THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CULTURES OF THE MAIN ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES, IN THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, THROUGH THE USE OF A MULTI-PROCESS TEACHING

Dissaya Supharatyothin
Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University, Thailand

Because language and culture are interrelated, a language cannot be taught without a proper understanding of the relevant culture. Thai students tend to have poor understanding of English due to their lack of knowledge of English culture. Many researchers try to find better methods of teaching ESL to students by encouraging a better understanding of English culture. This research aims: 1) To develop an instructional package by using multi-process teaching which includes various teaching aids such as: films, students ‘cultural research’, and students’ self-assessment to enhance their better understanding of the culture of the main English speaking countries, based on the 80/80 standard criteria.2) To compare the students’ English cultural language knowledge before and after being taught using the cultural instructional package. 3) To determine the level of student satisfaction, with this instructional package. The subjects of this study were 40 English major sophomores from the Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences, Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University who enrolled in the first semester of the academic year of 2010. The data was collected by using the ‘the Knowledge of English Culture’ test and a survey to determine the level of students’ satisfaction with the instructional package. The statistics used in the data analysis were arithmetic mean (X), standard deviation (S.D), and dependent t-test. The research results revealed that the efficiency of the instructional package was 84.86/80.80 which was higher than the standard which was higher than the standard which was significantly higher than before, at .01 with the mean of score before and after studying with this package is 21.03 and 51.73 respectively. The results also showed that the satisfaction of learners towards the learning through the package was at a high level (X= 4.03).

Keywords: Multi-method, The Knowledge of English Culture, Satisfaction. Self-assessment.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main purposes of teaching foreign languages today is to develop the learners’ ability to ‘communicate with others across linguistic and cultural boundaries’. As language and culture are closely linked, the teaching of culture is seen as an integral and component of language courses (Byram 1989, Bassnett 2001).

Languages cannot be learned or taught without understanding the cultures of the communities where they are used. Most teachers and students of English agree that knowing
about English cultures, makes it easier for students to communicate effectively with English native speakers. For example, it can be hard to understand Americans if you don't know anything about American Football because you may not understand what expressions like "kick off" and "touchdown" mean. For another, understanding English culture helps students avoid doing or saying things that would be offensive to an English native speaker. For example, students are less likely to offend English native speakers if they know that English native speakers don’t consider it polite to ask a woman’s age or to ask people how much money they make. In Thailand, people can ask these kinds of personal questions if they start a positive relationship, since Thais normally will call people with kinship terms. They call you Pi ‘elder sibling’ when they know that you are older than they are. They call you Lung ‘uncle’ when they know your age is similar to or older than your parents’ age. Using kinship terms in Thailand indicates friendliness and respect to the elderly.

One of the values and traits of Thai people is to be relaxed and not to be in a hurry about anything. Moreover, Thais are much more sensitive to ‘saving face’ than European cultures. These value and traits are good in some aspects but they can be a hindrance in areas like education.

According to Ulrich (2011), Thailand faces massive problems with the graduates produced by its universities, where about 50% of the graduates cannot find jobs. Universities complain about students unwilling to learn, lacking creativity in finding solutions, and superficially preparing for exams. Students are distracted by mobile phone, iPads, SMS, internet, and many things. Ulrich also argued that these students’ distraction may be caused by boring lecture classes which are the main tool for broadcasting knowledge, and from textbooks whose exclusive aim is to prepare for answering examination questions. That is what it is called ‘passive learning’. Passive learning discourages students from active learning.

The opposite of passive learning is active learning. Students are involved in more than listening: less emphasis is placed on transmitting information and more on developing students' skills: students are involved in higher-order thinking (analysis, synthesis, evaluation): students are engaged in activities (e.g., reading discussing, writing), and greater emphasis is placed on students' exploration of their own attitudes and values (Bonwell & Eison (1991).

It is important that the teaching process in class should motivate active learning by using multi-process teaching. Therefore, teaching language and culture should be taught together with multi-process teaching to enhance the learner’s use of language, appropriately based on their understanding of the target language’s culture.

THE ORIGIN AND MOTIVATION OF THE PROBLEM

Currently, Thai students who study EFL are faced with the problem of speaking English appropriately in a certain situations without the cultural knowledge of English speaking countries. Although they might have good command of vocabulary, selecting the correct words to use in each situation is not easy for them.

