

Teacher Perceptions of and Confidence in Teaching Cultural Content in English Courses: A Study of Islamic Private Schools in Five Southern Border Provinces of Thailand

Noorulhuda Ding
Prince of Songkla University
huda2810@yahoo.com

Adisa Teo
Prince of Songkla University
adisa.s@psu.ac.th

Abstract

This study examines teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses in Islamic private schools in five southern border provinces of Thailand, namely Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, Songkhla, and Satun. Three sources of culture—Source Culture including Thai and Thai Melayu Culture, Target Culture, and International Culture, along with three cultural dimensions—products, practices, and perspectives, were analyzed. Teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content were investigated by means of questionnaire administration and semi-structured interviews. The participants of the questionnaire administration were 314 teachers of English in 155 Islamic private schools. Among 314 teachers, 33 from 16 schools participated in the semi-structured interviews. The results of this study show that the teachers perceived that they should teach, and they were confident to teach all sources of culture and in every dimension. There was a weak positive relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses in Islamic private schools in five southern border provinces of Thailand at the significant level of 0.01. However, Thai Melayu cultural content seems to have the strongest relationship among all cultural sources.

Keywords: language and culture, English courses, English as an international language, cultural content, teacher perceptions, teacher confidence, Islamic private schools

Introduction

Language and culture are related. When the definition of culture is considered, language is a part of culture and it reflects culture (Peterson and Coltrane 2003). In communication, language is the tool not only to exchange information, but also to convey culture. That is to say, one way to pass on and exchange thoughts, ideas, customs, traditions, literature, etc. is through language; therefore, it is impractical to separate cultural learning from language learning (Byram 1988; Jin and Cortazzi, 2002; Kramsch, 1993; Laopongharn and Sercombe, 2009; Moran 2001; Peterson and Coltrane, 2003). In language classroom, language is used by speakers and writers to express thoughts, and it is used by listeners or readers to make inference about the writers/speakers' ideas (Sheets, 2005). Sárdi (2002) believed that without cultural teaching in a language classroom, learners will have an empty frame of language. In addition, cultural teaching is "a 'pedagogical device' that draws students' interest, contextualizes language learning and fills in the lessons" (Byram, Esarte-Sarries, Taylor, and Allatt, 1991). Therefore, language and culture are undoubtedly



inseparable; moreover, it is fruitful to include cultural features along with linguistic features in English language courses.

English is currently served as an international language. English language learners are likely to use the language with people from various language and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, teachers of English should not teach only the English language, but they should include information of a wide variety of cultures, meaning not only culture of the native English speakers, in their English classes in order to prepare their students for proper use of the English language in intercultural communication which can take place for many reasons, such as tourism, business, study, and migration (Morgan, 2002). Therefore, one of the cultural goals in English language teaching is to enable students to interact with people from other cultures appropriately, or to have so-called ‘intercultural competence’ (Byram, 1997).

Intercultural competence helps language learners exchange information successfully depending on the ability to decentre and take up the interlocutor’s perspectives, and the ability to establish and maintain relationships with the interlocutor (Byram, 1997). For that reason, language teachers should not teach only cultural content for students to understand and produce language structures, but also to promote their ability to use the language with people from different cultures appropriately.

To achieve the goal of equipping students with intercultural competence, Edelhoff (1987 cited in Sercu, 2002) presented teacher qualifications for intercultural foreign language teaching which include *attitudes*, *knowledge*, and *skills*. The first qualification is *attitudes*. To train students to have intercultural competence, teachers should be international learners themselves as they should consider how others see them and be curious about themselves and others. Teachers should be prepared to share meanings, experience, and effects with people from different cultures, and negotiate for cross-cultural understanding. They should be active for international understanding and peacemaking, and for adopting the role of social and intercultural interpreter. The second qualification is *knowledge*. Teachers should have and seek knowledge of cultural environment and background of the target language communities, students’ own communities, and how others see students’ communities. Apart from cultures of target languages and students’ cultures, in terms of EIL teaching, teachers should have and seek knowledge of a wide variety of cultural communities as well. Teachers should also be active to apply, interpret, and make cultural learning accessible. They should know how the language works and is used for understanding in different situations so that misunderstanding can be avoided. The last qualification is *skills*. Teachers should have and develop further appropriate communication skills for cultural negotiation when encountering authentic sources in media, and authentic interaction. Additionally, teachers should be able to relate students’ experience to their students’ unfamiliarity with ideas, things, and objects outside their direct reach and create cultural learning environment where cultural negotiation and experiment take place.

