

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter aims at presenting the summary of the study, the discussions of the findings, and the implications. Also, the recommendations of the study are finally presented for further research.

Summary

The two objectives of the study were 1) to investigate teachers' culture teaching practices in an English language classroom; 2) to examine the factors affecting teachers' culture teaching practices.

The data collection process could be divided into two stages: preparation for data collection, and data collection. The first stage dealt with reviewing literature, selecting the fieldwork, preparing research instruments and equipment for collecting the data, and establishing rapport with the participants. The second stage was involved with data collection which could be classified into two phases according to the methods of data collection: 1) questionnaire, outside-class observation, general interview, and documentation; 2) in-class observation, after-class interview, in-depth interview, and documentation. The data was collected by using various methods with different times, places, and people in order to ensure the validity and the reliability of the collected data. The research was conducted for a duration of 20 weeks (from 16 May to 26 September 2007).

The participants in the study were three upper secondary school English teachers at Sunshine School, Bangkok which were selected by the purposive sampling technique depending on their various educational backgrounds and teaching

experience. Their cultural knowledge and awareness as well as their teaching practices were measured on the questionnaire before they were observed in the English language classroom. Later, they were interviewed in order to investigate their culture teaching practices and then to examine the factors affecting teachers' culture teaching practices.

The data analysis process could be divided into two phases based on the time when the data was analyzed: during the data collection, and after the data collection. The first phase dealt with the questionnaire which was analyzed by descriptive statistics before the researcher examined the data by observations and interviews. After that, field notes and the interviews were analyzed by coding in the descriptive index in order to set and develop working hypotheses of the study. The second phase was concerned with the analysis of the data from the observation, interviews, and documentation. They were also coded in the descriptive index in order to find out the results of the study.

Major Findings

The findings of the study could be summed up into two categories: teachers' culture teaching practices, and the factors affecting teachers' culture teaching practices.

Teachers' Culture Teaching Practices

The findings of the investigation of teachers' culture teaching practices showed that all cultural contents were taught only by the participant who taught English Reading-Writing. She used her cultural knowledge and experience from when she went abroad in her culture teaching practices. In both Foundation English and English Listening-Speaking, participants did not teach the culture content concerning

geography/places, social life, and stereotypes and national identity. Also, the participant who taught Foundation English did not teach the culture content of moral and religious beliefs and values.

In terms of teachers' roles, the participant teaching English Reading-Writing was the only one who took the roles covered by all four Cultural Knowings, namely, Knowing How, Knowing About, Knowing Why, and Knowing Oneself. Roles in Knowing Oneself were not taken by the two remaining participants. Additionally, all participants did not take the role as a Resource which gave students a chance to search for information themselves. They also did not take all roles in Knowing Oneself, except the participant who taught in English Reading-Writing who sometimes took the role as a Co-learner. On the other hand, all of them took the role as a Source very often as they tended to explain cultural information to the students.

All participants used three similar techniques – Initial Overview to Set the Stage, Ad Hoc Culture Notes, and Contrastive Analysis in their culture teaching practices.

The course textbook was used as main material in two English subjects – Foundation English and English Reading-Writing while CDs and VCDs were used as main materials in English Listening-Speaking.

In assessment, all participants used criterion-referenced tests – multiple choice as a method to measure students' culture learning in both the mid-term and final exams. The participant teaching English Reading-Writing was the only one who also used true/false. Students' culture learning was assessed in English Reading-Writing the most, but in Foundation English the least. However, participants in the two English subjects – Foundation English and English Reading-Writing did not realize that they assessed students' culture learning since both of them emphasized language

testing. In their tests, they were not aware that culture content was included, which meant that they assessed students' culture learning indirectly.

Moreover, all participants were not actually aware that they had some problems in culture teaching practices.

