and others (2015) displayed that the foreign news reported in news media of U.S. about 21 nations. These countries, Russia, United Kingdom and China frequently reported. This implied what the U.S. wanted to know about these countries. Similarly, Chanthao (2016) found that the relationship between Laos and other countries can see by the frequency of country appeared in the first page of local newspapers. This implied to what the Laos government want to point out the relation in each country and found that China, Vietnam and Thai continually were reported about the relationship of Laos governments and these countries while the U.S. news was rarely reported in Laos newspapers.

The researches above disclosed the influence of media including newspaper to the receivers. The topics continually reported in newspaper are implying what the newspaper owner wants to shape the readers' opinion. Similarly, this research will disclose what CLMV countries' pay attention to Thailand. The government agency in CLMV countries controls the international newspaper's publishing. However, other nations can access the news about Thailand from CLMV international newspapers. The news thus has hidden agenda of CLMV governments that prefers their people to see Thailand through topics in their newspapers.

2. Methods

This research was about linguistic perspective. The aim of this research is to seek the news' topics about Thailand of which reported in the international newspaper online of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam (CLMV) in 2016 according to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) policy has been launched in 2015. The southern cities of China are integrated into the Mekong region countries, however, those cities do not have international newspapers online; therefore, this research was not included China into the data collection. The content analysis is used as the research framework to categorize the 662 news into 5 main contents; society, economy, sport, foreign relation, and culture and education. The research questions are what Thailand's topics are interested in Mekong region countries and why each country chooses those topics to publish or whether these topics are related to their government policy. The findings will be explained in terms of topics and examined the Thailand's news.

3. Results

The ASEAN Economic Community or AEC policy that has launched in late 2015 consists of 10 countries divided into 2 main groups. There are 6 countries from islands; Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, and Philippines and there are 5 countries from mainland; Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. They have formed the Great Mekong Sub-region or GMS countries and some cities in south of China were included. Thailand located in mainland of this region and has set closer relationship among CLMV countries as they has shared together the Mekong River resources.



Fig. 1: Mekong region countries in AEC

Various news topics about Thailand in the international newspapers or English language newspapers in CLMV countries were divided into 5 contents consisting of society, economy, sport, foreign relationship, and culture and education, respectively.

3.1 Thailand news in Mekong Sub-region countries

There was totally 662 Thailand's news in Mekong region countries or CLMV countries. They were categorized into 5 contents showing in the table 1 bellows.

Table 1: Thailand news in Mekong region countries by contents

	Society	Economy	Sport	Foreign relation	Culture & Education	Total
Cambodia	163	110	40	29	4	346
Laos	26	23	6	14	7	76
Myanmar	53	20	11	17	3	104
Vietnam	9	36	60	14	17	136
Total	251	189	117	74	31	662

A mount of topics in table 1 above shown that a total of 557 news (85%) in the topics of society, economy, and sports were the highlight topics while there are 105 news (15%) in total of foreign relation and culture and education topic. Most of Thailand's news was reported in Cambodia newspapers 346 news (52 %) in total while Laos newspaper slightest reported about Thailand.

In terms of news topic in each country, Cambodia newspapers numerously reported Thailand's society and economic topics in total of 273 news (79%). Similarly, both topics were reported in Laos newspaper 49 news (64%) in total. The interesting topic about Thailand in Myanmar obviously focused on society topic for 53 news (51%) of the total. Partly, the highlight topic of Thailand in Vietnam was clearly in sport topic that shown 60 news (44%) in total following by 36 news (26%) of economic topic. Seemingly, all countries, however, pay attention to economic topic as the major priority objective of AEC. Although, the foreign relation was rarely reported in these countries' newspapers; however, appearing these topics in their international newspaper display the cooperation between these countries with Thailand. The culture and education topics also were not much reported in all countries. Having similar cultures related to an agriculture of mainland countries, however, these countries were



interested in sharing cultures such as the Mekong river respectful ceremonies. These ceremonies were mostly reported in Laos international newspapers.

3.2 Thailand topics in Mekong region' s newspapers

This part of research finding uses the data which are the examples of Thailand news from international newspapers in each country in table 1 above. The topics were ordered by news respectively of an amount of news.