To summarize, teaching English as an international language is teaching the English language side by side with the International Culture in order to prepare students for the use of English in intercultural encounters. Teachers of English should teach as many varieties of cultures in different cultural dimensions: cultural products, practices, and perspectives, as possible, especially cultures of those whom students are most likely to encounter in their own surroundings (Crystal, 2003). In the case of Thailand, the cultures of ASEAN nations should be firstly taught. However, students’ own culture should never be neglected, as Byram (1988) and Kramsch (1993) agreed that intercultural competence can be developed through de-centering from students’ own culture. This means that after one’s identity is established,

his/her ability to negotiate for meanings across cultural boundaries is generated which eventually creates intercultural competence.

Moran (2001) proposed his view on three dimensions of culture: *products, practices, and perspectives*. Cultural products are what a society creates such as music, literature, housing, tales, arts, and rituals. Cultural practices refer to cultural content dealing with patterns of behaviors—what, where, when, and how to perform specific tasks—of people in a society. Cultural perspectives include cultural content concerning ideas, values, attitudes, meanings which explain why a society performs its practices and creates its products.

Meanwhile, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) also presented their view on sources of cultural content in language teaching: Source, Target, and International Culture. Source Culture refers to the learners' culture; Target Culture is the culture of the English speaking countries; and International Culture embraces a variety of cultures of non-English-speaking countries all over the world.

Regarding Islamic private schools, this kind of school is prevalent in southern border provinces of Thailand. All students are Muslims. The schools offer both general and religious educations. Classes are divided into two sessions: the religious subject session (e.g. Islamic history, Al-Quran, Arabic, Melayu), and the general subject session (e.g. science, Thai, English, mathematics, social studies). Since the religious education constitutes half of the whole educational system, students in Islamic private schools may be tightened with their own social and religious cultural identities. Thus, the integration of cultural differences in English classes may be seen as a harmful approach in such schools and can be a threat to learners' own cultural identity and eventually be disregarded as commented by Cortazzi and Jin (1999). Therefore, the researcher is interested in the study of teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in Islamic private schools.

Some researchers studied teachers' perspectives on teaching cultural content. For example, Jahan and Roger (2006) investigated teachers of English's perspectives on target culture—the culture of countries where English is spoken as the first language—associated with English as a foreign language. The subjects are language teachers from five different countries: Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Mauritius, and South Korea, who had themselves learned English as a second or foreign language. A focus group discussion was held to generate a comprehensive set of data on three issues which are ownership of the English language, degree of cultural acceptance, and native and non-native models of English. The finding showed sharp distinctions between the view of participants from Outer Circle countries and Expanding Circle countries.

In consideration of ownership of the English language, teachers from Kenya and Mauritius, representing the Outer Circle countries, revealed that they use the English language as a tool to convey their own culture. In contrast, teachers from Expanding Circle countries: Japan, Korea, and Indonesia, suggested that world Englishes perspectives are only just beginning to enter the popular discourse in these societies. In terms of cultural acceptance, consequently, English language is viewed as a culturally biased language for participants from Korea and Indonesia, while it is seen as a culturally neutral language for participants from Kenya and Mauritius. Moreover, native models of English are not prioritized in Kenya and Mauritius, but in Korea and Indonesia, native models are more greatly accepted than non-native models. Therefore, it is interesting to note that Target Culture and Source Culture are effectively balanced in English language teaching and learning in Kenya and Mauritius, while in the countries in the Expanding Circle they are not.

