

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

This study aimed to investigate English teachers' background knowledge and understanding of cultural contents in Compass 1, which is an English textbook for Thai secondary schools. In order to enable the readers to better understand the focus point of the study, some pertinent background knowledge will be provided.

In this chapter, definitions of culture, language and culture interrelationship, language teaching as culture teaching, culture contents which must be taught in the classroom, and related research were reviewed.

#### Definitions of Culture

The concept of culture is a somewhat vague and broadly defined concept and there are probably as many different definitions of culture as there are researchers. For example, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1954) found over three hundred definitions of culture in their study, which underlines the difficulty and scope of the issues involved in communicating and teaching about culture. Nonetheless, the development of culture teaching in L2/FL education has led to a current understanding of culture, which the researcher in the present study briefly summarized here.

On a general level, culture has been referred to as “the ways of a people” (Lado 1957). This perspective incorporates both ‘material’ manifestations of culture that are easily seen and ‘non-material’ ones that are more difficult to observe.

Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi (1990: 3-4) help us define culture on a more specific level by outlining four meanings of culture. Their aesthetic sense includes cinema, literature, music, and media, while their sociological one refers to the organization and nature of family, interpersonal relations, customs, material conditions, and so on. Their semantic sense encompasses the whole conceptualization system which conditions perceptions and thought processes, and their pragmatic or sociolinguistic sense refers to the background knowledge, social and paralinguistic skills, and language code which are necessary for successful communication.

While it is natural for us to speak of and define culture at both a general and a specific level because of the inherent complexity of the concept, another aspect of our definition reflects the dynamic nature of culture. It never remains static, but is constantly changing. As a result, Robinson (1988: 11) rejects behaviorist, functionalist, and cognitive definitions of culture and recommends a symbolic one which sees culture as a dynamic “system of symbols and meanings” where “past experience influences meaning, which in turn affects future experience, which in turn affects subsequent meaning, and so on”.

Other definitions of culture can be found in text, for example:

Dictionary of English Language and Culture (1992: 311) states that “Culture is the custom, belief, art, music, and the other products of human thought made by a particular group of people at a particular time.”

Webster’s New World Encyclopedia (1990), says:

Culture in sociology and anthropology, the way of life of a particular society or group of people including patterns of thought, belief behavior, custom, traditions, rituals, dress, and language as well as art, music, and literature. Sociologists and anthropologists use culture as a key concept in describing and analyzing human societies (299).

From these definitions of culture, we can see that culture was defined in various ways and they have something in common that is, beliefs, customs, values and products of human thoughts made by people in each society. It is the responsibility of foreign and second language teachers to assist in bringing the students to the point that culture becomes an aid to language learning. The purpose of this study is to investigate the teachers’ background knowledge and understanding of cultural contents in Compass 1. The information obtained will help teachers be successful in teaching as Smith (1969: 55) insisted that the success of any particular method of teaching culture rest on the teacher. The teachers have a very important role to direct students to understand culture. This understanding will help them more easily function and understand not only the contents in the books, but also foreign films and magazines.

## Language and Culture Interrelationship

In the learning of a native language, that language is both part of the native culture being acquired in the process of children's enculturation, or socialization, and a primary medium for the transmission of other aspects of that culture from one generation to the next, such as values, beliefs, and rules for social behavior. If speakers remain in contact with their native culture, their native language proficiency, expands to include expression of the new concepts they develop, the new domains in which they function, and the new role-relationships in which they participate. This intrinsic relationship of language to culture is so 'natural' as to operate at an unconscious level for most native speakers (Saville-Troike 1978). Consequently, in foreign language learning, we also have to learn to understand a foreign culture in order to make that foreign language teaching and learning successful.

Lado (1988: 9) remarked that the language teacher must understand the intimate relation between a language and its culture. The student cannot go far into the target language without facing differences in cultural meanings, because the meanings expressed in a language are largely culturally determined. One cannot understand a language fully without understanding at least some of the distinct cultural meanings expressed through it.

Second language learning is also second culture learning as Brown (1980: 124) has stated. He added that culture and language are interwoven and cannot be separated otherwise the significance of either language or culture will be gone. Finocchiaro (1989:76) proposed that language reflects the culture and students should get insight into the habits, customs and values which are similar or different from their own. Kaplan (1996:18) emphasizes that language and cultures are related. When learners know the culture, it is easier to say certain things and get a quick understanding.