Factors Affecting Teachers' Culture Teaching Practices

Another finding was associated with the factors affecting teachers' culture teaching practices. It appeared from the data that eight teacher factors were significant because they seemed to have a strong influence on culture teaching practices. The first teacher factor was learning experience. The results showed that participants who had experiences with the second culture tended to teach culture quite often in class. The second teacher factor was cultural knowledge. Participants who were exposed to the second culture seemed to use the cultural knowledge in class. The third teacher factor was teachers' beliefs since participants tended to consider what to teach and how to teach based on their beliefs. Teachers' personal preferences had an influence on their practices as well. Participants seemed to choose culture content and materials which matched their personal preferences. The next teacher factor was teaching experience, because participants who lacked culture teaching experience seemed to have more problems in culture teaching practices. Another teacher factor was teachers' teaching skills. Those who lacked teaching skills tended to have problems in culture teaching practices. Preparation time also affected teachers' culture teaching practices. Participants who had time to prepare activities and materials seemed to teach culture frequently in class. The last factor was the roles they played in culture teaching. Participants were likely to teach culture based on the roles they took.

Discussions

The objectives of the study were to investigate how teachers teach culture in an English language classroom and to examine the factors affecting their culture teaching practices. Thus, the findings were related to two aspects – teachers' culture teaching practices, and teacher factors affecting culture teaching practices.

Teachers' Culture Teaching Practices

With the first research question, how do teachers teach the culture content in an English language classroom? The answer could be divided into five aspects of culture teaching practices: culture content, teachers' roles, techniques, materials in culture teaching practices, and methods to assess students' culture learning.

Culture Content

To begin with the culture content, the possible explanation why the participant who taught English Reading-Writing was the only one who taught all 10 culture content while two remaining participant did not is that the latter two teachers were faced with the lack of knowledge about culture teaching. Therefore, they thought that the culture content dealt with the second culture customs only. Also, they did not have direct exposure with the second culture, such as going abroad. Consequently, they did not cover all culture content in their culture teaching practices.

Teachers' Roles in Culture Teaching Practices

The second topic was teachers' roles in culture teaching practices. Though Moran (2001) suggested that teachers be aware of their key roles in culture teaching, it could be seen from the data that they were not. The possible explanation is that the participants did not realize the importance of culture in language learning; therefore, they did not see why they had to show students where to find a source of information because they had already explained the cultural information to the

students. Consequently, students did not need to search for further information. The further explanation is that the roles in Knowing Oneself focused on helping learners acquire self-awareness. To do so, teachers needed to spare more time on this role than other roles in Cultural Knowings but they had very limited time. Subsequently, the roles in Knowing Oneself were performed the least. The results are consistent with Tseng's study (2002) in that teachers should highlight culture as it is an important aspect in language classrooms. However, teachers might not teach their students target culture due to many reasons, such as lack of time.

Techniques in Culture Teaching Practices

The third topic was techniques in culture teaching practices. The reason why all participants used Initial Overview to Set the Stage, and Ad Hoc Culture Notes in their culture teaching practices is that these two techniques were related to the roles they took very often – a Source which they needed to explain various cultural aspects to students. In class, they gave students information about the second culture in Thai with their materials, and they switched to English later when students understood it. Moreover, the possible explanation why they used Contrastive Analysis was because they needed to help students understand the differences between Thai and Western culture which are consistent with one of the standards in the Basic Education Curriculum B.E. 2544 (A.D. 2001). However, they did not give students a chance to compare and contrast cultural aspects in class, except Teacher C. While there were various techniques which could promote student-centeredness, such as Secondary Research Topic, it could be seen that participants used the teacher-centered approach in culture teaching in order to help students understand cross-cultural differences between Thai and target cultures. In fact, teachers should promote students' self-study because it seemed that students were eager to learn and had much

fun when teachers asked them to participate in class activities or share their opinions. To give an illustration, when Teacher C asked them to compare and contrast the differences between cultures, they paid close attention and actively expressed their opinions on specific cultural topics. They also listened carefully to what their classmates said and asked further questions.

Materials in Culture Teaching Practices

The fourth topic was materials in culture teaching practices. The data showed that CDs and VCDs were used as main materials in English Listening-Speaking only while the course textbook was used as a main material in Foundation English and English Reading-Writing. It is possible that the participant teaching English Listening-Speaking loved learning English language through activities and interaction but the course textbook did not match her personal preference. Therefore, she prepared extra materials – CDs and VCDs to teach her students, and omitted some culture content in the course textbook due to limited time.

These findings concur with the studies of Richards and Lockhart (1994), Shrum and Glisan (2005), Cruickshank, Jenkins, and Metcalf (2006) in that personality has an impact on language teaching because teachers select a teaching pattern, arrangement, or activity that matches their personality or according to their personal preference. One of the problems in culture teaching is that teachers might feel that they cannot spare the time in an overwhelming curriculum to teach the additional material since the study of culture involves time (Hadley, 2001; Keatley & Kennedy, 2004).

