An Educational Demand for Integrating Culture in the FLT at Secondary Level in Thailand

Atima Kaewsa-ard

School of Liberal Arts, Mae Fah Luang University

Abstract

This article analyzes the Basic Education Core Curriculum (A.D. 2008) towards the integration of culture in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) at the secondary level in Thailand, providing a reference point on how to integrate culture in foreign language teaching for developing learners' intercultural competence in Thailand. This article discusses two significant issues related to the integration of cultural content and cultural sources for developing intercultural competence in the language teaching at secondary level in Thailand.

ความต้องการในการบูรณาการเนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรม ในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ ระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนต้นของประเทศไทย

อติมา แก้วสอาด

สำนักวิชาศิลปศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยแม่ฟ้าหลวง

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์ที่จะวิเคราะห์หลักสูตรแกนกลางการศึกษาขั้นพื้นฐาน ปีพุทธศักราช 2551 เพื่อเป็นแนวทางในการบูรณาการการสอนภาษากับวัฒนธรรมในการพัฒนาทักษะการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม ในบริบทของประเทศไทย บทความวิจัยฉบับนี้อภิปรายในสองประเด็นหลักคือการสอดแทรกเนื้อหา และแหล่ง ความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมในการสอนภาษาเพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม ในระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนต้น และสรุปประเด็นสำคัญโดยการแนะนำแนวทางในการพัฒนาทักษะการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมให้กับเด็กไทย เพื่อเตรียมตัวเข้าสู่ประชาคมอาเซียนและประชาคมโลก

1. Introduction

In the globalized world, people often find themselves working in professions that bring them into contact with people from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, preparing language learners to work and communicate effectively and appropriately in the multicultural world is significant. To be an effective communicator in intercultural communication, language learners need a thorough understanding of how cultural values and beliefs underlie foreign language usages in order to be able to avoid miscommunication or misunderstanding that may occur in intercultural communication as people from different cultures see, perceive, interpret, and evaluate things differently, consequently act upon them differently (Cheng, 2007). Zhenxian (2002) provides an example to clarify this point from his study in miscommunication between English native speakers and Chinese learners of English as follows:

> *Situation: A Chinese was at an English friend's house.*
>
> *English: What would you like to drink? Tea or coffee?*
>
> *Chinese: No, no, no. No trouble, please.*
>
> *The host didn't serve him anything to drink then.*
>
> (Zhenxian, 2002, p. 9)

The example shows that communication does not always result in understanding when the sender and the receiver come from different cultures; the chances of accurately transmitting a message are low. In China, when the host offers anything to drink or eat, the guest, whether likes to take it or not, usually gives a ritual "no" as the first reply. Then the host always insists on the guest taking the offer until the guest saying "ok" which is different from American culture. This example shows that both learner's culture and the culture in which meaning is created or communicated have an influence on the ways in which possible meanings are understood.

As communication is the product of culture, language and culture, therefore, interrelate each other. Culture is usually carried by the language, and people use the language to communicate facts, ideas or reflect attitudes through their lives in the

community (Kramsch, 1998). Hence, miscommunication or misunderstanding in intercultural communication may occur if the sender and the receiver do not have a good understanding of the cultural differences among each other or if they lack of the intercultural competence (Beamer and Varner, 2008).

The issue of intercultural competence has gained significant attention and led to numerous debates on the role and impact to Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) over the years by the processes and demands of globalization and the increasing interaction among different cultures today. Learning and understanding culture helps language learners study foreign language more meaningful as learning culture increases their curiosity about and interests in target countries and encourages their motivation to study the target language (Kitao, 2000). Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) also claim that learning culture benefits language learners in many ways such as increasing awareness of using words and phrases in the target culture, being aware of performing behavior in common situations in target culture, and evaluating the target culture. In addition, McKay (2003) claims that to master a language, language learners should learn both linguistic and cultural norms of the target language to avoid a "*fluent fool*" as linguistic competence is not enough for them to be competent in the language. Learners also need to be aware of socially appropriate behavior in which the language is used to be competent in the target language. Accordingly, this shows that language education has noticed a shift in defining the aims of foreign language education which shifting from considering a native-like speaker of the target language as the model to be the modeling of an intercultural speaker (Byram, 2009).

