



รายงานวิจัยฉบับสมบูรณ์

แนวความคิดและแนวปฏิบัติในการสอนวัฒนธรรมในห้องเรียนภาษา

Perceptions and Practice on Teaching Culture in the
Language Classroom

โดย

ผศ. ดร. พงศกร เมธีธรรม

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ภาควิชาภาษาอังกฤษ

คณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร

สนับสนุนโครงการวิจัย โดย งบประมาณรายได้กองทุนมหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร

ประจำปีงบประมาณ พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๕

บทคัดย่อ

ส่วนที่ 1 รายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับโครงการวิจัย

ชื่อโครงการ แนวความคิดและแนวปฏิบัติในการสอนวัฒนธรรมในห้องเรียนภาษา
Perceptions and Practice on Teaching Culture in the Language
Classroom

ชื่อผู้วิจัย ผศ. ดร. พงศกร เมธีธรรม

หน่วยงานที่สังกัด ภาควิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะมนุษยศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร

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ส่วนที่ 2 บทคัดย่อ

ภาษาไทย

การที่ภาษาอังกฤษได้แพร่ขยายไปทั่วโลกนั้น เปิดโอกาสให้ผู้คนจากต่างภาษาต่าง

วัฒนธรรมได้มีโอกาสพบปะสื่อสารซึ่งกันและกัน สำหรับครูอาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษ ซึ่งถือว่า

มีโอกาสมากกว่าครูอาจารย์ในสาระการเรียนรู้อื่นๆ ในสถานศึกษา ที่ "มีภาษาอังกฤษเป็นเครื่องมือ"

จะได้ โอกาส พบปะสื่อสารผู้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษจากหลากหลายวัฒนธรรม ในวาระต่างๆ ผ่าน

โครงการแลกเปลี่ยน การประชุมนานาชาติ หรือการศึกษาในต่างประเทศ การวิจัยนี้ ต้องการศึกษ

ว่า ประสบการณ์ที่ครูอาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษได้รับ จากการพบปะผู้พูดภาษาอังกฤษจาก หลาย

หลายวัฒนธรรมนั้น ส่งผลอย่างไรต่อการสร้างกระบวนการทัศน์ในการเรียนการสอนวัฒนธรรมใน

ห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ งานวิจัยนี้ ได้ทำการสัมภาษณ์ครูอาจารย์ผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษจำนวน คน 20

เกือบทั้งหมดของครูผู้สอน ได้ แสดงความคิดเห็นว่า นักเรียนไทยจะสามารถเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษได้

ดีขึ้นและใช้ภาษาอังกฤษได้อย่างเหมาะสม ก็ต่อเมื่อ นักเรียนมีความเข้าใจและคุ้นเคยกับ วัฒนธรรม

และโลกทัศน์ของเจ้าของภาษาอังกฤษ ดังนั้น วัฒนธรรมที่สมควร ใช้สอนในห้องเรียนที่เหล่า

ตามที่ครูผู้สอนภาษาอังกฤษได้กล่าวถึงคือ วัฒนธรรมของชาวอังกฤษและอเมริกา แต่ทว่า

วัฒนธรรมท้องถิ่นของนักเรียนและวัฒนธรรมต่างๆของโลก กลับไม่ได้รับความการกล่าวถึงและให้

ความสนใจ งานวิจัยชิ้นนี้พยายามจะชี้ให้เห็นว่าการให้ความสำคัญแต่เพียง การเรียนการสอน

วัฒนธรรม ของชาติอังกฤษหรืออเมริกา เพียงชาติใดชาติหนึ่งหรือสองชาตินั้น ไม่สอดคล้องกับ

สภาพความเป็นจริง และไม่สามารถนำไปปรับใช้ใน สังคมโลกได้อย่างเหมาะสม ความรู้

ความสามารถในกรอบวัฒนธรรมของสองชาติดังกล่าวนั้นไม่สามารถเตรียมพร้อมให้นักเรียน

นำเอาไป ปรับใช้ในการสื่อสารและสังคมโลกที่มีความหลากหลายทางด้านภาษาและวัฒนธรรมได้

The worldwide spread of English implies increased opportunities for people of different languages and cultures to interact with one another. Thai teachers of English, compared to teachers of other disciplines, have been granted the prestige of “having English as a tool,” which enables them to enjoy more personal contact with English users from other cultures through exchange programs, international conferences, or overseas education. This study explores how these multicultural experiences have shaped teachers’ perceptions toward cultural teaching in the English classroom. This study involved in-depth-interviews with twenty tertiary teachers of English. Nearly all of them perceived that Thai students only learned English better and used English properly if they understood and were familiar with the native-speaking culture and perspectives. Anglo-American cultures were most often identified as the most worthwhile cultures to study in the classroom while the local and global cultures rarely received significant attention. This study implies that it is impractical and unrealistic to pay attention to only one or two of dominant English-speaking cultures. Communicative competence in Anglo-American cultures cannot effectively allow Thai students to fully participate in multicultural communication and community.

Keywords: Cultural Teaching, English as an International Language, Thai Teachers of English, Anglo-American Cultures

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Research Report

1. Research Title: Perceptions and Practice on Teaching Culture in the Language Classroom

2. Research Director: Assist. Prof. Phongsakorn Methitham
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3. Background of the Study:

English is an international language in the Commonwealth, the Colonies and in America. International in the sense that English serves the American way of life and might be called American, it serves the Indian way of life and has recently been declared an Indian language within the framework of the federal constitution. In another sense, it is international not only in Europe but in Asia and Africa, and serves various African ways of life and is increasingly the all-Asian language of politics. Secondly, and I say 'secondly' advisedly, English is the key to what is described in a common cliché as "the British way of life". (Firth, 1956, p. 97)

In recent years, teaching the culture of the target language has been a controversial issue in ELT (English Language Teaching) circles. With the worldwide spread of English as a result of colonization or (economic) globalization, as mentioned in the opening quote, English has undoubtedly become the "international" language for both global and local communications, within or beyond nations. To elaborate on this phenomenon, English is international in the sense that people across the world have already appropriated and nativized the language by adding socio-cultural elements into their use of the language. In the tourism industry and social networks, it is clear that there is American English, Australian English, Indian English, Singaporean English, Nigerian English, and more, and, of course,

the *classic* and *canon* British English. Moreover, the major reason and goal of learning the language is to enable learners to effectively communicate their own ideas and culture to speakers of other languages and cultures (1976). As a consequence, the focus on the target culture in English classroom seems irrational. In other words, it is unrealistic and impractical to pay more attention to the target culture than the student's local culture, or at least the global culture, if students are learning English to participate in the multicultural communities. Hence, the use of target language culture in the English language classrooms has recently been debated. Many scholars and researchers has agreed to propose that the target culture should be minimized or, at best, completely abandoned (Adaskou, Britten, & Fahsi, 1990; Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 2001; Jabeen & Shah, 2011; McKay, 2002; Prodromou, 1988). However, how local English teachers in Thailand view the cultural teaching and cultural contents to be employed in the language classrooms is still unexplored.

Thai teachers of English, having the advantage of English as their primary tools, enjoy more personal contact with English users from other cultures, compared to teachers of other disciplines, especially from English-speaking communities. They are regularly exposed to different varieties of English-speaking cultures through exchange programs, international conferences, professional training, or higher education both inside and outside Thailand. Their exposures different users of English have influenced their views toward English-speaking countries, and this study aims at presenting how these multicultural experiences have shaped their perceptions toward cultural teaching in the EFL classroom.

4. Research Questions:

The major purpose of this study is to investigate and analyze the attitudes and perceptions of Thai teachers of English toward the teaching and the employing of cultural contents in the English language classrooms. The key questions of the research are as follows:

1. What are attitudes and perspectives of Thai teachers of English which are related to the current status and roles of English in global and local contexts?
2. To what extent do Thai teachers of English understand and integrate cultural contents in their language instruction?
3. What are perceptions and practices on of Thai teachers of English cultural teaching, for example, selection of teaching materials and cultural contents, in language classrooms?

5. Scope of the study:

This study aims at investing and analyzing attitudes and perspectives of Thai teachers of English, which are related to perceptions and practices on cultural teaching in language classrooms. This research is based on qualitative orientation. With its holistic and in-depth description in data gathering, qualitative research is regarded as a suitable approach to answer the aforementioned three research questions. This research orientation allows the researcher to gain insight into the attitudes and perspectives of local English teachers.

6. Significance of the study:

1. This study aims to shed light on the problematic ideology of native-speaking culture(s) as a sole focus on cultural teaching in the English language classrooms. However, this ideology is not practical and relevant with the current status of English and its changing patterns and contexts of use.
2. This study aims at deconstructing a classic but controversial doctrine that a learner can only use English properly if he or she is familiar with native English-speaking culture.
3. This research, then, offers an alternative approach to teaching which is more practical in preparing language learners for multicultural communications and communities.

7. Conceptual Framework:

Conceptual framework related to the study can be divided into four aspects: 1) Revisiting English as an International Language, 2) Implications from EIL Paradigm to ELT, 3) Cultural Perceptions in the Language Classroom, and 4) Critiques on Cultural Teaching in the English Classroom

7.1 Revisiting English as an International Language

With its phenomenal spread to many parts of the world, English is widely accepted as an international language. Unlike other world languages, English is not limited to native-to-native or native-to-nonnative communication. It is also a communicative medium among nonnative speakers. This 'international' status is not primarily based on the number of native speakers. Otherwise, other widely-spoken languages, for example, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic, might also be considered as an international language. Crystal (2003) states that English has undoubtedly achieved global status because it has developed a "special role that is recognized in every country" (p. 3). The 'special' role can be observed in two situations. First, English serves as the official language of public administration, media, education, and business communications in former British territories, such as, Nigeria, Singapore, and Jamaica. Second, English has been given special priority worldwide as a required foreign language in the educational system.

Crystal (2003) claims that there are some seventy-five territories in which English has held or continues to hold a special role. In his book, *English as a Global Language*, the countries and territories listed below show an estimate of the number of speakers (Crystal, 2003, pp. 62-65).