One of the first problems a foreign language learner encounters is how to commit a large number of foreign words to memory (Gu 2003). Most students in Thailand are mainly taught vocabulary and English structure by passive rote learning. They are expected to memorize a large number of foreign words and grammatical rules without applying these words and their structures to 'real life' situations which require some cultural background.

Teachers in Thailand are familiar with requiring students to memorize a large vocabulary corpus of words and English structure, but rarely practice students in real life situations. This
The Development of a Better Understanding of the Cultures

strategy is not very effective and the long term retention of vocabulary is often low (Idoine – Shirai 2007).

In real life situations, to use language effectively, students should know not only vocabulary and structure but they should also know how to apply them in appropriate situations. For example, the sentences “What is your name?” and “May I have your name, please?” request the same information but in some situations some people might feel offended by the first sentence. Therefore, it is important to teach a language and its culture together.

Although this concept is widely accepted, it is not easy to provide an effective way to teach foreign cultures to students. Some teachers themselves might not totally understand the target culture and a culture can often be confusing even to the native speaker.

According to Samovar, Porter, and Stefani (1998), culture is a system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of a society use to cope with their world and with one another and are transmitted from generation to generation through learning. This definition includes not only patterns of behavior but also patterns of thought (shared meanings that the members of a society attach to various phenomena, natural and intellectual, including religion and ideologies), artifacts (tools, pottery, houses, machines, works of art), and the culturally transmitted skills and techniques used to make the artifacts.

For the reasons mentioned above, the researcher was aware that teaching language and its culture should have a package as a guideline for the convenience of both teachers and learners. With the instructional package, the teachers will feel confident and can evaluate the class performance correctly.

RELATED WORKS AND THEORIES

Teaching English Culture with multi-processes refers to the use of various teaching processes to teach English culture to learners. Different educators may use different processes in their teaching such as: teaching culture through advertising, teaching through films, teaching using the Internet, teaching through the students’ own research, through students’ self-assessment, etc.

This current research tried to use multi-processes in teaching English culture since using more than one process might provide learners with more points of views and, provide more enjoyable experience with a deeper retention of knowledge.

According to Mingers (2001), multi-method approaches help to obtain full answers and increase the robustness of our understanding. Using multi methods has the potential of gaining knowledge about different aspects of a phenomenon under study, and therefore, an overall better and more complete explanation.

Sakkinen (2000) used the teaching material package when teaching culture via the Internet. This teaching package exemplified how the different services on the Internet could be used in teaching cultural knowledge in primary education. He concluded that the greatest achievement of the material package was its innovative format as presented on the web; teachers all over the world were able to use it in one way or the other.

Tanasuwan & Wannawati (2006) used a self-study computer program to teach English cultural knowledge to students. The target group was 26 third and fourth year English major students from Chinghai University. They concluded that the self-study computer program on English cultural knowledge had been effectively developed to the good level and enabled students to gain more knowledge about English culture.

Martinez-Gibson (1998) studied the effectiveness of video to teach about a foreign culture. She reported the findings of an exploratory study to assess FL students’ ability to observe cultural
differences between the target and native culture as presented in television commercials. She hypothesized that the visual aspect of television commercial messages, which is often more important than the verbal message, helps the FL student become aware of the actions of the people, which in turn aids comprehension and enhances cultural awareness.

Kitajima and Lyman-Hager (1998) conducted a pilot study that examined the effect of visual cues on students’ cultural awareness. Eight students in their third semester of Japanese were individually shown a 1-minute silent video about Japanese roads. In a think-aloud protocol, students stopped the video clip whenever they wanted to verbalize what they had noted. Students’ comments revealed that they were able to perceive cultural events. Kitajima and Lyman-Hager interpreted these findings as demonstrating that silent video clips enhance students’ discovery processes of culturally unique phenomena.

Brew (2010) studied “Research and Teaching from the students’ perspective”. She briefly outlines some of this research and explores what it tells us about how students conceptualize research, what they learn through engaging in research, and what some of the effects of the integration are on student learning experiences. She found that in Students’ views of research, students appear to value the fact that their teachers are engaged in research. They see it as making lectures more interesting and stimulating.