Only after coming to know, understand, and appreciate something of other cultures can one realize the importance of providing cultural clues to assist the language learner in a new environment and to recognize what values and behavior patterns of the new culture the learner has most need to know. Trudgill (1978: 7-8) reinforces that language is the communicative conduct of communities used in

different cultures and it examines the functions and uses of styles, dialect when speech acts are interpreted according to particular societies.

Pongtongchareon (1982:19) stated that language learning must include cultural learning – gestures, speech acts. Intonation in one language may mean different things in another language and this is in common with the view given by Trudgill (1978: 7-8) that silence may be more usual in some cultures than others. Pongtongchareon also pointed out that for communication, the speaker must understand the language in terms of sounds, words, meaning, and word order including understanding of emotion, feeling or meaning implied because all of these reflect relationships between the speaker and the listener. She stressed that the main factor for people to use the language communicatively is to learn the culture of that target language.

We can summarize that to be able to use language effectively and communicatively, learners must learn both the language and its target culture dialects, expressions, emotions, feelings, and speech acts of that particular society. Learning language alone would not help create mutual understanding. Learners must be able to use language appropriately in various situations rather than to the criterion of formal correctness.

### **Language Teaching as Culture Teaching**

A number of educators and language teachers have emphasized the importance of the cultural aspect in language teaching. Writers such as Hammerly (1982), Seelye (1984) and Damen (1987) are among those who have offered ways of incorporating culture into language teaching. Despite the recognition that language and culture cannot be separated and that culture teaching is essential to language learning, culture teaching in classes is not as widespread as it should be because the teachers lack background knowledge and understanding of the cultural contents in the textbooks. In fact, Stern (1992) points out that instruction in foreign languages and cultures has decreased despite increased contacts with other people, cultures and countries.

Culture teaching is necessary in a second language classroom for effective language learning to occur. Culture teaching, in general terms, involves a

comprehensive description of the way of life of a particular society which is intertwined with the teaching of language. Current pedagogy stresses that language cannot be taught without culture and that culture is a necessary context for language use.

One of the well-known characteristics of modern approaches to second language learning is the view that successful second language acquisition (SLA) is accompanied by second culture acquisition (SCA) (e.g., Hamers and Blanc, 1989; Schumann 1978). It seems clear that a learner's acquisition of communicative competence must involve more than the command of the grammatical structures of the target language and a mastery of its phonology. The learner must also acquire new cultural knowledge and a set of culture-specific constraints on linguistic behavior.

Second language learning is often second culturizing learning. In order to understand just what second culture learning is, one needs to understand the nature of acculturation, culture shock, and social distance. Moreover, Gardner and others have developed a socio-educational model over the last 30 years to account for the role of various characteristics involved in the learning of a second language (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993: 157-194). Integrativeness was identified as an important factor in achieving advanced proficiency in a second language. An integrative motivation to learn a second language reflects the individual's willingness and interest in social interaction with members of the target language.

Kramsch (1993) states that culture should be taught as an interpersonal process. Rather than presenting cultural facts, educators should assist second language learners in understanding the "other" culture. She states that because of the increasing multiculturalism of various societies, learners should be aware of other cultural factors that exist such as age, gender, regional origin and social class. Focusing on the national traits of a person's culture is simply too limiting to be able to understand another's culture which once again relates to the idea of avoiding sweeping generalities about a specific culture and the people of that culture. And finally, she believes that the teaching of culture should be connected to academic areas such as sociology, history and anthropology. By doing so, learners can gain an in-depth and richer understanding of people, their culture and language.

Using culture as a main theme in the language room is an example of content-based learning. In this method the focus is on using language as a vehicle to understand and communicate about really meaningful contents, because “To study language without studying the culture of native speakers of the language is a lifeless endeavor” (Oxford 1994: 30).

Two of the most important aims in foreign language education are achieved when students have increased their understanding of their own culture and gained competence in the target culture. Both of these aspects are equally important, because in order for the student to understand another culture, he has to be aware of his own cultural background; he has to realize that the way we are seen by other people is not necessary the same as we see ourselves and that the attitudes and values we have are not universal (Steele and Suozzo 1994: 74).