Table 1 *Speakers of English in territories where the language has had special relevance*

| <i>Territory</i> | <i>Population (2001)</i> | <i>Usage estimate</i> | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| American Samoa | 67,000 | L1 | 2,000 |
| | | L2 | 65,000 |
| Antigua & Barbuda (c) | 68,000 | L1 | 66,000 |
| | | L2 | 2,000 |
| Aruba | 70,000 | L1 | 9,000 |
| | | L2 | 35,000 |
| Australia | 18,972,000 | L1 | 14,987,000 |
| | | L2 | 3,500,000 |
| Bahamas (c) | 298,000 | L1 | 260,000 |
| | | L2 | 28,000 |
| Bangladesh | 131,270,000 | L2 | 3,500,000 |
| Barbados (c) | 275,000 | L1 | 262,000 |
| | | L2 | 13,000 |
| Belize (c) | 256,000 | L1 | 190,000 |
| | | L2 | 56,000 |
| Bermuda | 63,000 | L1 | 63,000 |
| Botswana | 1,586,000 | L2 | 630,000 |
| British Virgin Islands (c) | 20,800 | L1 | 20,000 |
| Brunei | 344,000 | L1 | 10,000 |
| | | L2 | 134,000 |
| Cameroon (c) | 15,900,000 | L2 | 7,700,000 |
| Canada | 31,600,000 | L1 | 20,000,000 |
| | | L2 | 7,000,000 |
| Cayman Islands (c) | 36,000 | L1 | 36,000 |
| Cook Islands | 21,000 | L1 | 1,000 |
| | | L2 | 3,000 |
| Dominica (c) | 70,000 | L1 | 3,000 |
| | | L2 | 60,000 |
| Fiji | 850,000 | L1 | 6,000 |
| | | L2 | 170,000 |
| Gambia (c) | 1,411,000 | L2 | 40,000 |
| Ghana (c) | 19,894,000 | L2 | 1,400,000 |
| Gibraltar | 31,000 | L1 | 28,000 |
| | | L2 | 2,000 |
| Grenada (c) | 100,000 | L1 | 100,000 |

*Why English? The historical context*Table 1 (*cont.*)

| <i>Territory</i> | <i>Population (2001)</i> | <i>Usage estimate</i> | |
|------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Guam | 160,000 | L1 | 58,000 |
| | | L2 | 100,000 |
| Guyana (c) | 700,000 | L1 | 650,000 |
| | | L2 | 30,000 |
| Hong Kong | 7,210,000 | L1 | 150,000 |
| | | L2 | 2,200,000 |
| India | 1,029,991,000 | L1 | 350,000 |
| | | L2 | 200,000,000 |
| Ireland | 3,850,000 | L1 | 3,750,000 |
| | | L2 | 100,000 |
| Jamaica (c) | 2,665,000 | L1 | 2,600,000 |
| | | L2 | 50,000 |
| Kenya | 30,766,000 | L2 | 2,700,000 |
| Kiribati | 94,000 | L2 | 23,000 |
| Lesotho | 2,177,000 | L2 | 500,000 |
| Liberia (c) | 3,226,000 | L1 | 600,000 |
| | | L2 | 2,500,000 |
| Malawi | 10,548,000 | L2 | 540,000 |
| Malaysia | 22,230,000 | L1 | 380,000 |
| | | L2 | 7,000,000 |
| Malta | 395,000 | L1 | 13,000 |
| | | L2 | 95,000 |
| Marshall Islands | 70,000 | L2 | 60,000 |
| Mauritius | 1,190,000 | L1 | 2,000 |
| | | L2 | 200,000 |
| Micronesia | 135,000 | L1 | 4,000 |
| | | L2 | 60,000 |
| Montserrat (c) | 4,000 | L1 | 4,000 |
| Nambia | 1,800,000 | L1 | 14,000 |
| | | L2 | 300,000 |
| Nauru | 12,000 | L1 | 900 |
| | | L2 | 10,700 |
| Nepal | 25,300,000 | L2 | 7,000,000 |
| New Zealand | 3,864,000 | L1 | 3,700,000 |
| | | L2 | 150,000 |

(cont.)

ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

Table 1 (*cont.*)

| <i>Territory</i> | <i>Population (2001)</i> | <i>Usage estimate</i> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Nigeria (c) | 126,636,000 | L2 60,000,000 |
| Northern Marianas (c) | 75,000 | L1 5,000 |
| | | L2 65,000 |
| Pakistan | 145,000,000 | L2 17,000,000 |
| Palau | 19,000 | L1 500 |
| | | L2 18,000 |
| Papua New Guinea (c) | 5,000,000 | L1 150,000 |
| | | L2 3,000,000 |
| Philippines | 83,000,000 | L1 20,000 |
| | | L2 40,000,000 |
| Puerto Rico | 3,937,000 | L1 100,000 |
| | | L2 1,840,000 |
| Rwanda | 7,313,000 | L2 20,000 |
| St Kitts & Nevis (c) | 43,000 | L1 43,000 |
| St Lucia (c) | 158,000 | L1 31,000 |
| | | L2 40,000 |
| St Vincent & Grenadines (c) | 116,000 | L1 114,000 |
| Samoa | 180,000 | L1 1,000 |
| | | L2 93,000 |
| Seychelles | 80,000 | L1 3,000 |
| | | L2 30,000 |
| Sierra Leone (c) | 5,427,000 | L1 500,000 |
| | | L2 4,400,000 |
| Singapore | 4,300,000 | L1 350,000 |
| | | L2 2,000,000 |
| Solomon Islands (c) | 480,000 | L1 10,000 |
| | | L2 165,000 |
| South Africa | 43,586,000 | L1 3,700,000 |
| | | L2 11,000,000 |
| Sri Lanka | 19,400,000 | L1 10,000 |
| | | L2 1,900,000 |
| Suriname (c) | 434,000 | L1 260,000 |
| | | L2 150,000 |
| Swaziland | 1,104,000 | L2 50,000 |
| Tanzania | 36,232,000 | L2 4,000,000 |
| Tonga | 104,000 | L2 30,000 |

Why English? The historical context

Table 1 (*cont.*)

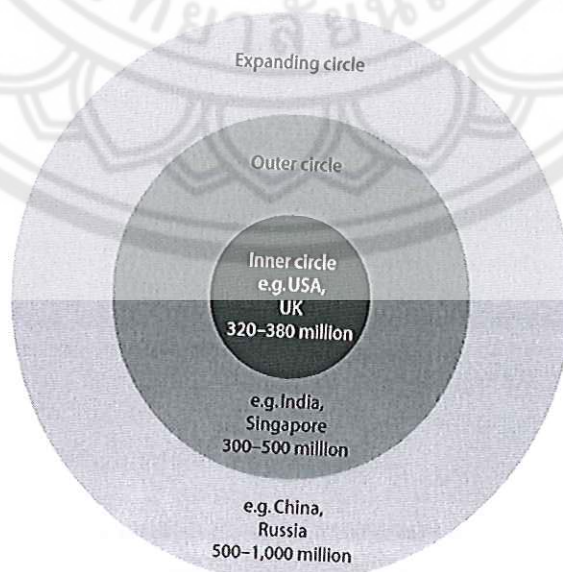
| <i>Territory</i> | <i>Population (2001)</i> | <i>Usage estimate</i> | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Trinidad & Tobago (c) | 1,170,000 | L1 | 1,145,000 |
| Tuvalu | 11,000 | L2 | 800 |
| Uganda | 23,986,000 | L2 | 2,500,000 |
| United Kingdom | 59,648,000 | L1 | 58,190,000 |
| | | L2 | 1,500,000 |
| UK Islands (Channel Is, Man) | 228,000 | L1 | 227,000 |
| United States | 278,059,000 | L1 | 215,424,000 |
| | | L2 | 25,600,000 |
| US Virgin Islands (c) | 122,000 | L1 | 98,000 |
| | | L2 | 15,000 |
| Vanuatu (c) | 193,000 | L1 | 60,000 |
| | | L2 | 120,000 |
| Zambia | 9,770,000 | L1 | 110,000 |
| | | L2 | 1,800,000 |
| Zimbabwe | 11,365,000 | L1 | 250,000 |
| | | L2 | 5,300,000 |
| Other dependencies | 35,000 | L1 | 20,000 |
| | | L2 | 15,000 |
| Total | 2,236,730,800 | L1 | 329,140,800 |
| | | L2 | 430,614,500 |

The category 'Other dependencies' consists of territories administered by Australia (Norfolk I., Christmas I., Cocos Is), New Zealand (Niue, Tokelau) and the UK (Anguilla, Falkland Is, Pitcairn I., Turks & Caicos Is).

Furthermore, the role and use of English as an International Language (EIL henceforth) across the globe can be best viewed through a model of three concentric cycles: Inner-Circle, Outer-Circle, and Expanding Circle countries. Krachru (1986, 1992) claims that English is used as the primary language in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These are the Inner-Circle countries. Interestingly, the majority of speakers in this circle have historically been Caucasian. Countries located in the Outer Circle tend to share a history of colonization by English-speaking countries, particular the United Kingdom and the United States. If being observed closely, these countries, such as

Kenya, India, and Singapore, are multilingual, and English has served as a *lingua franca* within them. They tend to represent particular non-Caucasian ethnic groups whose culture is distinct from those of Caucasian group in the Inner-Circle. As English plays an important role in education, media, and politics, people in this circle learn English as their additional language or second language as a tool to survive and excel in their societies. The largest circle is the Expanding-Circle countries where English has played no crucial role in their history and government. As a consequence, English here has long taught as learned as a foreign language. In fact, Kachru (2005) maintains that the Expanding-Circles countries were not explicitly or directly colonized, but, to the certain extent, they did “gradually came under Western influence and where English is fast becoming a dominant second [or additional] language in academia, business and commerce, higher education, media, and science and technology” (p. 155). Countries located in the Expanding Circle are, for example, China, Russia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand. Similar to the Outer-Circle, people in these countries are prototypically non-Caucasian and have their own distinctive cultural values and patterns.

Why English? The historical context



The three 'circles' of English

In his three centric circles, Krachru (1986, 1992) highlights that English has been used in diverse sociolinguistic and multicultural contexts, especially in the Outer- and Expanding-Circle countries, and it has been localized, nativized, or indigenized by the speakers outside the Inner-Circle countries. He terms the emerging localized varieties of English in many countries as World Englishes.