According to Rueckert (2010) what students gain by doing research, are: (1) Learning a topic in depth (2) Ability to work and think independently (3) Ability to read scientific literature (4) Oral and written communication (5) Problem solving skills (6) Appreciation of science (7) Practical application of course work (8) Understanding the research process (9) Enhancement of credentials.

Many educators mention the benefit of students doing their own self-assessment. According to Rolheiser and Ross (2000), self-assessment is defined as students judging the quality of their work, based on evidence and explicit criteria, for the purpose of doing better work in the future. Self-assessment is a potentially powerful technique because of its impact on student performance through enhanced self-efficacy and increased intrinsic motivation.

The works of educators mentioned above show the advantage of each teaching process. This current research integrated the three main processes of teaching English culture i.e. teaching through films, through students’ cultural research, and through students’ self-assessment.

**THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**

The purposes of this research are as follows:

1. To develop an instructional package by using multi-process teaching which includes various teaching aids such as: films, students ‘cultural research’, and students self-assessment (students write their own weekly assessment on what they have learned and how they feel about the learning), to enhance a better understanding of the culture of the main English speaking countries based on the 80/80 standard criteria.

2. To compare the knowledge of the cultural language of English speaking countries of students before and after being taught with the cultural instructional package.

3. To determine the level of the student satisfaction toward learning using this instructional package.
METHODOLOGY

1. Research Questions

The research questions of the present study contain questions to be examined in relation to quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The general research questions of the present study are as follows:

1) What is the effectiveness of the cultural instructional package in teaching students English cultural knowledge of the main English speaking countries?
2) Is there any difference in their knowledge of the cultural language of English before and after being taught using the cultural instructional package?
3) What is the students’ satisfaction toward the multi-processes of teaching used in the socio-cultural of English speaking country course?

2. Participants

The subjects in this study were 40 sophomore English Major Students from the Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences, Pibulsongkram Rajabhat University who enrolled in the Socio-Cultural Background course in the academic year 2010.

3. Research tools

3.1. The cultural instructional package

The cultural instructional package was composed of 6 lessons. Each chapter was composed of the objective, content and activity:

1) Geography and History,
2) Society: Housing, Family Life, and Education
3) Literature, Art and Music,
4) Transport and Media,
5) Holidays and Festivals, and
6) Food Etiquette, Health and Fitness.

This cultural instructional package of multi-process teaching was developed using the following steps:

Step 1 Content Analysis: to understand the content and details of the course and determine the order of content. The analysis followed these steps:

1) Develop a brainstorming chart for the entire package. The researcher identifies English speaking socio-cultural topics in the middle of the chart. The cultural contents are classified into 3 aspects: Information Culture, Behavior Culture, and Achievement Culture (Hammerly (1982).
2) Create a concept chart by analyzing the brainstorming chart to determine appropriate topics and the relationships between the topics.
3) Create a Content Network Chart, which shows the relationships between the contents. It is used to determine the order in which the contents should be presented.

Step 2 Design involving the following:

The chart network content validated by English native speaker experts are used to determine the division and sequencing into units of study (Lesson) in a package.

Step 3 Group the contents in the Lesson Unit. This process begins by writing the content within the content scope, and then putting them into order.

Step 4 Create an achievement test reflecting the behavioral objectives to test the effectiveness of the instructional package. These behavioral areas include cognition, understanding, memory, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Step 5 Try out each unit with the sample group and then test their understanding to determine the effectiveness of the package.

Step 6 Use the instructional package to try out with sample group (30 Business English majors who have the same knowledge level as the target group) to make sure that the instructional package is effective to use in teaching English culture.

3.2 The User’s satisfaction questionnaire.

This set of questionnaire is composed of 18 questions. At the end there is a section where the students are invited to write their own personal observations and feeling about the course of study. The items in this questionnaire asked about the students’ opinion about the objective of the lesson goal, content, activity and the appropriateness of studying with this instructional package. The satisfaction questionnaires use a Likert’s scale in which 5 - extremely satisfied, 4 - very satisfied, 3 - moderately satisfied, 2 - slightly satisfied, and 1 - not at all satisfied.

3.3 The pre-test/post test exam.

The exam used here is ‘The Knowledge of English Culture’ test which is multiple choices with 4 selective answers. There are 80 items in this exam. Each item is worth 1 point. The exam asked about the student’s knowledge of English culture and the kind of language used in each situation. The contents in these exams were from material related to the course description. These examinations are validated by 3 educated English native speakers to determine the accuracy of the answers.