As Higgs (1990: 74-84) stated, it is the recognition of an “unbreakable bond between language and culture that motivates our profession's implicit commandment that ‘thou shalt not teach language without also teaching culture’”

Brown (1990: 11-17) questions whether or not language may be value-free or independent of cultural background. Brown concludes: “there are values, presuppositions, about the nature of life and what is good and bad in it, to be found in any normal use of language”. Such normal language use is exactly what most L2 and FL instructors aim to teach.

Beyond this perspective, Buttjes (1990: 53-57) refers to ethnographic language studies (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984; Poyatos, 1985; Peters and Boggs, 1986) and summarizes several reasons why “language and culture are from the start inseparably connected”:

1. language acquisition does not follow a universal sequence, but differs across cultures;
2. the process of becoming a competent member of society is realized through exchanges of language in particular social situations;
3. every society orchestrates the ways in which children participate in particular situations, and this, in turn, affects the form, the function and the content of children's utterances;

4. caregivers' primary concern is not with grammatical input, but with the transmission of sociocultural knowledge;
5. the native learner, in addition to language, acquires also the paralinguistic patterns and the kinetics of his or her culture. (Buttjes, 1990: 55)

✗ Having outlined these findings, Buttjes cautions readers that “as in the case of first vs. second language acquisition research, first and second culture acquisition differ in many respects” (1990: 55). Two of his further observations also explain just how language teaching is culture teaching:

1. Language codes cannot be taught in isolation because processes of sociocultural transmission are bound to be at work on many levels, e.g. the contents of language exercises, the cultural discourse of textbooks (Kramsch, 1988: 63-68), and the teacher's attitudes towards the target culture.

2. In their role of “secondary care givers” language teachers need to go beyond monitoring linguistic production in the classroom and become aware of the complex and numerous processes of intercultural mediation that any foreign language learner undergoes... (Buttjes, 1990: 55-56)

Thus, from this evidence and that provided by Valdes (1990: 20-30) in the paper referred to above, it is clear that language teaching is indeed culture teaching. Such a perspective is evident outside of the fields of applied linguistics and second language education as well, in writings on intercultural communication (Luce and Smith 1987). Consider this view from outside of the L2 and FL education literature:

Culture and communication are inseparable because culture not only dictates who talks to whom, about what, and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode messages, the meanings they have for messages, and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed, or interpreted... Culture...is the foundation of communication (Samovar, Porter, and Jain, 1981: 24).

We should and do teach our students the L2 or FL culture in our classes when our goal is communicative competence. ✗ Not only is culture part and parcel of the process, but the educational value of it within L2/FL education is also great, as Byram (1988: 15-31) argues. ✗

## Culture Contents Which Must Be Taught in the Classroom

Brooks (1964: 90-95) was one who strongly advocated the idea of a cultural component in second language curriculum and emphasized an anthropological approach to the study of culture. He believed that language teaching should include knowledge about the country and way of life of the target language group. Brooks made the distinction between 'Culture with a capital C' which referred to formal culture and 'culture with a small c' or deep culture which referred to "way-of-life" culture. He created a list of sixty-four topics dealing primarily with everyday culture as follows:

1. Greetings, friendly exchange, farewells
2. The morphology of personal exchange
3. Levels of speech
4. Patterns of politeness
5. Respect
6. Intonation patterns
7. Contractions and Omissions
8. Expletives
9. Types of error in speech and their importance
10. Verbal taboos
11. Written and spoken language
12. Numbers
13. Folklore
14. Childhood literature
15. Discipline
16. Festivals
17. Holidays
18. Observance of Sunday
19. Games
20. Music
21. Errands
22. Pets
23. Telephone
24. Comradeship
25. Personal possessions
26. Keeping warm and cool
27. Cleanliness
28. Cosmetics
29. Tobacco and smoking
30. Medicine and doctors
31. Competitions
32. Appointments
33. Invitations and dates
34. Traffic
35. Owning, repairing, and driving cars
36. Science
37. Gadgets
38. Sports
39. Radio and television programs
40. Books
41. Other reading matter
42. Hobbies
43. Learning in school
44. Homework and learning in the home