The EIL paradigm puts an emphasis on the relevance and integration of World Englishes to ELT. EIL connotes that people have been using English within their own cultural frame of reference, creating new varieties of English deviated from the pattern of language usage among native speakers. This view should shape how ELT should be applied in schools. English language education within EIL contexts should focus on teaching and learning the language that serves as a medium for communication taking place between speakers coming from different cultural and national backgrounds. Sharifian (2009) puts it bluntly: “The focus in the EIL paradigm is on communication rather than on the speakers’ nationality, skin color, and so on...” and “the distinction between who is and who is not a native speaker is not always clear-cut” (p. 5).

7.2 Implications from EIL Paradigm to ELT.

With the worldwide spread of English as a lingua franca within cyber contacts, social networks, multinational gatherings, and the tourism industry, Suzuki (as cited in Matsuda, 2003) observes that people uses English with their own cultural frame of reference, creating new varieties of English detached from the frame of reference and cultural values of native speakers. The assumption that nonnative English speakers learn English in order to communicate with native speaker and learn about their culture does not reflect the reality of the English language in the EIL community these days. As Smith (1983) puts it:

A Thai doesn’t need to sound like an American in order to use English well with a Filipino at an ASEAN meeting. A Japanese doesn’t need an appreciation of a British

lifestyle in order to use English in his business dealings with a Malaysian. The Chinese do not need a background in western literature in order to use English effectively as a language for publications of worldwide distribution. The political leaders of France and Germany use English in private political discussions but this doesn't mean that they take on the political attitudes of Americans. It is clear that in these situations there is no attempt for the user to be like a native speaker of English.” (p. 7)

The dynamic status of English as an international language presented in the above-mentioned quotation has an implication on culture in language teaching. Smith (1976) proposes that:

1. Learners of an international language do not need to internalize the culture norm of native speakers of that language.
2. The ownership of an international language becomes 'de-nationalized.'
3. The educational goal of learning it is to enable learners to communicate their ideas and culture to others.

McKay (2002) echoes that “users of EIL whether in a global or local sense do not need to internalize the cultural norms of Inner Circle countries in order to use the language effectively as a medium of wider communication (p. 12).” She then revises Smith's notions concerning the relationship between an international language and culture which can be applied to English language instruction in a global context.

1. As an international language, English is used both in a global sense for international communication between countries and in a local sense as a language of wider communication within multilingual societies.

2. As it is an international language, the use of English is no longer connected to the culture of Inner Circle countries.
3. As an international language in a local sense, English becomes embedded in the culture of the country in which it is used.
4. As English is an international language in a global sense, one of its primary functions is to enable speakers to share with other their ideas and culture.

7.3 Culture Perceptions in Language Classroom

A focus of the culture in the language classroom has always been the native speaker. Influenced by Stern's work in 1992, Kumaravadivelu claims that the core of culture teaching aims at helping L2 learners to gain an understanding of the native speakers' perspective. He claims that English language teaching pays attention to making L2 learners "becom[e] sensitive to the state of mind of individuals and groups within the target language community ..." (p. 543). In other words, what teachers are trying to do is to help the learner "create a network of mental associations similar to those which the items evoke in the native speaker" (p. 543). Holliday (2005) points out a similar idea in his discussion of "the residues of audiolingualism" (p. 45) which serves as a means of pressuring the native-speaking teachers into a kind of behaviorist training mindset: the idea that *we* have to make *them* think like *us*. Taking Japanese learners of English as a case study, Nakamura (as cited in Kubota, 1998, p. 298) claims that "by learning English, the Japanese have internalized ... Anglo-Saxon views of the world ..." (p. 298). Hence, it is not an exaggeration to claim that the core of culture teaching is just to promote a communicative ability appropriate for "the specific purpose of culturally empathizing if not culturally assimilating, with native speakers of English" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 543).

7.4 Critiques on Cultural Teaching in English Classroom

When it comes to the cultural teaching in English classroom, many English teachers support the inclusion of culture in their language instruction. It also seems to take for granted among English teachers that the target culture should go hand in hand with the target language. In other words, the cultural aspects of the Inner-Circle countries should be a primary focus in English classrooms. This practice may have, more or less, been influenced by the cliché statement that has embedded in English education for a long time. As it spell out, *learners can only be used English properly if they are familiar with native English-speaking culture.*

With such influence, it is natural among English teachers to integrate everyday lifestyles of native speakers with language forms, meanings, and functions, in order to promote communicative competence in classroom. Teachers insist on “conformity to native-speaker norms” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p. 361) and evaluate students against “the idealized native-speaker model” (Leung, 2005, p. 139). Hence, the students struggle to reach goals “which are both unrealistic and unnecessary [and the teachers make them] subservient and prevent them from appropriating the language” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p. 361). In that case, the cultures of both non-native learners and teachers and their cultural identities are deliberately, or unintentionally, ignored in the learning process. Hence, the cultural teaching in language classrooms—which focus on the respective native-English speaking culture—aim at promoting the cultures of the native speakers of English.

As English has gained a dominant status as an international language, the above mentioned perceptions and practices in the language classrooms have recently been questioned and critiqued by ELT scholars. To illustrate, from his study on Greek students learning English at private language institutes and at a British Council Teaching Centre, Prodromou (1988) claims that the language instruction with emphasis and reliance on cultural contents from Inner-Circle countries forces the students to

leave their three-dimensional humanity outside and enter the plastic world of

EFL textbooks; textbooks where life is safe and innocent, and does not say or do anything. Our modern books are full of speech acts that don't act, don't mean anything ... Most textbooks project an Anglo-centric, male-dominated, middle-class utopia of one kind or another. The life has been taken out of this EFL textbook word. (p. 79)

The result from his study shows that students are less motivated in English language class. He further claims that "When both the material we use and the way we use it are culturally alienating then, inevitably, the students switch off, retreat into their inner world, to defend their own integrity" (p. 80). Cook (2001) also shares a common view on this issue, as he states in his teaching guideline book, "Second Language Learning and Language Teaching":

In an ideal teacher's world, students would enter the classroom admiring the target culture and language, wanting to get something out of the L2 learning for themselves, eager to experience the benefits of bilingualism and thirsting for knowledge. (p. 118)

Cook (2001) suggests that, for students, to be motivated in learning a foreign language, their own cultural backgrounds should have a certain connection to the culture of the target language. There is a greater chance of success in learning the language if the students "feel they are adding something new to their skills and experience by learning a new language, without taking anything away from what they already know" (p. 119). On the other hand, students will less-likely succeed if they "feel that the learning of a new language threatens what they have already gained for themselves" (p. 119). McKay (2002) also shares the view that "students will be more, not less motivated, to learn English if the language is presented in contexts that relate to their own lives as young adults rather than to see it presented in the context of an English-speaking country (p. 87)."

In this connection, he further critiques how mainstream teaching materials “reinforces unfavorable images of L2 [second language] users” (p. 122) by showing or mentioning only famous native-speakers representing Inner-Circle culture. As students never see samples of successful English non-native language users in reality or in action, they tend to perceive and later internalize that English is very difficult to master and ‘out of reach’ for non-native speakers like themselves.

Canagarajah (1999) also shares the view on the drawbacks and inappropriateness of the cultural contents appeared in such materials. While Cook (2001) focuses on how the materials might have an effect on acquiring the target language, Canagarajah (1999) goes beyond the language acquisition issues by arguing that there is political ideology ingrained in those teaching materials. He maintains that commercial materials produced by and imported from the Inner-Circle countries try to maintain postcolonial values and reinforce the dominance of their cultures.

8. Research Methodology

8.1 Research Orientation

This section describes the research procedure employed in conducting this study. The data collection procedure is based on a qualitative-oriented approach as it helps the researcher to gain insight into the perceptions and practices of in-service teachers in terms of their cultural teaching in classroom. However, the purpose of the data gathered through a questionnaire is to provide personal background experiences of the participants, and the questionnaire itself has been designed to reveal a descriptive data rather than statistics.

8.2 Design of the Study

8.2.1 Participants

There were 29 Thai teachers of English who participated in this study by returning questionnaires with signed consent forms. They were in-service teachers from public

universities and secondary schools from different parts of Thailand. Twenty two of the participants were female, and there were only 7 male participants. More than half of the participants (18) held a BA as their highest degree, while the remaining 5 and 6 held a MA and PhD degree, respectively. The majority of the participants (19) were in their thirties, while the remaining 7 and 2 were in their twenties and forties. Their teaching experience was varied from 1-6 years (12 participants) to 7-15 years (9 participants) and 16-25 years (3 participants).

Nine participants eventually withdrew from the study during the in-depth e-mail interviews. Ultimately, there were twenty participants who took part in the study. They are varied greatly in terms of age, and their teaching experience ranged from less than six years to twenty-five years. Their multicultural experiences with English speakers included pursuing a degree, attending a conference or seminar, and participating in a short training program. Each participant was interviewed individually, and there were two interviews with each participant over two weeks. The interview questions were in both English and the teachers' mother tongue, Thai, and participants could choose to answer the questions in either English or Thai according to their own preference. Also, at the end of the interview, I asked for permission from the participants to follow up on their answers. Hence, they could elaborate and clarify their responses or help elicit additional information and depth about the focused research topics.

8.3 Instruments of Data Collection

Two different data collection methods were employed in this study, and the data were collected over a period of four months. The two instruments were a questionnaire and electronic (e-mail) interviews.

8.3.1 Questionnaires

In this study, the questionnaire was designed to provide the participants' personal information, basic background, and descriptive data which could reveal the teachers' perceptions and practices on the current status of English, and its implication on English language teaching and learning, particularly on teaching culture in the English classroom. I used the participants' contact information, responses, and the consent provided in their returned questionnaire to continue conducting e-mail interview. Most of the interview questions in the follow-up email interviews were developed from participants responses to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of a series of questions and other prompts including demographic data, perceptions of English language, attitudes towards English-speaking countries and culture, and practices on teaching culture in the language classroom. The questionnaire was in both English and Thai. The participants were allowed to answer the questionnaire in either Thai or English upon their own preference.