An intercultural speaker refers to someone who can mediate between cultures and be able to overcome the problems that may arise during and/or after the intercultural communication such as misunderstanding, culture clashes and stereotyping effect (Byram, 2009). Liddicoat (2002) also defines an intercultural speaker as a bilingual speaker who is comfortable and efficient in an intercultural context. Teaching English, thus, has a significant role to equip language learners with such efficiency.

However, there is still very little emphasis placed on the cultural teaching in the FLT in Thailand and very few teachers training on intercultural communication. Intercultural competence, therefore, does not feature among the graduation criteria. Furthermore, the majority of teachers still question on what culture should be taught exactly in language teaching and do not exactly know how to develop learners' intercultural competence. This study, therefore, would like to give the answers to these questions, and provide a reference point on how to integrate culture content in the foreign language teaching for developing learners' intercultural competence in Thai context.

2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptualizations of culture

Culture has been as area of interest and study for a wide range of disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and ethnology. In this regard, culture is an interdisciplinary concept which is conceived, used and defined differently covering various aspects of human life.

The word culture is originally assumed to be the Latin word 'cultura' which means cultivate referring to the process of tending crops and animals (Schoenmakers, 2012). Later on in the nineteenth century, in the field of anthropology, culture is defined as a whole way of life of people or a specific group (Williams, 1985). By this concept, culture could be seen as a particular system including all social practices that bonds a group of people together and also distinguishes them from others. Similarly, Thanasoulas (2001) defines culture as the accepted ways of behavior shared with other as a result of belonging to a certain group. Not only does this notion include a group's way of thinking, feeling, and acting, but also the internalized patterned for doing certain things in certain ways.

The aforementioned definitions stress culture as deep aspect like values and norms of a cultural group. However, Trompemarrs and Hampden-Turner (1998) see culture in different aspect. They see culture as the layer of an onion which composes

of three layers: artefacts and products as the outer layers, norms and values as the middle layer, and basic assumptions as the core (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Onion Model of Culture
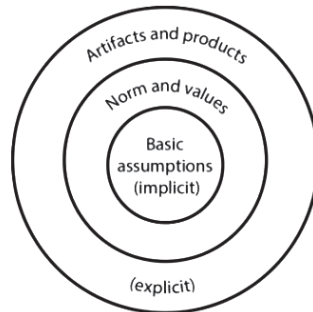
In this model, the explicit layer of culture refers to the visible aspect of culture that could be observed, such as language use, buildings, fashions, food, art, and agriculture. Banu (2015) indicates that this layer could be defined as "the body of the things we first noticed and perceived on culture."

The middle layer of culture consists of norms and values of societies which determines the social principles, behavior standards, and value system in the society. Norms normally refers to what is right or wrong that an individual should behave in the society, whereas values refers to what is right or wrong that the individual wishes to behave in the society (Banu, 2015).

The core culture which is in the inner depth of culture includes basic assumptions about the existence which are taken for granted by people within the community such as beliefs of life which is an invisible side of culture, and could be observed through the reflections in the visible culture elements.

Similarly, Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) describe culture as the form of an image of an iceberg with the surface, intermediate, and deep levels (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Iceberg Model of Culture
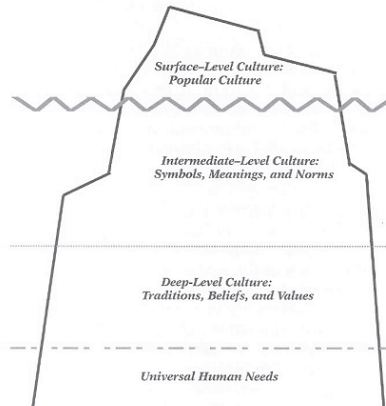
In this model, the tip of the iceberg above the water surface represents the surface-level culture, or popular culture, which is easily identifiable and could be directly observed in everyday life, such as cultural artefact, and also easily distinguishes it from other cultures. The next layer below the surface one is the intermediate-level culture consisting of symbols, meanings and norms. According to Ting-Toomey and Chung, a symbol may exist in various forms, such as a sign, a gesture, a word, a nonverbal behavior to which meanings are attached. Beneath the intermediate layer is the deep-level culture which is made up of the traditions, beliefs and values shared by the people of a cultural group. The elements of the deepest layer of the iceberg contains universal human needs, for instance, for security, love or connection, inclusion and respect which are shared by all human beings. This explains why a group of people from different cultures are different in various ways they share many such basic needs across cultures.