In Indonesia, Zacharias (2003) studied tertiary teachers' beliefs about English language teaching in Indonesia with regard to the role of English as a global language by



using three instruments: questionnaire, classroom observation, and interview. The findings show that in Indonesia, English is an instrumental reason for better employment and higher social status. Regarding the issue of teaching materials, many respondents favor material from the English-speaking countries for the reasons that it is more readily available and more accurate, while not many of them have tried out locally produced materials. When asked to compare their preference for native and non-native English teachers, they answer differently depending on the language skills considered. For pronunciation and speaking, native English speakers are more preferred than Indonesian teachers. However, most teachers agree that the use of their first language—*bahasa Indonesia*—is beneficial, while many of them find it difficult to draw a line between the use and the abuse of their mother tongue for, they sometimes feel that students should be more exposed to the English language. Many of them, consequently, argue that integrating source culture in English language teaching is useful, and the target culture which is primarily taught can be included in the classroom but students should not practice such culture.

Purposes of the Study

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are teacher perceptions of teaching cultural content in English courses?
2. To what extent are the teachers confident in teaching cultural content in English courses?
3. Is there a relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses?

Methodology

Subjects

Among 695 teacher populations from 172 Islamic private schools in five southern border provinces of Thailand, 314 teachers teaching English in 155 Islamic private schools were randomly selected with balanced proportion of school sizes—extra large, large, medium and small, and school locations—town and suburb. In addition, 33 out of these 314 teachers teaching in 16 schools were purposively selected to participate in the semi-structured interviews according to the schools' safety and accessibility.

Data Collection

To collect data, Moran's (2001) view on dimensions of culture and Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) view on sources of cultural content were adapted. Specifically, this study explores teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in three dimensions of culture: products—what a society creates, practices—patterns of behaviors, and perspectives—ideas, values, attitudes and meaning which explain why a society performs its practices and creates its products (Moran, 2001). Moreover, this study adapted Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) sources of cultural content in language teaching: Source, Target and International Culture. In this study, Source Culture—learners' culture—consists of two types of culture. They are Thai and Thai Melayu Cultures. To elaborate, according to Ding and Teo (2013), Thai Culture is the culture of Thai people based on the belief in Buddhism claimed as the national religion. Thai Melayu Culture is the culture of Thai people believing in Islam and

living in the southern part of Thailand. Target Culture is the culture of the English-speaking countries, and International Culture is the cultures of non-English speaking countries excluding Thailand.

Data of this study were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire items in the form of four-point Likert Scale probed teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses in Islamic private schools in general, as well as their perceptions of and confidence in teaching culture from all cultural sources—Source Culture including Thai and Thai Melayu Culture, Target Culture and International Culture, and in three cultural dimensions—products, practices and perspectives. The semi-structured interview questions were constructed to elicit more information concerning teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses, their integration of cultural content in English courses, and motivators and barriers influencing their perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using a series of descriptive statistics. The data recorded in the semi-structured interviews were transcribed and used to support and explain findings from the questionnaire. To analyze the relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content, Pearson's Correlations were computed. To analyze the strength of the relationship, Hinkle, Wiersma and Jurs' (2003) Rule of Thumb for Interpreting the Size of a Correlation Coefficient was adopted.

Findings and Discussion

1. Teacher Perceptions of Teaching Cultural Content in English Courses

It was found that as a whole, the teachers agreed that they should teach cultural content from all sources. The mean values of teacher perceptions of teaching cultural content from each cultural source and in each cultural dimension are shown in Table 1 side by side with the rankings.

Table 1: Teacher Perceptions of Teaching Cultural Content in English Courses

Sources	Dimensions	Perceptions				
		\bar{x}	S.D.	Meaning	Rank: dimension	Rank: source
Source Culture	Thai Culture	Products	3.25	0.57	Agree	1
		Practices	3.24	0.60	Agree	2
		Perspectives	2.65	0.87	Agree	3
		Average	3.05	0.68	Agree	
	Thai Melayu Culture	Products	2.88	0.87	Agree	3
		Practices	3.28	0.60	Strongly agree	2
		Perspectives	3.31	0.56	Strongly agree	1
		Average	3.16	0.68	Agree	



Target Culture	Products	2.75	0.85	Agree	3	2
	Practices	3.13	0.57	Agree	2	
	Perspectives	3.26	0.59	Strongly agree	1	
	Average	3.05	0.67	Agree		
International Culture	Products	2.98	0.59	Agree	2	3
	Practices	2.69	0.73	Agree	3	
	Perspectives	3.03	0.56	Agree	1	
	Average	2.90	0.63	Agree		

Table 1 shows that the teachers strongly agreed that they should teach Thai Melayu cultural practices and perspectives along with perspectives of Target Culture, while they agreed that they should teach all cultural dimensions of Thai and International Culture, Thai Melayu cultural products, and cultural products and practices of Target Culture.