8.3.2 Electronic mail (e-mail) Interviews

All of the participants were interviewed through electronic mail (e-mail) interviews as they had a chance to provide well-thought-out answers rather than top-of-head responses (Hunt & McHale, 2007). In the same light, Meho (2006) states that "this e-mail interview allows both researchers and the interviewees to take the time to be more thoughtful and careful in their responses" (p. 1291). E-mail interviews tends to prevent the 'halo effect' "when interviewees pick up cues from the researcher related to what they think the researcher wants them to say, thus potentially influencing their responses" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 174). Moreover, Hunt and Mchale (2007), together with Meho (2006), claim that, compared to the traditional methods, e-mail interviews are far cheaper, their range is broader, and their

number of participants is more varied and larger, and the environment is more relaxed and friendlier.

The participants were asked to take part in the e-mail interviews only after they provided their consent with their returning questionnaire. All participants received background and detailed information about the research in which they were asked to participate to ensure their understanding of what participation would entail including any possible risk.

There was only one interview with each participant over two weeks; each interview consisted of five questions regarding their perceptions and practices on teaching culture in the English classroom. In order to give them a chance to provide well-thought-out responses, I allowed each participant up to two weeks to ponder on the questions thoroughly before answering via e-mail. The follow-up interviews were done with only 9 participants in order to ask for more clarifications. Like the questionnaire, the interview questions were in both English and Thai, and the participants were free to answer the question in either language (English or Thai).

8.4 Data Analysis

First and foremost, the data from the questionnaire was analyzed against the guiding research questions of the study. Items for research results and discussion were derived from recurring topics, ambiguous answers, and unexpected responses. These items also helped in shaping and revising the interview questions and refined my focus in subsequent data collection.

The e-mail interview responses were analyzed in three stages. I first engaged in data organizing and a careful reading of the e-mail transcripts. I then reviewed the data to code and categorize individual statements and passages according to themes. These themes were, in turn, related back to the research questions. These were themes used to break up and

segment data into simpler, general categories in order to formulate different levels of interpretations and analysis.

9. Results:

This section reports the data on perceptions and practices of in-service Thai teachers of English on their cultural teaching in the English classroom. All the findings are based on the data derived from questionnaires and semi-structured interview responses. More than half of the returned questionnaires and e-mail interview responses were written in Thai as the researcher allowed the participants to provide their responses in either English or Thai according to their own preference. In order to protect participants' privacy, their written responses will be presented through the use of pseudonyms.

9.1 Perceptions of the Current Status of English

English has travelled far from its motherland, set foot in foreign lands, and has been adopted or accepted by people in many parts of the world as their mother or foreign tongue. English has already gained pre-eminence in education, employment, business, social mobility, and popular culture on a global level. With such pre-eminence, English is now being viewed as either a passport or a gatekeeper in gaining possibility and prosperity. This section reveals how Thai teachers perceive this current status of English.

The majority of the participants perceived English as the most convenient mode of communication, as a multifunctional language used in a wide range of circumstances, and as unquestionably the first-preferred additional language for people across the globe to communicate with one another. The following quotes are typical of statements made by almost half of the respondents.

ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาหนึ่งซึ่งใช้เป็นสื่อกลางในการสื่อสารกับคนทั่วโลก ทั้งในด้านเศรษฐกิจ การเมือง

การศึกษาและอีกหลายหลายด้าน

(Nakorn's response in Thai)

It is a language that people all over the world use to communicate with each other. It is the language for economics, politics, education, and other domains.

(Nakorn's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

ประเทศต่างๆทั้งโลกต่างใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษากลางในการติดต่อสื่อสารด้านต่างๆ เช่นการศึกษา เศรษฐกิจ และ การเงิน สังคมและการเมือง ผู้ที่มีความรู้ความสามารถในภาษาอังกฤษย่อมมีความได้เปรียบในการประกอบ กิจกรรมต่างๆในระดับสากล

(Patipan's response in Thai)

Countries across the globe have adopted English as a medium for communications taking place in, for example, education, economics and finance, and society and politics domains. Those with a good command of English have advantages over others in international activities.

(Patipan's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

Thus, the status of English as a global lingua franca received the most acknowledgements. Moreover, in connection to this, many participants also considered English as a vehicle for modernization, internationalization, civilization, and key to access to advanced knowledge and resources. Among these benefits, many felt that the less developed countries needed English in order to “receive the advancements” from developed countries, especially those with English as their first language. This feeling came through clearly in the following quotes:

With America's supremacy in all aspects, English has gained more popularity

worldwide as a result of being the national language of America. In order to catch up with technological advancements from the USA, many countries need to learn to use English.

(Thanee's response in English)

English is the language of supreme countries and it is unquestionable that English has become an international language. To become 'internationalized', one need to learn and use English well in order to be able to participate in cross-cultural communications and gain access to advanced knowledge.

(Weena's response in English)

Political and military power received the second most common acknowledgements as the major force that resulted in the phenomenal spread of English. In other words, the answer to why language becomes an international language "lies in the swords and spears wielded by the armies" (Crystal, 2003, p. 9). Many of the teachers reported that English has journeyed so far away from England and successfully settled down outside its own homeland because of its imperial force. This perception can be clearly observed through one of the participants' responses

England expanded its empire through colonizing other countries, especially in Asia, by first introducing the religion. Then, the British army invaded other countries and enjoyed its absolute power by controlling their natural resources and manipulating local arts and culture. They seized the freedom of local people in all aspects of life. Though the colonization era has faded away, the consequences of imperialism still strongly prevails in those countries.

(Wilai's response in English)

This section has revealed that Thai teachers perceived English as an international language because of its function as a lingua franca, because of political/military power, and because of its economic/technology force.

9.2 Perceptions of English-speaking Countries

The interviewees were asked if they were to receive a scholarship to study English abroad, which country might they like to go and what would the reason for their choice. The majority of the participants shared the view that they would choose to further their education in the USA for three reasons: its superiority in all aspects, its worldwide linguistic and cultural influence, and its “melting-pot” of a heterogeneous society. As regards to the country’s superiority, many participants claimed:

ความฝันของตนเองคืออยากมีโอกาสไปศึกษาต่อที่ประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกาเพราะเป็นชาติมหาอำนาจ ซึ่งมีอิทธิพลต่อประเทศต่างๆทั่วโลก อีกทั้งยังเป็นแหล่งเรียนรู้ศิลปะวิทยาการด้านต่างๆที่สำคัญ

(Pratipan’s response in Thai)

My dream is to have a chance to further my education at the United States. This is because it has become the most powerful and influential country in the world. It is also a resource center for all kinds of knowledge.

(Pratipan’s response in Thai, Researcher’s translation)

The States is an amalgamation of all kinds of knowledge and academia.

(Namthip’s response in English)

I would be exposed to and gain experience in such an advanced body of knowledge, then brings it back in order to help develop my home country.

(Decha’s response in English)

Additionally, many respondents mentioned that American English language and culture had already gained the phenomenal spread, recognition, and influence on the use of

language and the way of life among people across the globe. By attending schools in the United States, they would, then, be exposed to the mainstream language and culture which had already been adopted as worldwide norms. One participant claimed that,

อยากไปเรียนที่ประเทศเจ้าของภาษาอย่างสหรัฐอเมริกา เพื่อที่จะได้เรียนรู้สัมผัสกับภาษาและวัฒนธรรมของเจ้าของภาษาที่ถูกต้อง

(Sirinee's response in Thai)

I want to study English in a native English-speaking country like the USA so that I could be exposed to the accurate native language and culture.

(Sirinee's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

The heterogeneous or multicultural "salad bowl" society aspect of the United States led many participants to perceive the USA as the ideal country for their future schooling. As they put it:

จะเลือกไปประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา เพราะเป็นประเทศที่มีความหลากหลายของเชื้อชาติ จะทำให้ได้เรียนรู้สำเนียงที่หลากหลาย

(Chaipak's response in Thai)

I will choose to go to the United States because the country's population is multiracial. I will have a chance to be exposed to varieties of English accents.

(Chaipak's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

ต้องการไปประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา เพราะเป็นประเทศมหาอำนาจ ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาแม่ รวมทั้งจะได้เรียนรู้วัฒนธรรมที่หลากหลาย

(Nakorn's response in Thai)

I would like to go to the United States because it is a superpower country where people use English as their mother tongue. As well, I will be exposed to a multicultural society.

(Nakorn's response in English, Researcher's translation)

For those teachers who wanted to study English in England, they were favorably impressed by the sense of language origin, originality, and ownership. Many participants desired to further their education in England because, for example:

ภาษาอังกฤษแบบที่ใช้ที่อังกฤษเป็น ภาษาอังกฤษมาตรฐาน และ ประเทศอังกฤษเองก็เป็นต้นกำเนิดของภาษา

ภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้ในประเทศจึงเป็นรูปแบบภาษาอังกฤษที่ถูกต้องที่สุด

(Paweena's response in Thai)

British English is the Standard English, and as English originated in England, the language patterns used there are the most accurate model.

(Paweena's response in Thai, Research's translation)

ไปประเทศอังกฤษ เพราะถ้ามีโอกาสก็อยากไปศึกษาประเทศที่เป็นต้นกำเนิดภาษานั้นจริงๆ

(Prakorn's response in Thai)

I want to go to England. If I had a chance, I would like to study in the country where the language originated.

(Prakorn's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

Additionally, Australia and New Zealand received recognition; however, there were no shared perceptions among the respondents who mentioned those countries.

9.3 Perceptions of English-speaking Cultures

The impressions of English-speaking countries are closely interrelated with cultural perceptions. During the interviews, teachers were asked to describe their impression of beliefs, values, and practices of any one particular English-speaking country with which they



were most familiar. The question itself was intended to generally explore their attitudes (either positive, neutral, or negative) toward any English-speaking cultural aspect.