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| 45. Penmanship                         | 46. Letter writing and mailing     |
| 47. Family meals                       | 48. Meals away from home           |
| 49. Soft drinks and alcohol            | 50. Snacks and between-meal eating |
| 51. Cafes, bars, and restaurants       | 52. Yards, lawns, and sidewalks    |
| 53. Parks and playgrounds              | 54. Flowers and gardens            |
| 55. Movies and theaters                | 56. Races, circus, rodeo           |
| 57. Museum, exhibitions, and zoos      | 58. Getting from place to place    |
| 59. Contrasts in town and country life | 60. Vacation and resort areas      |
| 61. Camping and hiking                 | 62. Savings accounts and thrift    |
| 63. Odd jobs and earning power         | 64. Careers.                       |

Based on the anthropological definition of culture, Chastian (1971: 389-392) developed the following list of culture themes:

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| 1. Typical student activities                      | 2. Typical conversations                    |
| 2. What does the typical student think about most? | 4. Money                                    |
| 5. Meals and drinks                                | 6. Leisure activities                       |
| 7. Careers   | 8. Happiness                                |
| 9. Success   | 10. Parents                                 |
| 11. Youth view of parenthood                       | 12. Masculine and feminine roles in society |
| 13. The family                                     | 14. Relatives                               |
| 15. Youth  | 16. Courtship and marriage                  |
| 17. Education                                      | 18. Friends                                 |
| 19. The social system                              | 20. The generation gap                      |
| 21. Drugs  | 22. Youth participation in politics         |
| 23. The economic system                            | 24. Patriotism                              |
| 25. Women's liberation                             | 26. War and peace                           |
| 27. Change and progress                            | 28. Ecology                                 |
| 29. Population                                     | 30. Religion                                |
| 31. Crime  | 32. Law                                     |
| 33. Humor  | 34. Good manners                            |
| 35. Advertising                                    | 36. The press                               |
| 37. Individual liberty                             | 38. Death                                   |
| 39. Discipline                                     | 40. Holidays                                |

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| 41. Clothing         | 42. Transportation |
| 43. Courtesy phrases | 44. Kinesics       |

Finocchiaro and Bonomo (1973: 60-63) suggested a list of the aspects of native culture for conversation and for comparison or contrast with similar aspects in the target culture is as the following:

1. Introductions and Identifications
2. The immediate classroom
3. The school
4. The family
5. The immediate community of the school and home
6. The wider community
7. Our cultural heritage
8. Personal guidance (This topic is treated in greater detail because of its importance to secondary school students.)
  - 8.1 Social
  - 8.2 Educational
  - 8.3 Vocational
  - 8.4 Leisure-time activities:
  - 8.5 Moral and spiritual values
9. Miscellaneous

From studying the cultural contents, which should be taught in the classroom from Brooks (1964: 90-95), Chastain (1971: 389-392), and Finocchiaro and Bonomo (1973: 60-63) etc. There are 17 common categories as follows:

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| 1. Food                   | 2. Drinks                                  |
| 3. Music                  | 4. People                                  |
| 5. Sports                 | 6. Custom                                  |
| 7. Education              | 8. Collection                              |
| 9. Emergency              | 10. Expenditure                            |
| 11. Mass media            | 12. Buildings and places                   |
| 13. Travel and transports | 14. Buildings and houses                   |
| 15. Measurement system    | 16. Places associated with food and drinks |
| 17. Others                |  |

## Related Research

### Research in Foreign Countries

Since language learning involves learning cultural and linguistic differences, language teachers in many countries are now alert to the bi or multi-cultural situation as a special case.

Seid (1980: 40-41 cited in Agadmeck. 1996: 19) did research on cultural content and reading comprehension in Iran and found that foreign language students are interested in the culture of the people whose language they are trying to learn and this interest motivates the students to pay more attention to the content of the reading material. The students could understand better when they knew the cultural background of the people and the language learned.

Williams (1987: 40-41) who has done research in Indonesia stated in teaching culture in the ESL classroom that culture communicates itself in many ways and provides variety for members in the community to communicate with one another by using the language. He emphasizes that cultural learning like language learning should be an integral part of the ESL curriculum. He notes concepts of time also vary greatly in different cultures, the way a person sits and stands, communicates something about the person and has meaning, humor distinguishes one culture from another or silence may tell a message. Because of these elements, language learners must know the linguistic forms and something about the native speaker's cultural attitudes and values so as not to cause misunderstanding.