Methods in Assessing Students' Culture Learning

The final topic was the methods in assessing students' culture learning. The possible explanation why criterion-referenced tests were used by all participants

is that they lacked knowledge in culture teaching; therefore, they did not know that there were several methods to assess students' culture learning. Since Teacher B was the only participant who realized that she assessed students' culture learning directly, it may be possible that the latter two teachers were not aware that language and culture are inseparable. Since the culture content was included in the texts, when they measured students' language proficiency, they also measured their cultural knowledge.

In summary, the first research question could be answered from the data that only one participant taught all 10 culture contents in culture teaching. In addition, they all did not take all roles under Cultural Knowings. All of them used three similar techniques: Initial Overview to Set the Stage, Ad Hoc Culture Notes, and Contrastive Analysis. In addition, the participant teaching English Listening-Speaking was the only one who used CDs and VCDs as main materials, while the other two participants used the course textbook as main material. Also, they used criterion-referenced tests in assessing students' culture learning.

Factors Affecting Teachers' Culture Teaching Practices

For the second question, what are the factors affecting teachers' culture teaching practices? According to the Literature Review, it could be seen that teacher factors were essential since they had direct effects on teachers' culture teaching practices. In addition, three teacher factors, namely, cultural knowledge, teaching experience, and learning experience, were the most dominant and influential factors in culture teaching. The researcher, therefore, decided to focus on these three factors. However, not only learning experience, cultural knowledge, and culture teaching experience have an impact on culture teaching, but also other factors. There are eight

teacher factors in total which consist of learning experience, cultural knowledge, teaching experience, teaching skills, beliefs, personal preferences, roles, and preparation time.

To begin with the focus of the study, learning experience, cultural knowledge, and culture teaching experience had a strong impact on one another as well as on the other factors. With regard to the first factor, teachers' learning experience, it was found that teachers with more learning experiences, especially in foreign countries or with foreigners were likely to have high cultural knowledge and they tended to include their own experiences and knowledge along with the content they taught in class. In this study, participants seemed to teach culture based on their cultural knowledge. Therefore, teachers who had much cultural knowledge tended to cover more culture contents, teach about them frequently, and took more roles in the language classroom. However, those who lacked cultural knowledge tended to teach culture content in the course textbook only, and took fewer roles in culture teaching. To give an illustration, the teacher who taught Reading-Writing was the only one who taught all 10 culture contents. She used her cultural knowledge and her own experience in foreign countries in her culture teaching practices. The other two teachers did not have direct contact with the second culture. Therefore, they covered only 6 culture content, and taught them less.

In addition, teachers who transferred their learning experience and cultural knowledge to their students, would have more experience in culture teaching. Based on their experience, they seemed to know what culture content they should teach and how they should teach their students. Hence, teachers who lacked culture teaching experience seemed to have problems in culture teaching practices.

Also, it could be seen that teachers' culture teaching skills tended to come from their own experience. Thus, those who had more experience seemed to have more advantages in culture teaching than those who did not. Despite their experience, they still had problems in culture teaching as they did not know enough about the techniques used in culture teaching. To give an illustration, Contrastive Analysis was the only technique that all three teachers reported using. In fact, they also used other techniques, such as Initial Overview to Set the Stage, but they were not aware that they actually did it.

The findings are consistent with Byram, Morgan and colleagues (1994), Ryan (1996), Hadley (2001), and Tsou (2005) who said that teachers' experience in a foreign country was a primary source of their cultural knowledge, and it led to their instructional behavior in the classroom. That is, if teachers had limited knowledge of the target culture or they did not know enough about foreign cultures, they might not teach it since they were uncomfortable in providing culture teaching. Also, Hadley (2001), Keatley and Kennedy (2004) stated that problems in culture teaching occurred when teachers felt they did not know enough about formal culture in order to teach it adequately. In addition, Tseng (2002) explained that teachers might not teach their students target culture due to many reasons, and one of them was teachers' limited knowledge of the target culture.

Apart from three teacher factors, this study has found that teachers' beliefs in culture teaching was another dominant factor that could possibly have an influence on culture teaching as well. That is to say, teachers tended to decide what culture they should teach and how they should teach it in class based on what they believed.