Within the same range, the mean value of teacher perceptions of teaching Thai Melayu Cultural perspectives ($\bar{x} = 3.31$) was the highest. The teachers reported in the semi-structured interviews that they integrated Thai Melayu cultural perspectives into their English classes because they is the basis of their students' lives. In addition, the teachers talked about Thai Melayu cultural products and practices because their students were familiar with the content and they could utilize the content to compare it with cultural content of Target and International Culture, and to encourage their students to talk about it in English.

Overall, the findings regarding the teachers' favorable perceptions of teaching all dimensions of cultural contents from all sources and their most favorable perceptions of teaching cultural content from their own culture as presented in Table 1 show that the teachers' belief about English teaching is in line with the current role of English as an international language. In teaching English as an international language, students' own culture should be highly appreciated (Jin and Cortazzi, 2002; Kramsch, 1993; McKay, 2002; Peterson and Coltrane, 2003; Shibata, 1998 cited in Sadtono, 2000; Strevens, 1980). In response to Kramsch and Sullivan's (1996 cited in McKay, 2003) proposed language pedagogy in this new era as "global thinking, local teaching" (p.200), students should be taught to communicate their own culture to others (Bouzenita, 2008; Smith, 1976), and to understand cultures of others through the others' eyes and the students' own sight (Kramsch, 1993). It is obvious that to introduce other cultures to students, it is useful to include the students' own culture to the lesson as it aids them to make a link between cultural content in textbooks and their own culture—the schema, so that they can expand their understanding of their own culture along with the new cultures (Byram, 1997; Laopongharn and Sercombe, 2009; McKay, 2000).

It is, however, interesting to point out that the average mean values of teaching Thai Culture and Target Culture ($\bar{x} = 3.05$ each) showing that they agree to teach culture from both sources at the second place and International Culture ($\bar{x} = 2.90$) at the third place. They might be influenced by the national curriculum, which focuses on students' competence in Target and Thai Culture (Ministry of Education, 2008), and by the commercial textbooks used in their English courses. These commercial textbooks usually draw heavily on Target Culture.

In details, based on the result of semi-structured interviews, Thai cultural products and practices were included in their English courses so as to compare such content with Target and International Culture, while Thai cultural perspectives were discussed to build up students' cross-cultural understanding. Similarly, the teachers taught cultural perspectives of Target culture for cross-cultural understanding and for giving the underpinning information to

understand cultural information about products and practices of Target Culture. Moreover, cultural practices of Target Culture were taught in their English courses because they expect their students to use the English language with native English speakers appropriately.

Within the similar range, the average mean value of teacher perceptions of teaching International Culture ($\bar{x} = 2.90$) was the lowest. This shows that, among all cultural sources, the teachers paid the least attention to the International Culture reflecting their belief that English is learnt as a foreign language and students tend to use the language with merely English native speakers. The teachers expressed in the semi-structured interviews that they would like to teach International Culture which is of students' interest and benefits. They taught about products and practices of International Culture because of the occurrence of such cultural content in textbooks, and their own interest and experience in International Culture. Among many different countries belonging to International Culture, they did prioritize cultures of ASEAN nation. Such finding indicates that the teachers were aware of the current regional change and the increased use of English as an international language.

Focusing merely on teacher perceptions of teaching cultural content in each dimension, the means of teacher perceptions, according to Table 1, of teaching cultural perspectives was most of the time higher than other cultural dimensions. This is probably because cultural perspective is the only dimension that underlies the other two cultural dimensions—cultural products, and cultural practices. For that reason, to integrate cultural perspectives is to provide students with foundation of cultural information which can be expanded to other cultural topics in the future.