4. Data collection and Analysis

In class, the teacher and students discussed articles, novels, interpreted films and practiced analytical skills. Assignments included weekly reading, watching movies, library research and writing self-assessment essays to demonstrate their understanding. Students shared their research findings with the class in small group presentations and took notes to supplement their
understanding. Students kept Cultural Consumption Research notes throughout the term to identify and evaluated their cultural beliefs and attitude. Students shared their self-assessment essays with the teacher weekly. After the completion of the course, students took the exam ‘the Knowledge of English Culture’ and answered the survey ‘The Users’ satisfaction questionnaire.’

The data was collected by using the ‘the Knowledge of English Culture’ test and a survey to determine the level of students’ satisfaction with the instructional package. Students’ self-assessment essays were also collected to be considered as qualitative data. The statistics used in the data analysis were arithmetic mean (X), standard deviation (S.D), and a dependent t-test.

**FINDING**

The research results revealed the followings:

1. The efficiency of the instructional package was 84.86/80.80 which is higher than the standard level 80/80 as shown in Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit/Topic</th>
<th>In-Class Score</th>
<th>Final Exam Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Geography and History</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Society: Housing, Family Life, and Education</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Literature, Art, and Music</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Transportation and Media</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Holiday and Festival</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Food Etiquette, Health and Fitness</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ E1 = \frac{5601 \times 100}{6600} = 84.86 \]
\[ E2 = \frac{961 \times 100}{1200} = 80.08 \]

2. The knowledge of English culture, after learning with this package, was significantly higher than before learning with this package, at .01. The mean of score before and after studying with this package is 21.03 and 51.75 respectively as shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of students</th>
<th>Pre-test Score</th>
<th>Post-test Score</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>21.03</td>
<td>9.34</td>
<td>51.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The statistic significance at .01 (t .01, 39 =2.4258)*
3. The results also showed that the satisfaction of learners toward the learning through the package was at a high level (very satisfied) with $X = 4.03$ as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Student satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processes of Teaching</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Level of Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers show intended objectives and the criteria in measuring and evaluating the students’ performance and knowledge clearly.</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>extremely satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Content of teaching and learning are clearly understandable.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers are able to clearly explain the content, the teaching is an appropriate process, and easy to understand. The directions for doing activity are clear</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers give students opportunities and encouragement to study by practicing and researching from various sources.</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>extremely satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers encourage students to practice critical thinking, thinking reasonably, creative thinking.</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The content in this course can be applied in real life.</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers allow students to question, comment, discuss and exchange ideas with other students and teachers, and be open minded to other people’s opinions.</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The media and technology that the teacher uses is interesting, modern, and appropriate to the course content. This Media and technology enhance learning and understanding of the subject.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teachers suggest useful movies, and how to search data from electronic media for students to study by themselves.</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Students are satisfied with the teacher’s ability to teach and to use appropriate teaching aids</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Time doing activities was appropriate.</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Participation in teaching and learning was fun.</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Participation in learning activities helps promote cooperation among students in exchanging ideas and learning from each other.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Role play activities can help train students to use this second language in real life.</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Teacher intervention stressing moral / ethical, and a good attitude toward the culture of Thailand and foreign countries.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. Writing notes, assessments, and understanding each week’s work, helps students promote their understanding of the subject.</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Learning from the movies enhances the student’s knowledge and understanding of the subject.</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Learning through doing research by oneself helps promote the learning and understanding of the subject.</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>very satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings answer the research questions respectively.

**DISCUSSION**

Based on table 1, the efficiency of the instructional package was 84.86/80.80 which was higher than the standard level 80/80. It indicated that this instructional package is effective to use in teaching. Its effectiveness might be the result of the organization of the contents. It begins with the geography, the history of English speaking people which helps students to comprehend the content. For example, the content in the first chapter describes the proto-English.

“The Original English were the Picts and Celts. They were pushed out of the main part of England into Scotland and Wales by invaders. Under Julius Caesar, the Romans invaded most of England. They brought Latin to England which is a root form for much of English. Many English have black hair and olive skins now which are the result of Roman genes. When the Roman Empire collapsed the Vikings and German tribes invaded England. The Normans came from France. The Vikings had blond hair, so did some Germans. So many English are now blond or light brown hair.”