The society topics especially concerning an important government policy was continually reported in the first pages of international newspapers in CLMV countries because this topic is not only impact to Thailand, but it is also impact to CLMV countries such as the East-West Economic Corridor development project between Thailand and these countries. CLMV migrant workers in Thailand's fishing industry mostly are Cambodian and Burmese workers immigrating to central and southern regions of Thailand. The current news happening in particular time in Thailand was reported as well. As the society topic was mostly reported in Cambodia newspapers, the news of Thailand's society will be examined in the example 1 as follows;

Example 1: The society topics

[1] Khmer Fishermen Die on Thai Vessel

Five Cambodian and one Thai fishermen died at sea of unknown causes while 20 of their Cambodian crewmates were hospitalized in Thailand's Ranong province, after their trawler returned from the Indian Ocean last Thursday, an embassy official said. Cheam Lamatin, counselor in charge of migrant labor at the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok, told Khmer Times that the fishermen died while they were on their vessel.

(<http://www.khmertimeskh.com>: 01/11/2016)

[2] Thai Boat Overcrowded – Police

An overcrowded tourist boat carrying Muslim pilgrims was being piloted recklessly before it capsized, killing at least 15 Thai people, officials said yesterday as divers and other rescuers searched for 11 people still missing. The accident happened on Sunday on the Chao

Phraya River in Ayutthaya, a UNESCO World Heritage site located some 80km north of the Thai capital of Bangkok. (<http://www.khmertimeskh.com>: 09/20/2016)

The example 1 [1] of Thailand's news above, The Khmer Times Newspaper reported the fishermen workers from Thailand and Cambodia die being there vessel in Indian Ocean. The news about Thailand's fishing industry was regularly reported because the EU rules to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) to caution Thailand to pay attention the human right in fishing industry in late 2015. Cambodia as the primary migrant workers in Thailand, reported this news because it was impact to nation and workers in this business.

The second example [2] reported the tourist boat accident in Chaopraya River when the tourists root from Bangkok to Ayutthaya as a world heritage. This news was not impact to Cambodian people; however, it was big news in Thailand in that time.

The economic topics about Thailand's there are 189 news (28%). Cambodia newspapers obviously reported a huge economic topic following the table 1 showing 110 economic news (58%) in total. The Khmer Times newspaper reported the macro economic state of country especially import and export of agriculture products. The other significant economic topics about the border trade were reported as well. The second example news show the economic topics reported in Khmer Times newspaper.

Example 2: Economic topic

[1] Thailand Keeps 2016 GDP Outlook

BANGKOK (Reuters) – Thailand's Finance Ministry kept its 2016 growth outlook intact in new economic forecasts announced on Friday, and also said it expects exports to fall less sharply than initially projected. (<http://www.khmertimeskh.com>: 10/31/2016)

[2] Trade with Thailand Passes \$5 Billion Mark

The studied neighboring countries like Cambodia, Lao, Vietnam, and Myanmar. After the study Cambodia saw the top economic growth of these countries," Mrs. Wongmongkol said. "The purchasing power in Cambodia is rising with the Cambodian economy growing 7 percent annually," she added....To facilitate more trade and investment, especially border betrade, both sides will cut red tape and simplify the process at main border crossings, officials said, adding that an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation will be finalized soon. (<http://www.khmertimeskh.com>: 06/27/2016)



The example [1] was annually reported how Thailand’s GDP was growing. Thailand economic situation is not only gained from nation economic policy, but it also is affected of AEC’s economic growing particularly tourism in CLMV countries. Reporting Thailand GDP state benefit Cambodia and CLMV countries in terms of regional economic sharing, therefore, it also was reported in the other countries. The outstanding border trade between Thailand and CLMV countries is seemingly Laos and Cambodia. The example [2] reported the border trade cooperation between Thailand and Cambodia about the solution of tax avoidance.

The sport topics about Thailand seemingly were highlighted in Vietnam’s newspapers as Thailand and Vietnam have developed nation’s sport in similar level in football, tennis and so on. The topic of Thailand’s sports in Vietnam newspapers reported 60 news (51%) in total. The example 3 shows Thailand sport news as follows. Example 3: sport topics

Binh Duong to play Muangthong in friendly match

HA NOI (VNS) — V.League defending champions Became Binh Duong will host SCG Muangthong of Thailand during the visitors' ASEAN Tour 2016 on January 23 at HCM City's Thong Nhat Stadium. Muangthong's stars who are members of the national and U23 squads, such as Teerasil Dangda, Datsakorn Thonglao and Kawin Thamsatchanan, will play in the match. <http://www.vietnamnews.com>: 01/19/2016)

The example 3 was reported football match between Thailand and Vietnam that took place at Ho Chi Minh capital city. The news informed the Thai football player’s name who had been played for Vietnam football league. The sport topics mostly were reported the competition between Vietnam and Thailand in various sports; football, tennis, table tennis, boxing, volleyball, and so on. The numerous sport news in Vietnam newspaper display that Vietnamese like sports. The news, in addition, was reported the friendship match of Thailand and Vietnam.