However, it was very interesting that nearly all of them solely discussed their positive impressions of their chosen native English-speaking culture. The common beliefs, values, and practices from those countries that they shared were liberal education, freedom of thought, democratic society, a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, self-reliance, and social equality. Several participants also assumed that these served as intercultural norms which people all around the world agreed to follow and took them as the standard model. As one participant stated

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ประเทศที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษที่รู้สึกคุ้นเคยที่สุดคือ ประเทศอังกฤษ เพราะให้ความรู้สึกที่ ภาษาอังกฤษที่ใช้นั้น มาก
จากต้นกำเนิดจริงๆ และวัฒนธรรม ของที่นั่นก็เก่าแก่ หลายร้อยปี น่าจะพูดได้ว่า ค่านิยม ความเชื่อ แนวปฏิบัติ
แบบอังกฤษ ได้กลายเป็น รูปแบบกลาง เป็นมาตรฐานที่คนทั่วโลกให้การยอมรับและปฏิบัติตาม

(Pracha's response in Thai)

The English-speaking country that I am most familiar with is England. My impression is that the English usage pattern originated in this country, and their culture can be traced back for centuries. I would say that English values and practices have become the standard model which has already been accepted and followed by people from all over the world.

(Pracha's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

Another participant shared a very interesting assumption that the way of life in a *single* English-speaking country could be taken as a world role model. This was because it reflected and represented the ultimate goal which people from all walks of life everywhere in the world were trying to reach and achieve. As he claimed

America is the land of newness and its culture reflects what is in vogue in the fields of business, entertainment, education sciences, and technology. The culture in that country is that of middle class, which represents pretty much what the world tries to strive for (Yes, middleclassness seems to be the balance between the snobbish upper class and the vulgar lower class).

(Sathaporn's response in English)

Not only did the participants have only positive impressions, but more than one third also showed more appreciation toward the Western English-speaking cultures when being compared to Thai culture. For example, one participant was impressed by the way Western children were raised, but strongly criticized Thai parents for not letting their children become mature and independent.

ถ้าเปรียบเทียบกับของไทย ชาวอเมริกันมีความคิดความเชื่อค่านิยม การปฏิบัติในการดำรงชีวิตที่แตกต่างออกไป
 คนอเมริกัน ได้รับการเลี้ยงดู สั่งสอนให้เติบโตมาเป็นคนที่มีความรับผิดชอบและดูแลรับผิดชอบตัวเอง ตั้งแต่เด็ก ซึ่ง
 ถ้าเป็นคนไทยแล้ว พ่อแม่จะดูแลลูกทุกอย่างใกล้ชิดและปกป้องคอยระวังตลอด และเป็นห่วงคอยดูแล แม้ว่าลูกจะ
 แต่งงานไปแล้วก็ตาม

(Korakot's response in Thai)

Compared to Thais, Americans have different beliefs, values, and practices in their lives. Americans have been raised so that they could become self-disciplined and self-reliant since they were very young. Unlike the way Thai parents usually do, Thai children are extremely overprotected not only in their childhood, but also throughout their marital stage of life.

(Korakot's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

To explore the typical perceived characteristics of Thai people in the questionnaire, I asked if there were any differences or similarities among Thai and Western students. More

than half of the respondents said that these two groups were very different. The Thai teachers held a positive impression of Western English-speaking students, expressing that they had already met all the needs to become successful in life. Conversely, Thai students were negatively viewed as someone who only has “lacking” “missing,” or having “insufficient” qualities. According to them, the typical qualities commonly associated with Thai students were obedience to authority (teacher as an embodiment of knowledge), passivity in class, ignorance, lack of learning eagerness, lack of critical thinking, and lack of survival skills.

Because of the overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Western English-speaking people and cultures, I further investigated whether the participants had adopted any Western English-speaking culture from the identified countries. The majority agreed that they had adopted certain beliefs, values, and cultural practices.

All of them reported that they intentionally taught Western beliefs, values, and practices to the students. With good intentions, two of them said that they trained and reinforced students to accept certain Western-oriented norms and perspectives—e.g. punctuality, self-discipline, gender equality, and human rights—by considering these cultural concepts as part of their evaluation scheme. They stated that these elements of Western culture would benefit their students in the near future when they looked for a job, got married, and raised a family.

9.4 Assumptions on Culture Input in English Language Teaching

I further investigated how teachers' positive impressions of Western culture would shape their pedagogical implications, especially in term of cultural information and orientation in English language classrooms. In one of the interviews, teachers were asked whether they agreed with this statement: “A learner can only be used English properly if he or she is familiar with (West) native English-speaking culture.” The majority agreed that language and culture are closely related. Not only should a learner know language, they also

should be aware of the culture of English-speaking people to be fully competent in English.

The following quotes are representative of the majority of the participants.

เห็นด้วย โดยเฉพาะกับนักเรียนไทยที่ไปศึกษาต่อที่ต่างประเทศ เพราะได้คลุกคลีกับเจ้าของภาษาทุกวัน แต่ที่สำคัญ ต้องมีความกล้าที่จะพูด กล้าที่จะสื่อสารกับชาวต่างชาติ เชื่อว่านักเรียนจะเรียนรู้ภาษาได้ดีแน่นอน

(Chaipak's response in Thai)

I agree (with the statement), especially as it applies to those students who go to further their education abroad. They have a chance to practice the language with native speakers every day. However, they have to be brave and speak with foreigners. If they are, I believe that learners will definitely master the language.

(Chaipak's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

เห็นด้วยเช่นเดียวกับคนไทยที่ใช้ภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาแม่และเติบโตมาในวัฒนธรรมของไทยใช้ภาษาไทยสื่อสารตลอดมา คนเราเมื่อต้องไปตกอยู่ในวัฒนธรรมแบบใดใช้ภาษาใดสื่อสารในชีวิตประจำวันบ่อยๆ ก็ย่อมต้องเกิดการคุ้นเคยและเรียนรู้ไปเอง

(Sirinee's response in Thai)

I agree (with the statement). Thai people are competent in Thai language because we use the language as our mother tongue and we are raised in Thai culture. We always use Thai for communication. If we happen to live in a particular culture and use its particular language for daily communication, we became familiar with and acquire the language and culture simultaneously.

(Sirinee's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

However, there were a few respondents who that seem to go against the statement, as the acquisition or the learning of the language require beyond the cultural familiarity:

ไม่เห็นด้วย เพราะการใช้ได้หรือไม่ขึ้นอยู่กับการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมและความใส่ใจด้วย ซึ่งความคุ้นเคย

ก็เป็นส่วนหนึ่งแต่ถ้าคุ้นเคยแต่ไม่ได้ศึกษาบางอย่างลึกซึ้งก็อาจจะใช้ภาษาผิดก็ได้

(Rattana's response in Thai)

I do not agree (with the statement). To be able to use the language well or not requires both cultural understanding and devotion. To be familiar with the culture is part of language learning, but you still must devote your time to studying the language seriously. If not, you might make mistakes.

(Rattana's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

9.5 Cultural Teaching in the English Classroom

In connection to the preceding section, the perception that the English language and Western English-speaking culture are inseparable is obviously evident in the decision-making for cultural topics in English-teaching curricula. The Western cultural information that the majority of participants taught in their English classrooms was regarding the holidays and festivals, norms and customs, and lifestyle. They provided rationale emphasizing on Western culture in class. For example: "learning native-speaking culture would help students to learn English better" (Somjai's response in English), and "this will help them to study English better if they understand the native culture and native perspective" (Sompong's response in English). Additionally, there was a strong claim from many participants that native English speakers were essentially different from Thai people. Such claims reflected the belief when 'we' learned 'their' language, it was very difficult to understand the language use unless 'we' understood what was inside the native speakers' head. One participant assumed, "We need to understand them. We have to learn the way English-speaking Westerners think, say, or speak their mind in different situations so that we can understand them better" (Sathaporn's response in English). The quote also suggested that the teachers seemed to impose a heavy burden on their students to try to "understand" native speakers. Correspondingly, many

schools in Thailand annually provide extracurricular activities from native English speaking culture such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas celebrations. Respondents shared their reasons for such practice in the following quotes.

เพื่อให้ผู้เรียนได้เรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมของเจ้าของภาษา เพื่ออนาคตต่อไปนักเรียนอาจจะได้เข้าร่วมกิจกรรม
ดังกล่าวในชีวิตจริง จะได้ปฏิบัติอย่างถูกต้อง

(Rattana's response in Thai)

Extracurricular activities from native speaking culture are held in order to help students learn about native speaking culture, and to prepare some of the students who might have a chance to take part in such cultural events in the future. They will accurately participate in those events.

(Rattana's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

ทางโรงเรียนได้ทำการจัดกิจกรรม Christmas ทุกๆ ปี ตามโครงการที่ได้รับมอบหมายของกลุ่มสาระการ
เรียนรู้ภาษาต่างประเทศ เหตุผลคือ เพื่อให้นักเรียนได้ทราบถึงประวัติ ความเป็นมา ความสำคัญและกิจกรรม
ต่างๆที่เกี่ยวข้องกับกิจกรรมนี้

(Chaipak's response in Thai)

Our school holds a Christmas celebration every year. The foreign language department is assigned to be responsible for the event. The objectives are to inform students of Christmas's historical background, significance, and customs and practices.

(Chaipak's response in Thai, Researcher's translation)

To conclude, the majority of the participants feel that cultural information taught in class should be based on native English-speaking culture from the West. They cling to a

belief that the understanding of the native speakers' culture and perspective is essential in helping their students learn English.

10. Discussion:

The results of the study show that it is perceived that Thai students will learn English better if they know Western native-speakers' culture. Nearly all participants reached the same conclusion that Thai students will only learn English better and use English *properly* if they understand and are familiar with the native speaking culture and perspectives. British and American cultures were most often identified as the most worthwhile cultures to study in the classroom while the local culture (and other world cultures) rarely received significant attention. The participants perceived these Western cultures as the most "accurate" and "original" cultural (and linguistic) models, which have already been adapted as norms or standards in English education worldwide. To many teachers, British culture in particular creates the sense of history and tradition of "the real owner" of the language and the culture, and this implies cultural superiority.

Taking the essentialist view of culture (the "us" native and "them" non-native divide (Holliday, 2005)) into account, it comes as no surprise that Anglo-American language varieties and their corresponding cultures are closely related to each other according to Thai teachers. To them, not only does a learner have to know the target language, he or she also should be aware of the culture of English-speaking people to be fully competent in English. Holding to this perception, Thai teachers concluded that "it is impossible to learn language without understanding the [native] culture of a particular language." In other words, even though English has spread to be an *international* language, English and its native speaking cultures are inseparable.