All the conceptions of culture explained are significant and contribute to the understanding of the definition of culture in this study. Concluding from the definitions cited above, the definitions of culture given by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) and Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) are taken in this study. The researcher conceptualized culture into three major concepts at different level: surface, intermediate, and deep level. The reason for using this definition to describe culture in this study is the

researcher considers culture as one part of human life that shows the processes of human intellectual and social development, so this definition of culture is somehow understandable and tangible which is easy to identify and recognize.

2.2 Cultural content for developing intercultural competence

Generally, textbooks and other materials used in FLT present a certain way of looking at the world, presumably, through the cultural lens of the writer. Textbooks fulfill an important role in the process of education and FLT. However, for cultural teaching, language textbooks vary in their contents and approaches. In this regard, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) distinguish three categories of cultural content that can be used and reflected culture in language textbooks and materials:

1. Source culture

Source culture refers to the language learner's own culture or the local culture of their own cultural identity.

2. Target culture

Target culture refers to the culture of native speakers which commonly known as the culture of the United Kingdom and/or United States.

3. International culture

International culture refer to the cultures of the countries where English is used as a second, foreign or as an international language. The cultural content of this category normally provides the characters of people who use English for global communication and aims to develop learners' intercultural skill.

Traditionally, the content of the culture presented to EFL learners is that of somewhat the countries where English is used as the first language such as United States or United Kingdom. However, in recent years, there has been a debate on the status of target culture in foreign language teaching. Some scholars have suggested to reconsider the dominance of the target culture and to recognize the multilingual context of English use and consider the source culture and international culture to be focused more in language teaching (McKay, 2003b). To enhance learners' intercultural competence in global perspective, both non-native and native speakers' culture should be put equal

value in language teaching as the source culture could help them empower and practice using English to express their own culture and identity. While international and target culture help learners understand the cross-cultural pragmatics and could act appropriately in cross-cultural situations (Shin, Eslami and Chen, 2012).

2.3 Intercultural competence

Foreign language learners develop linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence in order to have a good command of the foreign language; however, foreign language learners develop intercultural competence in order to be able to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural communication (Byram, 1997).

Relying on Byram (1997), intercultural competence is seen as a foregrounding competence and becomes a significant goal of language teaching and learning together with communicative competence. This competence includes five interconnected saviors summarized into three major components which are knowledge (saviors), attitudes (savoir être), and skills (savior comprendre, savoir faire, and savoir s'engager).

2.3.1 Knowledge (saviors)

This component refers to learners' knowledge about their own culture and the culture of other social groups.

2.3.2 Attitude (savoir être)

Byram (1997) states that the attitude that should be promoted in a foreign language class are the openness towards the others which is the ability to judge a cultural aspect from different perspectives and the ability to accept criticism of their own fundamental belief and values.

2.3.3 Skills

The skills of intercultural competence are classified into three categories which are skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness.

The skill of interpreting and relating (savior comprendre) refers to the ability to interpret or analyze a document of other cultures and be able to relate and compare it

with their own culture to discover similarities, difference, and contradictions that may cause miscommunication. This skill can help raising learners' awareness of their own and other cultures.

The skill of discovery and interaction (savior apprendre/ faire) refers to the understanding other beliefs, meanings, and behaviors to help leaners act appropriately in different cultural context when traveling or residing in another country or satisfies learner' curiosity without having a direct interaction with others cultural member.

The critical cultural awareness skill (savoir s'engager) refers to the ability to be aware of cultural diversities and to critically evaluate on ones' own and others cultures in the aspects of perspectives, practices, and products.