2. Teacher Confidence in Teaching Cultural Content in English Courses

As shown in Table 2, it was found that the teachers agreed that they can teach cultural content from each cultural source and in each cultural dimension—namely, Thai cultural products, practices and perspectives, Thai Melayu cultural products, practices and perspectives, cultural products, practices and perspectives of Target Culture, and cultural products, practices and perspectives of International Culture.

Table 2: Teacher Confidence in Teaching Cultural Content in English Courses

Sources		Dimensions	Confidence				
			\bar{x}	S.D.	Meaning	Rank: dimension	Rank: source
Source Culture	Thai Culture	Products	3.06	0.46	Agree	1	2
		Practices	3.03	0.50	Agree	2	
		Perspectives	3.06	0.53	Agree	1	
		Average	3.05	0.50	Agree		
	Thai Melayu Culture	Products	3.17	0.52	Agree	1	1
		Practices	3.17	0.55	Agree	1	
		Perspectives	3.12	0.55	Agree	2	
		Average	3.15	0.54	Agree		
Target Culture	Products	3.04	0.56	Agree	2	3	
	Practices	3.07	0.52	Agree	1		
	Perspectives	2.99	0.57	Agree	3		
	Average	3.03	0.55	Agree			
International Culture	Products	3.01	0.59	Agree	1	4	
	Practices	2.96	0.60	Agree	2		
	Perspectives	2.95	0.61	Agree	3		
	Average	2.97	0.60	Agree			



The teachers, belonging to Thai Melayu Culture, were very confident to teach cultural products of Thai Melayu Culture. As presented in the semi-structured interviews, they perceived they can teach cultural perspectives of Thai Melayu Culture because it roots from Islamic teaching with which they were educated. A number of teachers perceived that they can teach Thai Melayu Culture because it is based on Islamic culture, which is their own culture. Consequently, it is the source of culture that they were most knowledgeable in.

Since Thai Melayu Culture is embedded in Thai Culture, the teachers claimed that they were confident to talk about Thai cultural products and practices in their English courses. The teachers became confident to talk about Thai cultural products because they and their students partly belong to Thai Culture and most Thai cultural products are the objects that they experience in their daily lives both directly and indirectly.

In terms of Target Culture, many teachers claimed during the semi-structured interviews that they felt competent in teaching Target Culture in general because there were sufficient media for them to learn the culture. They also appreciated their experience of majoring in English, and exposure to English native speakers which allow them to gain knowledge of the Target Culture. Regarding International Culture, the teachers viewed themselves as capable of teaching International Culture in general because they had gained information about International Culture, especially in cultural practices dimension, from different sources, such as books and documentaries.

Within the same range of mean values, the findings show that the teachers were confident to teach Thai Melayu, Thai, Target, and International Culture respectively. The teachers were ready to teach Thai Melayu Culture the most because they belong to the culture and they were most conversant in it. This is congruent with Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) view that teachers will be most confident about the cultures of which they have background knowledge. Such reason probably explains the finding that the teachers are secondly confident to teach Thai Culture.

The mean value of teacher confidence in teaching Target Culture is higher than that of the International Culture because almost every teacher got a degree in English. They might be exposed to information about Target Culture rather than International Culture when they were students. In addition, the scope of Target Culture and International Culture seemed too much different. That is because Target Culture includes cultures of a few countries while International Culture means cultures of many different countries in the world. Moreover, it is much easier for the teachers to access to information of Target Culture when compared with International Culture; for example, textbooks mostly contain Target Culture (Charise, 2007; Jahan and Roger, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Martin and Kamsiah, 2003), and media coverage of Target Culture is prevalent in Thailand. In this study, the teachers also mentioned that they usually compare Target Culture with Thai Melayu Culture to raise students' awareness of their identity and to have a clearer picture of new cultural information. This is in line with the new notion of teaching English as an international language in which it is imperative for language learners to understand the Target Culture in order to organize and reorganize language learners' own identity, and to relate the identity to the social world (Passrson, 1977 cited in Norton, 2000).