One crucial finding from Thai teachers suggests that when 'we' (Thais) learn 'their' (native speakers') language, it is very difficult to acquire the target language unless 'we'

understand what is inside 'their' head. This goes in line with Stern's (1992) discussion that one core of culture teaching aims at helping non-native students to develop an understanding of the perspective underlying the native speakers' thinking. In this climate, Thai teachers attempt to make their students "becom[e] sensitive to the state of mind of individuals and groups within the target language community" (p. 117). What the teachers are trying to do is to help their students "create a network of mental associations similar to those which the items evoke in the native speaker" (p. 224). By applying Kumaravadivelu's (2008) assumption in the local context, I would claim that the ultimate goal of teaching native-speaking cultures is to help Thai students to develop "the ability to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways for the specific purpose of empathizing and interacting with native speakers of the target language" (p. 114).

In the light of the culture of 'us' and 'them' (Holliday, 2005), Thai teachers are likely to be trapped into the marketing strategies of the Anglo-American publishers. To take one example at a time, they will find the appealing statements on book jackets fascinating and irresistible. Seidlhofer (1999) cites an example of language drawn from an advertisement for the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, in which learners are offered the chance to "get into the Head of the Native Speaker" (p. 234). Despite the fact that the reference shows the intention of the creators of the book to transform students' mental structures into those of native speakers, it is not exaggerated to claim that Thai teachers could use it "as the (uncontaminated?) source providing the language to be taught" (Seidlhofer, 1999, p. 234) in classrooms.

However, such language sources are actually "contaminated," as viewed from perspectives such as the Thai culture, as they are based on theories (and practices) derived from Western cultures and ideologies (Pennycook, 1998). Relatively, McKay (2002) argues

that a positive view of Western cultures is perpetuated; in contrast, a negative view of non-western cultures has been established in relation to the spread of English and cultural identity. It is in this relationship that the spread of English as an instrument in promoting Western culture and devaluing the non-Western cultures has become apparent.

I am aware that Thai teachers reinforce cultural values and norms from the West with good intentions. I agree with them that *some* cultural elements of Western culture would benefit their students in the near future when they seek a job, get married, and raise a family. However, I am also concerned that if there is only a one-way transfer of culture from the West, instead of a two-way transfer in which local and Western cultures are supposed to influence or shape one another, the students may perceive their local culture (and other world cultures) as inferior to Western culture, thus not worth maintaining. They may ignore and discredit their own cultural heritage. They may give up exploring its advantages and possibilities further because they perceive that the maintaining local culture is far from bringing them the prospect of a better life.

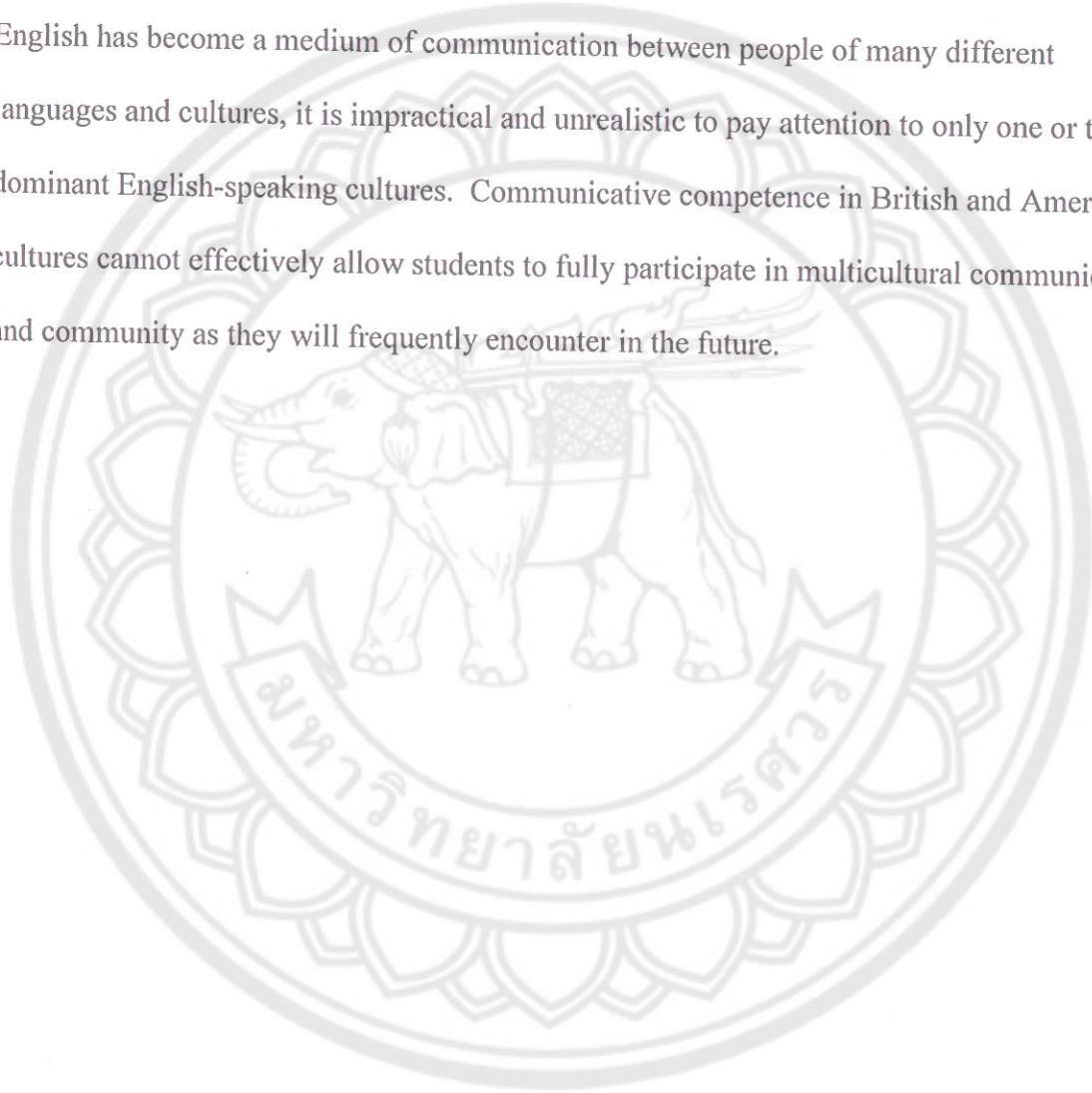
A study on English education in Japan by Nakamura (as cited in Kubota, 1998) sheds more light on this phenomenon. The study reveals that "by learning English, the Japanese have internalized ... Anglo-Saxon view of the world" (p. 198). Kubota (1998) further claims that English has, then, become "eyeglasses" through which Japanese view other nonnatives. The English classroom in Japan has promoted "the superiority of English, native speakers of English as well as their cultural and society" (p. 198). Hence, it is not surprising that Japanese people perceive other nonnatives poorly.

11. Conclusion

Promoting and integrating Western native-speaking culture in the English classroom may be problematic. If this cultural promotion is not taken into account critically, the student

are likely to prioritize Western nativeness as the only way to become competent in English, and devalue their local non-nativeness as it can be seen to hinder their language acquisition.

Moreover, Thai students are imposed (at least by their teachers) a heavy burden in the demand that they try to internalize Anglo-American linguistic and cultural norms in order to make themselves intelligible among those particular speakers from the UK and the US. As English has become a medium of communication between people of many different languages and cultures, it is impractical and unrealistic to pay attention to only one or two dominant English-speaking cultures. Communicative competence in British and American cultures cannot effectively allow students to fully participate in multicultural communication and community as they will frequently encounter in the future.



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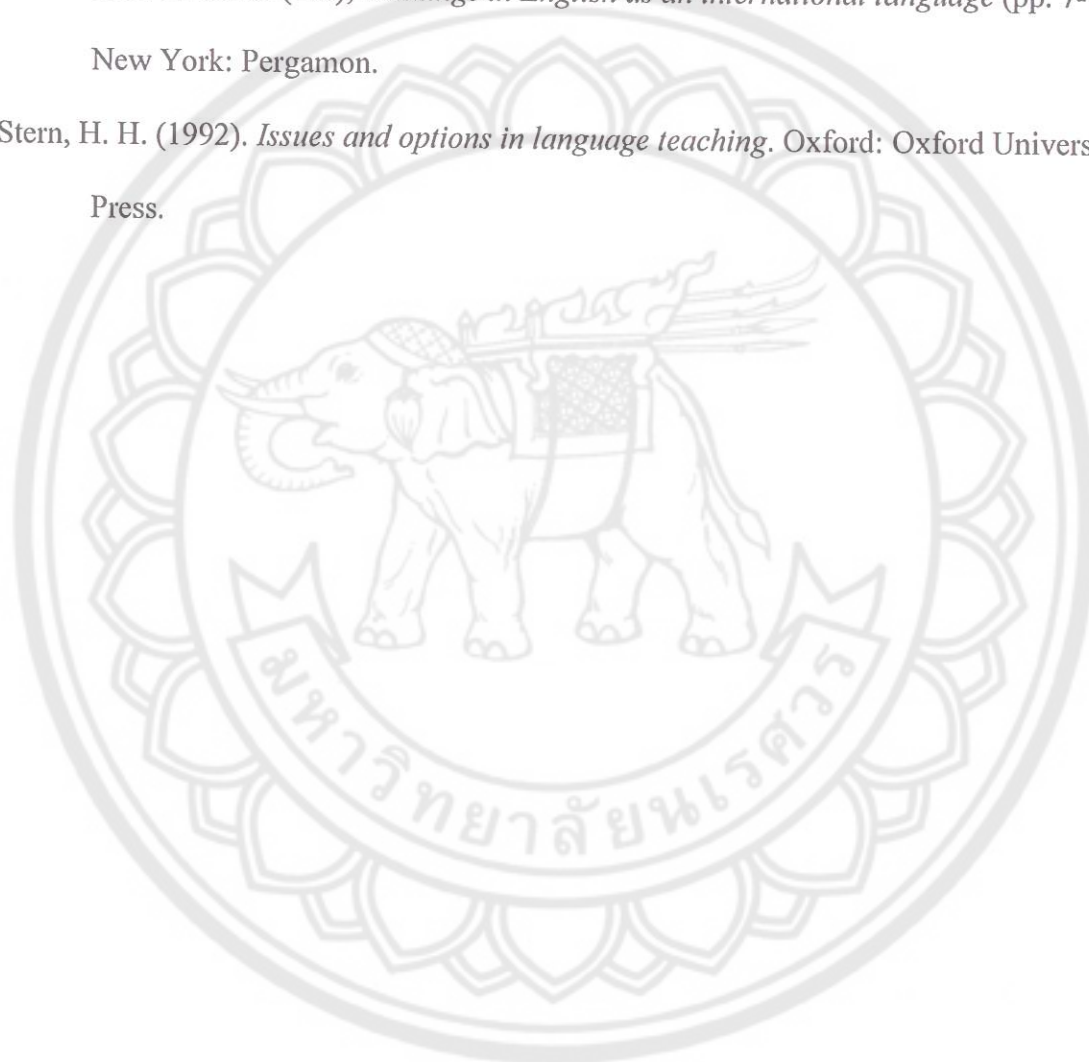
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Appendix