2.4 Basic Education Core Curriculum (A.D. 2008)

Apart from developing Thai learners' communicative skills in using foreign languages for communicating in various situations, seeking knowledge, engaging in a livelihood, and studying in higher education, one of the ultimate goals for teaching the foreign language is to promote Thai learners to have knowledge and understanding of stories and cultural diversity of the world community, appreciate the value of their own and other cultures, and be able to convey culture to the global society as mentioned in the second strand of the Learning Area of Foreign Languages:

Strand 2: Language and culture

Standard F2.1 Understanding the relationship between one's own language and culture; utilizing language and culture as appropriate to time, place and other factors.

Standard F2.2 Understanding the similarities and differences between the foreign language and culture and those of Thai; utilizing language intelligently and with consideration.

(Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 270)

However, to get the overall picture of an educational demand for integrating culture at secondary level, the Learners' Quality indicated for secondary level was the main focus of the analysis in this study.

2.4.1 Learners' Quality for Grade 9

After grade 9, Thai learners should be able to:

- act in compliance with requests, instructions, clarifications and explanations that they have heard or read; accurately read aloud texts, news, advertisements, tales and short verses by observing the principles of reading; specify/write various forms of non-text information related to sentences and texts that they have heard and read; choose and specify the topics, main ideas and supporting details, and express opinions about what they have heard or read from various types of media, as well as provide justifications and examples for illustration;

- Converse and write for an exchange of data about themselves, various matters around them, situations and news of interest to society, and communicate such data continuously and appropriately; use appropriate requests, clarifications and explanations and give suitable instructions; speak and write to show needs; offer and provide assistance; accept and refuse to give help; speak and write appropriately to ask for and give data, describe, explain, compare and express opinions about what they have heard or read; speak and write to describe their own feelings and opinions about various matters, activities, experiences and news/incidents, as well as to provide appropriate justifications;

- Speak and write to describe themselves, experiences, news/ incidents/ various issues of interest to society; speak and write to summarise the main idea/theme or topic identified from the analysis of matters/news/incidents/situations of interest; speak and write to express opinions about activities, experiences and incidents, as well as provide justifications;

- Choose appropriate language, tone of voice, gestures and manners by observing social manners and culture of native speakers; explain about the lifestyles, customs and traditions of native speakers; participate in/organise language and cultural activities in accordance with their interests;

- Compare and explain similarities and differences between pronunciation of various kinds of sentences and word orders regarding structures of sentences in foreign

languages and in Thai language; compare and explain the similarities and differences between the lifestyles and culture of native speakers and those of Thais and apply them appropriately;

- Search for, collect and summarize data/information related to other learning areas from learning sources, and present them through speaking and writing Use language for communication in real situations/simulated situations in the classroom, school, community and society;

- Use foreign languages in searching/conducting research, collecting and drawing conclusions about knowledge/various data sources from the media and various learning sources for further study and livelihood; disseminate/convey to the public data and news about the school, community and local area in foreign languages;

- Are skillful in the use of foreign languages (with emphasis on listening, speaking, reading and writing) to communicate about themselves, their families, schools, the environment, foods, beverages, free time and recreation, health and welfare, buying and selling, climate, education and occupations, travel for tourism, provision of services, places, language and science and technology with a vocabulary of around 2,100-2,250 words (words of higher abstract quality);

- Use compound and complex sentences to communicate meanings in various contexts for both formal and informal conversations.

(Ministry of Education, 2008, pp. 255-257)

3. Research Methodology

Qualitative content analysis was used as a method of this study. This technique has been proved to be a useful technique for dealing with large volumes of data, and it is an appropriate research tool in exploring and interpreting written words, texts or visual contents of document (Schreier, 2012). The process of qualitative content analysis, therefore, related and was convenient for this study because the main purpose of this study was to examine to what extent the teaching of culture is stated in the national

curriculum for secondary education, so to reach the objective of this study, the researcher needed to rely on qualitative data encountered in the national curriculum.

3.1 Coding schemes

In this study two coding schemes, the three level of cultural content and the categories of cultural sources, were employed to codify data. The first coding scheme was adapted from the culture model of Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998), and Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) to examine the cultural content stated in the national curriculum. The second coding scheme was employed the categories of cultural sources defined by Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) to understand the types of culture required in the national curriculum. The details of the two coding schemes are discussed as follows:

3.1.1 The three level of cultural content

The cultural content was divided into three level: surface, intermediate, and deep culture. At the surface level, culture is reflected through works of art, music, literature, movie, social institutions, or history which is a visible part of culture that could be observed. Intermediate culture refers to ways of life or norms of the society which constructs the patterns of social interactions and behaviors of a cultural group. The deep culture refers to the invisible perspectives which form the basis for what a cultural community accepts as true and reasonable such as assumptions, beliefs, values and attitudes. Table 1 is a brief summary of the three level of cultural content used in this study.