Although participants were experienced teachers who had at least 20 years of language teaching, they seemed to have problems in culture teaching because they

lacked the knowledge about culture teaching. Hence, their culture teaching practices were likely based on their own beliefs. For instance, Teacher A, who taught Foundation English, did not teach geography/places because she believed that certain culture content should be taught separately from her class and it should be taught in other English subjects. According to her, language and culture are two separate subjects. Consequently, she did not teach some cultural aspects in her subject. Teacher B, who taught Listening-Speaking, thought that culture only dealt with social interaction with foreigners because she did not know other elements of culture content. Teacher C, who taught Reading-Writing, taught culture by telling her own experiences in class because she believed that female students were interested in language and culture.

Furthermore, teachers' beliefs were likely to be derived solely from culture teaching experience. To illustrate, Teacher B, has experienced that students could not give information about Thai culture. They seemed to know more about western culture than their own. This has led her to form a belief that Thai culture should be the focal point of her culture teaching. As a result, she focused on teaching Thai culture more than others.

The findings are consistent with the studies in teachers' beliefs that teaching experience is the primary source of beliefs about teaching for many teachers (Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Richardson, 1996; Graves, 2000; Peacock, 2001). Besides, teachers' beliefs served as a source of reference when teachers encounter new ideas, sometimes impeding the acceptance of new ideas or practices. In addition, they served as the source of teachers' classroom practices as they were instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and made decisions regarding such tasks. Also, teachers' beliefs

strongly affect their behavior in the classroom since changes in beliefs precede changes in practices (Richardson, Andres, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991; Pajares, 1992; Cruickshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2006).

Since teachers were not trained in culture teaching, they lacked the knowledge about culture teaching and they did not recognize the importance of culture teaching. They taught only the culture content in the course textbook and occasionally, they even omitted some of it. Besides, when they did include culture content in their classes, they were not aware that they were teaching culture. This can lead to the inconsistency of their culture teaching practices. An example was that all of them did not realize that they used different approaches in their culture teaching practices, such as Initial Overview to Set the Stage, and Ad Hoc Culture Notes. Furthermore, Teacher B was the only one who realized that she assessed students' culture learning while Teacher A and Teacher C did not realize that they evaluated students indirectly through their language tests. Also, only Criteria-Referenced Tests, such as multiple choice or true/false were used as methods in assessing students' culture learning since they did not know other types of assessment, such as Simulation, and Visual Tests. As a result, teachers should be trained in culture teaching to enhance their culture teaching skills.

In terms of culture teaching training, the results of the study concur with the studies of Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991), Byram, Esarte-Sarries, and Taylor (1991), and Hadley (2001). They state that the lack of adequate training and experience for teaching language and culture could have an influence on cultural information provided in the classroom. This occurs because teachers are faced with a lack of what definition should be taught and the problem of deciding what aspects of culture to teach. Therefore, they do not have strategies and clear goals that help them

to create a viable framework for organizing instruction around cultural themes. These factors could lead to the teachers' lack of culture teaching. However, Stern (1992) said that many teachers had not been trained to use various techniques to teach culture.

Subsequently, the findings support the suggestion from Lafayette (1993), and Singhal (1998) that language teachers should be encouraged to join teacher education programs and get practical field experience in order to gain a more in-depth and comprehensive education and background information for a more complete cultural understanding, since teachers need both experiential and academic training in teacher education. Hence, it could be seen that teachers need culture teaching training, consisting of culture content, approaches, materials in culture teaching, and methods to assess students' culture learning in order to teach them appropriately.

To conclude, teachers taught culture based on their cultural knowledge which they obtained from their learning experience. Those who had more experience and much cultural knowledge tended to teach more culture content as well as take more roles in the language classroom. Thus, they seemed to have more culture teaching skills. In addition, they taught culture based on their own beliefs of what culture content was, since they were not trained in culture teaching. Hence, they were faced with a lack of knowledge about culture teaching. Consequently, they did not recognize the importance of culture teaching as well as they were not aware that they taught students culture in class. The relationship of these teacher factors could be presented in Figure 10 below.