Vera (1987: 37-38 cited in Agadmeck. 1996: 21) who has experience teaching English at the East China Institute of Technology in Nanjing found that her students could understand more when she taught them in a cultural context. Her method was that she taught her students a way of thinking by using movies, television programs, idioms and conversation practice. She emphasized that the teacher should not leave students alone but try to encourage and comfort them so they have confidence. She insisted that aspects of people's cultures influence how they use the language and words with meanings and that this cannot be found in any dictionary.

Syed (1988: 44-46 cited in Agadmeck. 1996: 20) has conducted research on culture and reading comprehension in Pakistan and found out that students had poor comprehension because they did not have knowledge about the culture of the target language. He pointed out that the more students knew about the target language, the more confidence they had when facing the textual material. He supported integrating the teaching of cultural content with the teaching of language patterns and the lexicon. Language teachers should make students aware of the correct levels of discourse and behavior as well as the social attitudes of the people because it helps motivate them to observe the cultural differences and reduce their objection towards another culture.

Syed's (1998) research on knowing cultural background when learning reading comprehension together with Seid's (1980) research on the same subject indicates influence over students' motivation in learning the second language. Knowing the culture of the language they are learning helps them to be more aware of cultural differences.

Danuta (1992: 46-47 cited in Agadmeck. 1996: 20-21) did research with her students in a university in Russia where American textbooks are used under the topic "Why study American English?" Her students had various problems in understanding about economics, politics, and the environment, so she hypothesized that these problems could be solved if there was a joint effort. People and government must find what she called "common language" that can be understood between one another to make mutual understanding. She taught her students by using American English, the meaning of words, how Americans felt when they said the words, their attitudes, values and cultural patterns and the results were that her students could understand the textbooks better and her students became more sensitive to cultural differences and accepted them more.

#### Research in Thailand

Meelucksana (1987: 52) did research on "The English Teachers' Needs in English Culture contents in Public Secondary School in Bangkok Metropolis". The results indicated that most of English teachers had the need to know more about western cultures, especially language use, expressions for various situations, food,

manners and etiquette. Moreover, the teachers needed cultural guidelines and information resource books to improve their culture knowledge.

Koomkaew (1988: 62) studied about "The Study of English Cultural Understandings of Mathayomsuksa six Students' in the Demonstration Schools Attached to the Ministry of University Affairs in Bangkok Metropolis". The results revealed that students have the least understanding about using gestures.

Somsakyothin (1994) conducted research on "A Study of Teachers' Problems on Cultural Content in Discoveries (Students' Books 1-3)". From 17 topics consisting of 108 items of cultural contents in textbook, she found that the teachers understood only 41 items, and 67 items were still problems for them. The result revealed that the content about 'Education' caused the highest level of problems.

Arayaskul (1995) did research on "The need in English Cultural Contents of Kasetsart University undergraduate students". The results indicated that there was a great need for information about tourist attractions and job applications. In terms of teaching methodology, the students wanted the teacher to explain the cultural contents along with explaining the text and also to give comparisons and contrasts with Thai culture.

✓ Promsiri et al. (1996: 80) did a research on "A Survey of English Teaching Problems and Wants in Teacher Training of English Teachers at the Upper-Secondary Schools in Government Secondary Schools in Educational Region 12". She found that the top-ranked items of problems of each group were difficulty in making learners achieve all objectives, textbooks, which did not have enough, content in order to help learners achieve the objectives and inadequate knowledge of western culture.

Agadmeck (1996: 56) conducted research on "A Training Kit for Cultural Aspects of Content in English Textbooks used in Secondary Schools in Thailand". She concluded that the teachers did not pay much attention to their own culture until they were asked to compare their own culture with British/American cultures. It can be said that to compare anything, there is need to have a secure knowledge of both portions of the comparison and with many teachers unsure on their own culture traditions, good comparisons were not possible except on a superficial level.

Based on the results and discussion of the findings from “A Study of Linguistic and Cultural Difficulties Encountered by Thai Graduate Students in Their Use of English When Studying Overseas” by Thongsongsee (1998). It can be concluded that a good understanding of western cultural norms, an ability to adapt oneself to western styles of living, and an ability to deal with their own problems played a crucial role in the overall achievement of the students.

From the research we can see that one of the main obstacles in learning a foreign or second language is cultural differences. The success of learning a foreign language rests on reducing the cultural bond of a student and motivating him to understand the culture of the target language. The classroom environment is of great importance itself in terms of creating an atmosphere of the target culture. When students understand cultural background, they can learn and understand better.