Table 1 Three Level of Cultural Content

Level of Cultural Content	Examples
Surface Level	*Artifacts:* food, tools, transports, emblems, etc.
	Places: buildings, cities, houses, etc.
	Institutions: family, law, economy, religion, education, politics, etc.
	Arts: music, clothes, dancing, paintings, movies, etc.
Intermediate Level	*Pattern of social interactions:* verbal and non-verbal communication
	Pattern of behavior: manners, customs, traditions, ways of life
Deep Level	National and regional identity, social class, belief, value, attitude, etc.

3.1.2 The categories of cultural sources

The category of cultural sources used in this study consisted of three main categories: Target, Source, and ASEAN (counted as International) cultures based on the theory of Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) Categories of Cultural Content (see Table 2). In this study the ASEAN culture was the main focus of the investigation because English is used as the official language for ASEAN community. Therefore, knowing the culture and social norms of each ASEAN member country has to be concerned in English language teaching and learning in Thailand rather than other international cultures.

Table 2 The Categories of Cultural Sources

Categories	Definition
Target Culture	Refers to an American or English culture
Source Culture	Refers to Thai culture
ASEAN Culture	Refers to cultures of the ASEAN member countries, and the ASEAN+3 (the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea)

4. Results

4.1 Goal of Culture Teaching

The goal of the culture teaching is stated in the second strand of the Learning Area of Foreign Languages in the Basic Education Core Curriculum (A.D. 2008) as follows:

Strand 2: Language and Culture

Standard F2.1: Learners are expected to

• Choose language, tone of voice, gestures and manners appropriate to various persons and occasions in accordance with the social manners and culture of native speakers.

• Describe the lifestyles, customs and traditions of native speakers.

• Participate in/organize language and cultural activities in accordance with their interests.

Standard F2.2: learners are expected to

• Compare and explain similarities and differences between the lifestyles and culture of native speakers and those of Thais, and apply them appropriately.

(Ministry of Education, pp. 270-272)

Based on the evidence, the aims of teaching culture for Thai learners are to raise their awareness of the similarities and differences between one's own and other cultures and also to develop their ability to be able use language and act appropriately in a wide variety of situations. In this respect, it recognizes that the culture teaching does not provide a fixed image of otherness or stereotypes, instead it is a process of understanding and broadening learner's world views which empowering Thai learners to develop intercultural understanding and respect. Consequently, the understanding of their own and other cultures leads to acquiring and developing intercultural awareness which could be justified as the promoting of intercultural competence, the ability to confront with a foreign language and culture.

4.2 Cultural Content Required for Secondary Level

To have a better understanding of teaching language and culture, the curriculum indicates the grade-level indicators for each educational level to be achieved. Therefore, this section presents the result from analyzing the indicators in the section of Learners' Quality for secondary level.

4.2.1 The choice of cultural content

The cultural content that Thai secondary learners should learn could be inferred from the grade-level indicators in the section of Learners' Quality as follows:

Learners are expected to:

● …Converse and write for an exchange of data about themselves, various matters around them, situations and news of interest to society, and communicate such data continuously and appropriately; **use appropriate requests, clarifications and explanations and give suitable instructions; speak and write to show needs; offer and provide assistance; accept**

and refuse to give help; speak and write appropriately to ask for and give data, describe, explain, compare and express opinions about what they have heard or read; speak and write to **describe their own feelings and opinions about various matters**, activities, experiences and news/incidents, as well as to provide appropriate justifications

- Choose appropriate language, **tone of voice, gestures and manners** by observing social manners and culture of native speakers; explain about the **lifestyles, customs** and **traditions** of native speakers; participate in/organize language and cultural activities in accordance with their interests

- Are skillful in the use of foreign languages to communicate about **themselves, their families, schools, the environment, foods, beverages, free time and recreation, health and welfare, buying and selling, climate, education and occupations, travel for tourism, provision of services, places, language and science and technology** with a vocabulary of around 2,100-2,250 words (words of higher abstract quality)…

(Ministry of Education, pp. 255-257)

Based on the evidence, Thai secondary learners are expected to learn various functional uses of language in verbal communication such as requesting, explaining, clarifying, accepting, refusing, expressing opinion, and etcetera, and also to learn other forms of non-verbal communication such as gesture in order to use appropriate language for various situations.