Besides these five teacher factors, there are three additional factors which seemed to affect teachers' culture teaching practices also. The first one was teachers' personal preferences. Teachers tended to select activities and materials which matched their personal preferences. For example, those who loved music used songs as their culture teaching material. Some of their preferences also came from their personal learning experience. To give an illustration, Teacher B who loved learning language through activities and interaction would be more likely to prepare extra materials in her culture teaching. These findings support the studies of Richards and Lockhart (1994), Shrum and Glisan (2005), Cruickshank, Jenkins, and Metcalf (2006) in that teachers selected a teaching pattern, arrangement, or activity according to personal preference.

Teachers' roles in culture teaching practices were the second factor. It seemed that the teachers were not aware of their key roles in culture teaching, such as being an Elicitor. Also, they tended to take roles depending on their cultural knowledge, and subjects they taught. For example, participants who taught English language skills or had wider cultural knowledge, took various roles in culture teaching practices as they tended to include more Cultural Knowings in their teaching, such as Knowing Why and Knowing Oneself. Furthermore, the roles they took also depended on their beliefs. Participants were likely to take fewer roles and teach fewer Cultural Knowings when they believed that language teaching was more important than culture teaching.

The final factor was teachers' preparation time. Those who had culture teaching experience, and culture teaching skills seemed to spend less time in preparation. The possible explanation is that they already knew what to teach and how to teach, so they had a plan of culture teaching in their mind.

In summary, the second research question could be answered from the data that teacher factors were crucial in culture teaching practices. They consisted of eight teacher factors in total: cultural knowledge, learning experience, teaching experience, teaching skills, beliefs, personal preferences, roles, and preparation time. They tended to have an influence on one another, and on the additional teacher factors.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study can serve as a guideline for teachers in facilitating, and improving their culture teaching practices as follows:

Since teachers did not recognize the significance of culture in their teaching, they omitted some culture content, and they also did not teach it much in their courses. The lack of cultural instruction would have an impact on students' culture learning as well as language learning because they would not have sufficient cultural knowledge and understanding of the target culture in order to communicate appropriately with foreigners. Therefore, the first implication is that teachers should realize the importance of culture teaching and that culture and language are inseparable. Students at all levels should be taught cross-cultural communication in an English language classroom. If students knew the target culture, their language competencies would increase and they could use language appropriately in various contexts. As a result, they would become proficient communicators.

Secondly, culture should be promoted in teachers' professional training because teachers who lack the knowledge about culture teaching tend to be unaware of the importance of culture teaching. Also, they do not realize that they are teaching culture in class. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to be trained in what culture content to teach, how to teach, and how to assess students' cultural knowledge.

Consequently, they will be able to cope with their problems in culture teaching, such as lack of knowledge, and lack of available time. Also, they could enhance their students' attitudes towards the target culture in language learning.

Although teachers were able to motivate students in culture learning by giving them a chance to participate in class, they used the teacher-centered approach in their culture teaching practices. To give an example, they took the role as a Source very often as they tended to explain cultural information to the students, and they did not take the role as a Resource, which gave students an opportunity to search for information themselves. Thus, the third implication is that teachers should focus more on the student-centered approach in their culture teaching. For instance, they should take the roles as a Resource or a Co-learner, and encourage students to find sources of cultural information. In addition, there are several techniques in culture teaching that can be used in promoting students' culture learning. By using Secondary Research Topic, for instance, teachers can assign students topics for written reports and oral presentation. Moreover, they should motivate students to be aware of their own culture. An illustration is that teachers should take the roles in Knowing Oneself as a Listener, a Witness, and a Co-learner so that students will have a chance to recognize and appreciate Thai culture.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study has taken a step in the direction of defining culture teaching practices of upper secondary school English teachers in Sunshine School. The focus was on investigating how they taught the culture belonging to English speaking social groups before examining teacher factors affecting culture teaching practices. It is definitely possible that other factors, such as learner factors may produce entirely

different results. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that a number of a sample group can limit the interpretations of the results.

The approach outlined in this study should be adapted in other research as further study should investigate how teachers teach Thai culture in an English language classroom in order to compare and contrast the findings. Furthermore, it should examine teachers' culture teaching practices at other teaching levels or other schools in order to find new evidence for supporting and developing the study of culture teaching. Also, it should focus on other factors, such as learner factors in order to explore whether they have an influence on teachers' culture teaching practices.