When students understand the backgrounds of English speaking peoples, they realize that all English speakers may not have white skin, blue eyes, blonde hair, etc. The organizing of the lessons in the package lead students to widen their perspective in language and culture, and later students can use English more appropriate to the context and situation.

Based on the findings in table 2, there was significant difference in mean percentage between the pre-test and post-test at .01. This indicates that students’ knowledge of English culture and the English language was higher after their cultural instructional studies.

The satisfaction of students using the instructional package is shown in table 3. The overall level of satisfaction was 4.03 and the S.D was 0.79. This indicates that the students were mostly very satisfied with the multi-processes educational system. It also indicated that students were extremely satisfied with the way teachers give students opportunities and encouragement to study by practicing and researching using various sources. This satisfaction may have been caused from the activities in this instructional package. In each chapter, students were assigned to do a research topic about a cultural aspect of English speaking countries that they are interested in and to bring it to share with the class. Most students stated their opinions in their
self-assessment form and at the open end part of the ‘The User’s satisfaction questionnaire’ as shown below:

“I learn the knowledge from friend’s presentation. I understand it well. I also finish 100% of my homework. This week class makes me feel happy. I like doing the research both in books and on internets because it helped me understand the background of each culture more deeply. I like the teacher assignment that we need to present what we get from our researching. It makes me understand how to work and improve all skill as well (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). This course makes me have knowledge about culture of all country, and I got trained to have the responsibility in doing homework.”

One student stated in the open end of the student satisfaction’s form that “Watching movies helped me learn culture of people in the movie deeply. I saw ‘Street Dance 3’. I have learnt the culture about dancing of the United States of America, and the dressing of bilateral kind of sport. These dresses are different from the ones in Thailand so are the criteria in judging the dance performance. I saw the ‘Duchess’. I have learned about the culture of people characters in the film. I saw the traditional dress which is different from the Thai people. The foreign culture people have more equal right than people in Thai culture. I saw ‘I Love You Phillip Morris’. I learn from this movie that America is open to gays, more than Thailand. I like to study this subject as it makes me happy and I gain knowledge.”

In short, most students’ comments showed that they thought they had gained considerable knowledge about English culture from being taught by multi-process teaching. They learned both from their own research and from listening to their peer reports in class. They also enjoyed and were happy with this method. This finding supports Stern (1992) that research techniques enable learners to find out things for themselves and “approach the new society with an open mind”.

Moreover, students understand themselves better and learned how to improve their knowledge through writing their own weekly self-assessment which made them reflect on their own selves. Working hard throughout the whole semester, students found that it was really useful to write every time after class.

Presently most students are familiar with being taught in a passive way. They just sit and wait for knowledge to come from their teachers without getting involved in active learning. Many students are likely to be shy, inhibited and fearful of making mistakes when they speak. As a result, they are less likely to become fully engaged in activities that require them to learn a language through speaking and interacting with classmates and the instructor.

Through the use of multi-process teaching, students are required to be active by writing self-assessments every week, doing research on their selected topics by watching movies, listening to music, and giving presentations in class through various activities such as: singing, role-play and power point presentations. Students gradually found it enjoyable and they learned better when they got involved. This finding is consistent with Hwang, Lui, and Tong (2005) who also determined that students in an active learning classroom performed better than students in a passive classroom.

In general, this study supports the idea of teaching culture through multi-process teaching.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING IMPLEMENTATION

I have found that teaching culture through multi processes such as: using film, the student’s own research and students’ self-assessment is very effective. This method can be applied to teaching in other areas. Teachers can assist students by using multi-processes such as providing them with
information and experiences which will enable them to bridge the gaps between their own native cultural languages to the new target one. The ideas to be taught should always be related to the relevant frameworks held by the students. The revision to the frameworks of their study should not be undertaken lightly. It is important to allow the students to explore their own ideas in a non-threatening environment. Teachers should also devise strategies for encouraging students’ exploration and for creating the necessary classroom climate. Teachers need to observe the performance of students while they are studying since some students maybe shy or fear being thought ignorant if they ask questions. Teachers cannot expect that all students will focus attention on key aspects of the learning activity without deliberate action on the teacher’s part. Using the multi-process in teaching English and culture is an effective strategy in the teaching process since it provides various activities to promote and encourage student learning.

REFERENCES