Apart from knowing various forms of functional uses of language, Thai secondary learners are expected to know the cultural practice such as lifestyle and social manner, and the surface culture or cultural product of one's own and those of the native speakers in order to be able to understand the similarities and differences between cultures.

4.2.2 The choice of cultural sources

The countries or the sources of culture that Thai secondary learners should learn indicated in the section of Learners' Quality as follows:

Learners are expected to:

- Choose appropriate language, tone of voice, gestures and manners by observing social manners and culture of native speakers; explain about **lifestyles**, **customs and traditions of native speakers**; participate in/organize language and cultural activities and cultural activities in accordance with their interests.

- Compare and explain the similarities and differences between the **lifestyles and culture of native speakers and those of Thais** and apply them appropriately.

(Ministry of Education, p. 256)

Based on the evidence, it is notable that Thai secondary learners are suggested to understand the culture of the native speakers. However, the curriculum does not define the meaning of 'native speakers' explicitly. According to Cambridge dictionary, native speaker means "someone who has spoken a particular language since they were a baby, rather than having learned it as a child or adult." Thus, if we talk about the native speaker of English, the culture represented in the EFL textbooks may be related to the culture of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand which are the countries in the Inner Circle of Kachru's Three Concentric Circles (1997) of the language. Besides, Thai secondary learners are expected to understand and maintain their own values and cultures. Therefore, the culture of native speakers and Thai culture should be represented in the EFL textbooks at secondary level in Thailand.

The cultural content suggested for Thai secondary learners are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 Cultural Content Suggested for Secondary Level

Cultural Content Suggested for Secondary Level	Examples
1. Cultural Sources	
- Target culture	The cultures of native speakers
- Source culture	Thai culture
2. Cultural Content	
- Surface culture	environment and climate, school, food and beverage, occupations, tourist attractions and places, science and technology
- Intermediate culture	*Verbal communication:* greeting, giving direction, giving clarification, expressing opinion, refusing, accepting, requesting, inviting, offering and providing assist
	Non-verbal communication: tone of voice and gestures
	Social behavior: manner and customs
	Routine behavior
	Traditions and celebrations

To sum up, both surface and intermediate culture of both Thai and native speakers seems to be the main focus of teaching culture at the secondary level in Thailand. Besides, all the knowledge required for developing intercultural competence is also mentioned in the national curriculum. Thai secondary learners should develop the intercultural knowledge for enhancing the understanding of cultural products of one's own and foreign cultures such as environment and climate, school, food and beverage, occupations, tourist attractions and places, and science and technology. Moreover, the different patterns of social behavior, lifestyles, and social interaction in

both verbal and nonverbal forms are also mentioned in the national curriculum. Thai secondary learners are suggested to learn how to greet, how to give direction, how to give clarification, how to express opinion, how to request or offer help, how to invite, accept and refuse, and also any gestures in order to use foreign languages for communicating in various situations functionally and appropriately, and also be able to creatively convey Thai concepts and culture to the global society.

5. Discussion

5.1 Cultural Content

The Basic Education Core Curriculum (A.D. 2008) suggests the cultural content that Thai secondary learners should be learned into two main aspects: surface and intermediate culture. The result highlighted that the national curriculum suggests various cultural topics for learners to develop intercultural competence.

However, apart from what mentioned in the Basic Education Core Curriculum (A.D. 2008), to help Thai secondary learners develop intercultural competence more effectively, the cultural content should include the knowledge of the life in the target community and essential differences between practices, values, and beliefs in that community and the learner's own society which did not mention in the national curriculum. The understanding of these cultural issues could assist learners develop potential ability to expand their knowledge of another society and culture into intercultural awareness (CEFR, 2001).