A Manuscript for Publication



TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CULTURE IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The worldwide spread of English implies increased opportunities for people of different languages and cultures to interact with one another. Thai teachers of English have gain opportunities to interact with English speakers from different parts of the world. This study explores how these multi-cultural experiences have shaped teachers' perceptions toward cultural teaching in English classroom. This study involved in-depth-interviews with twenty tertiary teachers of English. Nearly all of them perceived that Thai students only learned English better and used English *properly* if they understood and were familiar with the native-speaking culture and perspectives. Anglo-American cultures were most often identified as the most worthwhile cultures to study in the classroom while the local and global cultures rarely received significant attention. The study implied that it is impractical and unrealistic to pay attention to only one or two of dominant English-speaking cultures. Communicative competence in Anglo-American cultures cannot effectively allow Thai students to fully participate in multicultural communication and community.

Keywords: Cultural Teaching, English as an International Language, Thai Teachers of English, Anglo-American Cultures

Introduction

English is an international language in the Commonwealth, the Colonies and in America. International in the sense that English serves the American way of life and might be called American, it serves the Indian way of life and has recently been declared an Indian language within the framework of the federal constitution. In another sense, it is international not only in Europe but in Asia and Africa, and serves various African ways of life and is increasingly the all-Asian language of politics. Secondly, and I say 'secondly' advisedly, English is the key to what is described in a common cliché as "the British way of life".(Firth, 1956, p. 97)

In recent years, teaching the culture of the target language has been a controversial issue in ELT (English Language Teaching) circles. With the worldwide spread of English as a result of colonization or (economic) globalization, as mentioned in the opening quote, English has undoubtedly become the "international" language for both global and local communications, within or beyond nations. To elaborate on this phenomenon, English is international in the sense that people across the world have already appropriated and nativized the language by adding socio-cultural elements into their use of the language. In the tourism industry and social networks, it is clear that there is American English, Australian English, Indian English, Singaporean English, Nigerian English, and more, and, of course, the *classic* and *canon* British English. Moreover, the major reason and goal of learning the language is to enable learners to effectively communicate their own ideas and culture to speakers of other languages and cultures (1976). As a consequence, the focus on the target culture in English classroom seems irrational. In other words, it is unrealistic and impractical to pay more attention to the target culture than the student's local culture, or at least the global culture, if students are learning English to participate in the multicultural communities.

Hence, the use of target language culture in the English language classrooms has recently been debated. Many scholars and researchers has agreed to propose that the target culture should be minimized or, at best, completely abandoned (Adaskou, Britten, & Fahsi, 1990; Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 2001; Jabeen & Shah, 2011; McKay, 2002; Prodromou, 1988). However, how local English teachers in Thailand view the cultural teaching and cultural contents to be employed in the language classrooms is still unexplored.

Thai teachers of English, having the advantage of English as their primary tools, enjoy more personal contact with English users from other cultures, compared to teachers of other disciplines, especially from English-speaking communities. They are regularly exposed to different varieties of English-speaking cultures through exchange programs, international conferences, professional training, or higher education both inside and outside Thailand. Their exposures different users of English have influenced their views toward English-speaking countries, and this study aims at presenting how these multicultural experiences have shaped their perceptions toward cultural teaching in the EFL classroom.

Conceptual Framework

With the worldwide spread of English as a lingua franca within cyber contacts, social networks, multinational gatherings, and the tourism industry, Suzuki (as cited in Matsuda, 2003) observes that people uses English with their own cultural frame of reference, creating new varieties of English detached from the frame of reference and cultural values of native speakers. The assumption that nonnative English speakers learn English in order to communicate with native speaker and learn about their culture does not reflect the reality of the English language in the EIL community these days. As Smith (1983) puts it:

A Thai doesn't need to sound like an American in order to use English well with a Filipino at an ASEAN meeting. A Japanese doesn't need an appreciation of a British

lifestyle in order to use English in his business dealings with a Malaysian. The

Chinese do not need a background in western literature in order to use English effectively as a language for publications of worldwide distribution. The political leaders of France and Germany use English in private political discussions but this doesn't mean that they take on the political attitudes of Americans. It is clear that in these situations there is no attempt for the user to be like a native speaker of English."

(p. 7)

The dynamic status of English as an international language presented in the above-mentioned quotation has an implication on culture in language teaching. Smith (1976) proposes that:

1. Learners of an international language do not need to internalize the culture norm of native speakers of that language.
2. The ownership of an international language becomes 'de-nationalized.'
3. The educational goal of learning it is to enable learners to communicate their ideas and culture to others.

McKay (2002) echoes that "users of EIL whether in a global or local sense do not need to internalize the cultural norms of Inner Circle countries in order to use the language effectively as a medium of wider communication (p. 12)." She then revises Smith's notions concerning the relationship between an international language and culture which can be applied to English language instruction in a global context.

1. As an international language, English is used both in a global sense for international communication between countries and in a local sense as a language of wider communication within multilingual societies.

2. As it is an international language, the use of English is no longer connected to the culture of native-speaking countries.
3. As an international language in a local sense, English becomes embedded in the culture of the country in which it is used.
4. As English is an international language in a global sense, one of its primary functions is to enable speakers to share with other their ideas and culture.

However, when it comes to the cultural teaching in English classroom, many English teachers support the inclusion of culture in their language instruction. It also seems to take for granted among English teachers that the target culture should go hand in hand with the target language. In other words, the cultural aspects of the native-speaking countries should be a primary focus in English classrooms. This practice may have, more or less, been influenced by the cliché statement that has embedded in English education for a long time. As it spell out, *a learner can only be used English properly if he or she is familiar with (West) native English-speaking culture.*

With such influence, it is natural among English teachers to integrate everyday lifestyles of native speakers with language forms, meanings, and functions, in order to promote communicative competence in classroom. Teachers insist on “conformity to native-speaker norms” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p. 361) and evaluate students against “the idealized native-speaker model” (Leung, 2005, p. 139). Hence, the students struggle to reach goals “which are both unrealistic and unnecessary [and the teachers make them] subservient and prevent them from appropriating the language” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p. 361). In that case, the cultures of both non-native learners and teachers and their cultural identities are deliberately, or unintentionally, ignored in the learning process. Hence, the cultural teaching in language classrooms—which focus on the respective native-English speaking culture—aim at promoting the cultures of the native speakers of English.

As English has gained a dominant status as an international language, the above mentioned perceptions and practices in the language classrooms have recently been questioned and critiqued by ELT scholars. To illustrate, from his study on Greek students learning English at private language institutes and at a British Council Teaching Centre, Prodromou (1988) claims that the language instruction with emphasis and reliance on cultural contents from Inner-Circle countries forces the students to

leave their three-dimensional humanity outside and enter the plastic world of EFL textbooks; textbooks where life is safe and innocent, and does not say or do anything. Our modern books are full of speech acts that don't act, don't mean anything ... Most textbooks project an Anglo-centric, male-dominated, middle-class utopia of one kind or another. The life has been taken out of this EFL textbook word. (p. 79)

The result from his study shows that students are less motivated in English language class. He further claims that "When both the material we use and the way we use it are culturally alienating then, inevitably, the students switch off, retreat into their inner world, to defend their own integrity" (p. 80). Cook (2001) suggests that, for students, to be motivated in learning a foreign language, their own cultural backgrounds should have a certain connection to the culture of the target language. There is a greater chance of success in learning the language if the students "feel they are adding something new to their skills and experience by learning a new language, without taking anything away from what they already know" (p. 119). On the other hand, students will less-likely succeed if they "feel that the learning of a new language threatens what they have already gained for themselves" (p. 119).

Design of the Study

Nineteen Thai teachers of English from public universities and secondary schools participated in the study. They varied greatly in terms of age, and their teaching experience ranged from less than six years to twenty-five years. Their multi-cultural experiences with English speaker included pursuing a degree, attending a conference or seminar, and participating in a short training program. Each participant was interviewed individually, and there were two interviews with each participant over two weeks. The interview questions were in both English and the teachers' mother tongue, Thai, and participants could choose to answer the questions in either English or Thai according to their own preference. Also, at the end of the interview, I asked for permission from the participants to follow up on their answers. Hence, they could elaborate and clarify their responses or help elicit additional information and depth about the focused research topics.

Results

Perceptions of English-speaking Countries

The interviewees were asked if they were to receive a scholarship to study English abroad, to which country might they like to go and what would the reason for choosing that particular area. The majority of the participants shared the view that they would choose to further their education in the United States of America for three reasons: its superiority in all aspects, its worldwide linguistic and cultural influence, and its heterogeneous society. As regards the country's superiority, many participants claimed that "the States is amalgamation of all kind of knowledge and academia (Mrs. Nathinee)"; "therefore, I would be exposed and experience in [such] an advanced body of knowledge and bring it back in order to help develop my home country" (Mr. Sompong). Additionally, many respondents mentioned that

American English language and culture had already gained the phenomenal spread, recognition, and influence on the use of language and the way of life among people across the globe. By attending schools in the U.S., they would, then, be exposed to the mainstream language and culture which had already been adopted as worldwide norms. One participant claimed that, “I want to study English in the native English-speaking country [USA] so that I would be exposed to the *accurate* [italics added] native language and culture” (Mrs. Sirinee).