The foreign relation topics reported at the first newspaper page and mostly presented the relation between these countries and Thailand in terms of the government’ visiting. This topic much appeared in Cambodia and Myanmar. In addition, the news reported AEC meeting in terms of government agent’s cooperation between Thailand and other AEC countries. There is only 74 foreign relation news (11%) in total. The example 4 bellow will show the relationship



between Thailand and Myanmar’s government agency published in Myanmar Times newspaper.

Example 4: foreign relation topic

Thanlwin dams criticised ahead of state counsellor’s Thailand visit

Another civil society group has joined the mounting campaign against dams planned along the Thanlwin River, also known as the Salween, ahead of an upcoming energy meeting between Thailand and Myanmar. A statement by the Network of People in Salween Basin was released after the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Electric Power revealed that the bilateral meeting would be taking place on June 10.

(<http://www.mmtimes.com:06/10/2016>)

The news above reported the meeting ahead of state counsellor’s Thailand visited Myanmar to follow up on last meeting continuity. The foreign relation topic informed the cooperation issues between Thailand and Myanmar including other countries. The cooperation projects between Thai and CLMV countries that were reported in the newspapers also benefited economic sectors to acknowledge what will be going on the Mekong Region countries.

The culture and education topics were included because there are not much of them. In the table 1, this topic was least reported of research that presented only 31 news (5%) in total. The Mekong region countries have shared lot of similar cultures of which their people joined these regional cultures’ festival such as the international long boat racing on Mekong River. Principally, the news was reported the cooperation activities of cultures and exchanged students among CLMV countries. The example 5 is the news of education. Example 5: The culture and education topics.

Thai university to help develop vocational curriculum for Lao-German College in Vientiane

THE RAJAMANGALA University of Technology Rattanakosin (RUTR) of Thailand in cooperation with the Lao-German Technical College in Vientiane is aiming to improve curriculum development. A grant agreement ceremony was attended by director general of the Department for Technical and Vocational Education, Noupanh Outsa. The project provides for long-term cooperation in vocational training and curriculum development between the Lao-German Technical College in Vientiane and the Rajamangala University of Technology Rattanakosin. (<http://www.nationmultimedia.com:11/04/2016>)

The example 5 reported Thailand’s university provided Laos to improve curriculum development in Technical College. Thailand and Laos are similar language that can



communicate without translator; there for, many educational projects launched by Thailand's government provided Laos' education particularly graduate degree.

4. Summary and Discussion

Thailand's news in the international newspapers or English newspapers of Mekong region countries; Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, and Thailand (CLMVT countries) reported various topics. The 5 topics; society, economy, sport, foreign relation, and culture and education, have reported continuously in these countries. These interesting topics revealed the role of Thailand in Mekong region countries and the cooperation among these countries.

Seemingly, there are more than half of Thailand's news being raised to published by Cambodia. It implied that Cambodia prioritize Thailand firstly, in addition, it also revealed the role of Thailand toward Cambodia. It was not surprised because Thailand pay and important role into Cambodia in terms of worker immigration into Thailand in the field of daily work in border areas and industries particularly fishmen and factories in east region that is closed to Cambodia's major crossing point. Mostly topics reported in the CLMV's international newspapers are society and economic as both topics are priority aims of ASEAN Economic Communities, however, the topics that shows the cooperation representing among these countries are foreign relation, sport, and culture and education as the minor aims. The highlight topics of Thailand in each country, in addition, implied what these countries were interested in Thailand. Obviously, Vietnam' newspaper pay attention to sports topic especially their sport competition between Thailand and Vietnam. The research finding questions were found that there are 5 topics or contents were reported in Mekong region country' newspaper that all countries focused on Thai's society and economic while sport topic was mostly reported in Vietnam. A huge news of Thailand appeared in Cambodia implied that Cambodia pay attention to Thailand than other countries that related to the government. The future research concerning to this result is to find what the topics of Thailand were reported in local newspaper of Mekong region countries as well as Asian countries' newspapers. The impacted issues toward this region that were reported in local newspapers should be challenged to study such as climate change, global warming topics, and sharing of Mekong river resources as well.

4. Acknowledgments

This research supported by faculty of humanities and social sciences, Khon Kaen University, Thailand.

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