Lund (2006) also pointed out that in order to be able to communicate with people from another culture appropriately, learners need to understand the way the people behave. If learners have insight into the practices, values, beliefs and assumptions that their interlocutors have, it would be easier for learners to understand the cultural references and overcome miscommunication that could be happened in an intercultural interaction. The researcher would suggest to consider these cultural content to be considered more in the foreign language teaching at secondary level in Thailand.

5.2 Cultural Sources

The result highlighted that cultural content required for secondary level in Thailand has been linked to the culture of the native speakers which many of people may considered it as the cultures of the United Kingdom and the United States. In the teaching of English in Thailand, there are several reasons why it could be natural to maintain the tradition of focusing on these two countries.

First of all, it is perhaps the Basic Education Core Curriculum A.D. 2008 states that Thai leaners should be prepared for "*comparing and explaining similarities and differences between pronunciation of various kinds of sentences and word orders regarding structures of sentences in foreign languages and in Thai language; comparing and explaining the similarities and differences between the lifestyles and culture of native speakers and those of Thais and apply them appropriately*" (p. 273). Therefore, work with some of the challenges that contact with British and American people might be necessary for Thai learners as there is no denying that mastery of British and American language and culture has high prestige in Thailand and in many countries. Another relevant reason is the ample supply of British and American movies and television programs that can serve as sources for learning the language use in context and explore the conventions of language use (Scollon, 1999).

Even though the Basic Education Core Curriculum (A.D. 2008) states that learners are encouraged to interact with people from the English speaking countries, this does not mean that the curriculum focuses only on American and British culture. However, the curriculum could be said to open for the culture teaching related to a variety of different countries of native speaking countries. Here, the reference is clearly to the culture of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, etc. or the countries in the Inner Circle of Kachu's three Concentric Circles of the language.

Moreover, Thai secondary learners are also expected to understand their own culture. It is noteworthy that Thai culture should be focused in the language teaching for this level. According to Byram (1997), to develop learners' intercultural competence, it is significant for learners to understand their own culture as learning and understanding

one's own culture is significant to help learners talk about their own culture in English and to strengthen the sense of their own country, so Thai culture should not be ignored in the FLT at secondary level in Thailand.

Another interesting point to discuss here is the presentation of ASEAN culture and ASEAN +3 as ASEAN culture has not been mentioned in the Basic Education Curriculum (A.D. 2008). Mckay (2003) pointed out that knowing only the target culture is not enough to develop intercultural competence. Thai learners should expose more to the varieties of cultures as Thai learners will use English in different context and with people from any country in the world, especially in the ASEAN community. Therefore, it could be noted that ASEAN culture should be focused at this level in order to provide an opportunity to experience and explore some of the contexts in which English is used as an international language or as a lingua franca and also to free Thai learners from the native speakers norms. Besides, it could be pointed out that English plays a totally different role in today's world than it did just some decades ago. English is not only used for interacting with the native speakers, but also with non-native speakers, and the number of people who use English as an international language is on the increase. This situation can clearly call for a reconsideration of the cultural content that the teaching of English in Thailand should convey.

6. Conclusion

The result shows that the ultimate goals of teaching culture at secondary level are to use language and act appropriately when interacting with the foreigners and to be able to compare and contrast their own culture with one of the foreigners to understand why people of other cultures behave the way they do and be aware of the cultural differences. Thai secondary learners are also required to develop the intercultural competences from the basic level which is having and being aware of culture as a set of shared behaviors, beliefs, and values to the level of being awareness of common ground or the norms between specific cultures.

To reach the goals of developing intercultural competence, Thai secondary learners are encouraged to learn a wide range of cultural topics in various social situations in order to have the ability to bring their home culture and the foreign cultures into relation and be able to identify and use a variety of strategies to communicate with people from different cultures. In addition, mutual understanding and acceptance of differences are also promoted to familiarize Thai secondary learners with intercultural communication in order to understand and interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures.

To sum up, it is agreed that to develop learners' intercultural competence, the cultural content should be developed based on the language educational goals. However, the finding indicates that some significant components for developing intercultural competence have not been paid attention in the Basic Education Core Curriculum (A.D. 2008). Therefore, neglected areas should be taken in consideration when teachers design the teaching content for developing intercultural competence for Thai secondary learners.

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