For those teachers who would choose to study English in England, they were favorably impressed by the sense of language origin, originality, and ownership. To give some typical statements, many participants desired to further their education in England because “British English is the Standard English” (Mr. Chalong), “England originated the language” (Miss. Wilawan), and “English there is the *most accurate* [italics added] model” (Mrs. Lawan). Additionally, Australia and New Zealand received significant recognition; however, there was no particular reason that the respondents shared in common.

Perceptions of English-speaking Cultures

The impressions of English-speaking countries are closely interrelated with cultural perceptions. During the interviews, teachers were asked to describe their impression of beliefs, values, and practices of any one particular English-speaking country with which they were most familiar. The question itself was intended to generally explore their attitudes (either positive, neutral, or negative) toward any English-speaking cultural aspects.

However, it was very interesting that nearly all of them solely discussed their positive impressions of native English-speaking cultures. The common beliefs, values, and practices from those countries that they shared were liberal education, freedom of thought, democratic society, a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, self-reliance, and social equality. Several

participants also assumed that these served as intercultural norms which people all across the globe agreed to follow and took them as the standard model. As one participant stated

An English-speaking country that I am most familiar with is England. My impression is that the English usage pattern is originated in this country, and their culture can track back for centuries. I would say that English values and practices are the standard model which has been accepted and followed by people from all over the world. (Miss. Wilawan)

In this connection, one participant shared a very interesting assumption that the way of life in a *single* English-speaking country could be taken as a world role model. This was because it reflected and represented the ultimate goal which people from all walks of life across the globe were trying to reach and achieve, as she claimed

America is the land of newness and its culture reflects what is in vogue in the fields of business, entertainment, education sciences, and technology. The culture in that country is that of middle class, which represents pretty much what the world tries to strive for (yes, middleclassness seems to be the balance between the snobbish upper class and the vulgar lower class). (Mrs. Sirinee)

Not only did they obviously identify positive impressions, but more than one third also showed more appreciation toward the Western English-speaking cultures when being compared to Thai culture. To take one example, they were favorably impressed by the way Western children were raised, but they strongly criticized Thai parents for not letting their children become mature and independent.

Compared to Thais, Americans have different beliefs, values, and practices in their lives. Americans have been raised in the way that they could become self-disciplined

and self-reliant since they were very young. Unlike the way Thai parents usually do, children are extremely overprotected not only in their childhood, but also throughout their marital stage of life. (Mr. Alongkorn)

To explore the typical characteristics of Thai people that they perceived in the questionnaire, I asked if there were any differences or similarities among Thai and Western students. More than half of the respondents said that these two groups were very different. The Thai teachers held a very positive impression of Western students in the way that they had already met all the needs to become successful in life. On the contrary, Thai students were negatively viewed as someone who only has “lacking” “missing,” or “insufficient” qualities. According to them, the typical qualities commonly associated with Thai students were obedience to authority (teacher as an embodiment of knowledge), passivity in class, ignorance, lack of learning eagerness, lack of critical thinking, and lack of survival skills.

With such overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Western people and cultures, I further investigated whether the participants had adopted any Western English-speaking culture from the identified countries. The majority agreed that they had adopted certain beliefs, values, and cultural practices.

All of them reported that they intentionally taught Western beliefs, values, and practices to the students. With good intentions, two of them said that they trained and reinforced students to accept certain Western-oriented norms and perspectives—e.g. punctuality, self-discipline, gender equality, and human rights—by considering these cultural concepts as part of their evaluation scheme. They stated that these elements of Western culture would benefit their students in the near future when they sought for a job, got married, and raised a family.

Assumptions on Culture Input in English Language Teaching

I further investigate how teachers' positive impressions of Western culture would shape their pedagogical implications, especially in term of cultural information and orientation in English language classrooms. In one of the interviews, teachers were asked whether they agreed with this statement: "A learner can only be used English properly if he or she is familiar with (West) native English-speaking culture." The majority shared an agreement that "language and culture is closely related. Not only does a learner know language, he also should be aware of culture of English-speaking people to be fully competent in English" (Mr. Alongkorn).

Cultural Teaching in the English Classroom

In connection to the preceding section, the perception that the English language and Western English-speaking culture are inseparable is obviously evident in the decision-making for cultural topics in English teaching curricula. The Western cultural information that the majority of participants would teach in their English classrooms was the holidays and festivals, norms and customs, and lifestyle. They provided the rationale for placing emphasis on Western culture in class stating that "learning native-speaking culture would help students to learn English better" (Mrs. Somjai), and "this will help them to study English better if they understand the native culture and native perspective" (Mr. Sompong). Additionally, there was a strong claim from many participants that native English speakers were essentially different from Thai people. Such claims reflected the belief when 'we' learned 'their' language, it was very difficult to understand the language use unless 'we' understood what was inside the native speakers' head. One participant assumed, "We need to understand them. We have to learn the way Westerners think, say, or speak their mind in different situations so that we can understand them better" (Mr. Prakorn). The quote also suggested

that the teachers seemed to impose a heavy burden for their students in trying to “understand” native speakers.

To conclude, the majority of the participants feel that cultural information taught in class should be based on native English-speaking culture from the West. They cling to a belief that the understanding of the native speakers’ culture and perspective is essential helping their students learn English.

Discussion

Given the results of the study, I can confidently say that it is perceived that Thai students will learn English better if they know Western native-speakers’ culture. Nearly all participants reach the same conclusion; namely, Thai students will only learn English better and use English *properly* if they understand and are familiar with the native speaking culture and perspectives. British and American cultures are most often identified as the most worthwhile cultures to study in the classroom while the local culture (and other world cultures) rarely receives significant attention. Thai teachers perceive these Western cultures as the most “accurate” and “original” cultural (and linguistic) models which have already been adapted as norms or standards in English education worldwide. To many teachers, the British culture particularly creates the sense of history and tradition of “the real owner” of the language and the culture, and this implies cultural superiority.

Taking the essentialist view of culture (the “us” native and “them” non-native divide (Holliday, 2005)) into account, it comes as no surprise why Anglo-American language varieties and cultures are closely related among Thai teachers. To them, not only does a learner have to know the target language, he or she also should be aware of the culture of English-speaking people to be fully competent in English. Holding to this perception, Thai teachers jump to the conclusion that “it is impossible to learn language without understanding

the [native] culture of a particular language.” In other words, even though English has spread to be an *international* language, English and its native speaking cultures are inseparable.

One crucial finding from Thai teachers suggests that when ‘we’ (Thais) learn ‘their’ (native speakers’) language, it is very difficult to acquire the target language unless ‘we’ understand what is inside ‘their’ head. This goes in line with Stern’s (1992) discussion that one core of culture teaching aims at helping non-native students to develop an understanding of the perspective underlying the native speakers’ thinking. In this climate, Thai teachers attempt to make their students “becom[e] sensitive to the state of mind of individuals and groups within the target language community” (p. 117). What the teachers are trying to do is to help their students “create a network of mental associations similar to those which the items evoke in the native speaker” (p. 224). By applying Kumaravadivelu’s (2008) assumption in the local context, I would claim that the ultimate goal of teaching native-speaking cultures is to help Thai students to develop “the ability to use the target language in culturally appropriate ways for the specific purpose of empathizing and interacting with native speakers of the target language” (p. 114).

In the light of the culture of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Holliday, 2005), Thai teachers are likely to be trapped into the marketing strategies of the Anglo-American publishers. To take one example at a time, they will find the appealing statements on book jackets fascinating and irresistible. Seidlhofer (1999) cites an example of language drawn from an advertisement for the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, in which learners are offered the chance to “get into the Head of the Native Speaker” (p. 234). Despite the fact that the reference is explicitly intended to transform students’ mental structures into those of native speakers, it is not exaggerated to claim that Thai teachers would use it “as the (uncontaminated?) source providing the language to be taught” (Seidlhofer, 1999, p. 234) in classrooms.

However, such language sources are actually “contaminated,” as viewed from perspectives such as the Thai culture, as they are based on theories (and practices) derived from Western cultures and ideologies (Pennycook, 1998). In this connection, McKay (2002) argues that a positive view of western cultures is perpetuated; in contrast, a negative view of non-western cultures has been established in relation to the spread of English and cultural identity. It is in this relationship that the spread of English as an instrument in promoting Western culture and devaluing the non-Western cultures has become apparent.

I am aware that Thai teachers reinforce cultural values and norms from the West with good intentions. I agree with them that *some* cultural elements of Western culture would benefit their students in the near future when they seek a job, get married, and raise a family. However, I am also concerned that if there is only a one-way transfer of culture from the West, instead of a two-way transfer in which local and Western cultures are supposed to influence or shape one another, the students may perceive their local culture (and other world cultures) as inferior to Western culture and not worth holding or practicing. They may ignore and discredit their own cultural heritage. They may give up exploring its advantages and possibilities further because they perceive that the local culture is far from bringing them the prospect of a better life.

In connection to this issue, a study on English education in Japan by Nakamura (as cited in Kubota, 1998) sheds light on this phenomenon. The study reveals that “by learning English, the Japanese have internalized ... Anglo-Saxon view of the world” (p. 198). Kubota (1998) further claims that English has, then, become “eyeglasses” through which Japanese view other nonnatives. English classroom in Japan has promoted “the superiority of English, native speakers of English as well as their cultural and society” (p. 198). Hence, it is not surprising that Japanese people perceive other nonnatives poorly.

Conclusion

Promoting and integrating western native-speaking culture in English classroom can be problematic. If this cultural promotion is not taken into account critically, the student are likely to prioritize nativeness as the only way to become competent in English, and devalue their local non-nativeness as it can be seen to hinder their language acquisition.

Moreover, Thai students are imposed (at least by their teachers) a heavy burden in the demand that they try to internalize Anglo-American linguistic and cultural norms in order to make themselves intelligible among those particular speakers from the UK and the US. As English has become a medium of communication between people of different languages and cultures, it is impractical and unrealistic to pay attention to only one or two dominant English-speaking cultures. Communicative competence in British and American cultures cannot effectively allow students to fully participate in multicultural communication and community as they will frequently encounter in the future.

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