When teacher confidence in teaching cultural content in three different cultural dimensions was concerned, findings in Table 2 show that the teachers were most confident to teach cultural products followed by cultural practices. This is obvious because cultural products and practices are more concrete than cultural perspectives and they create a much clearer picture of a culture which is different from students' own culture. For this reason, it is easier for the teachers to address cultural products and practices in class. Nonetheless, it

should be noted that the teachers mostly showed the highest extent of confidence in teaching cultural products because, when compared with cultural practices, cultural products require less detail to talk about. It needs less time and material to make sure that students understand a cultural product than a cultural practice.

When the relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in Islamic private schools in five southern border provinces of Thailand was concerned, teacher perceptions of teaching cultural content from each source and in each dimension was shown positive. They agreed to teach cultural content from each source and in each dimension, especially perspectives and practices of Thai Melayu Culture, and perspectives of Target Culture. When teacher perceptions of teaching cultural content from each source was rank ordered, it was found that teachers perceived Thai Melayu Culture as the first culture to teach in English courses, followed by Thai and Target Culture, and International Culture respectively. In terms of cultural dimension, cultural perspectives were perceived by the teachers as the most important cultural dimension to teach in their English courses, and cultural products as the least important cultural dimension.

When teacher confidence in teaching cultural content from each source and in each dimension was concerned, teachers positively showed their confidence in the same extent. However, teachers were most confident to teach Thai Melayu Culture, along with Thai, Target, and International Culture respectively. In terms of cultural dimension, the teachers were most confident to teach cultural products and practices in their English courses.

3. The Relationship between Teacher Perceptions of and Confidence in Teaching Cultural Content in English Courses

Table 3 shows that overall in terms of cultural sources; there was a weak positive relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses. Such relationship is significant at the 0.01 level.

In details, when cultural dimensions are considered, it was found that there was a little positive relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching Thai and Thai Melayu cultural products as well as practices and perspectives of Target Culture at the significant level of 0.01. In addition, there was a weak positive relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching practices of Thai Culture, practices and perspectives of Thai Melayu Culture, as well as products and perspectives of International Culture at the significant level of 0.01.

Although the relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses in this study is not strong, it is worth pointing out that overall such relationship in teaching Thai Melayu cultural content tends to be the strongest among all cultural sources. ‘Sense of belonging’ or the feeling of being a member of a society (Bonnie, Judith, Katheleen, Maria, and Peggy, 1992) might be the key word to explain this finding. The teachers are from Thai Melayu Culture. They are knowledgeable in it. This explains the relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses found in the study. In addition, the students also belong to Thai Melayu Culture. Therefore, it is very practical to address and build on Thai Melayu Culture in English courses in the context of southern border provinces of Thailand where the majority of people belong to Thai Melayu Culture. Furthermore, according to the interviews, the teachers would like to pass on local wisdom and beliefs to their students so that they, the students, appreciate their own identity.

**Table 3: Correlations between Teacher Perceptions of and Confidence in Teaching Cultural Content in English Courses**

Perceptions \ Confidence			Source Culture																
			Thai Culture				Thai Melayu Culture												
			PD	PT	PS	Total	PD	PT	PS	Total	PD	PT	PS	Total	PD	PT	PS	Total	
Source Culture	Thai Culture	PD	.26*																
		PT		.34*															
		PS			-.08														
		Total				.30*													
	Thai Melayu Culture	PD					.18*												
		PT						.33*											
		PS							.36*										
		Total								.45**									
Target Culture			PD								-.09								
			PT										.27*						
			PS											.28*					
			Total												.35*				
International Culture			PD												.30*				
			PT														-.06		
			PS															.30*	
			Total																.30**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Note: PD = cultural products, PT = cultural practices, PS = cultural perspective

Conclusions and Implications

Teacher perceptions of teaching cultural content from each source and in each dimension were shown positive. They agreed to teach cultural content from each source and in each dimension, especially perspectives and practices of Thai Melayu Culture, and perspectives of Target Culture. When teacher perceptions of teaching cultural content from each source was rank ordered, it was found that, within the same range, the teachers perceived Thai Melayu Culture as the first culture to teach in English courses, followed by Thai and Target Culture as the second culture, and International Culture as the last culture to teach in their English courses. In terms of cultural dimension, cultural perspectives were perceived by the teachers as the most important cultural dimension to teach in their English courses, and cultural products as the least important cultural dimension.

When teacher confidence in teaching cultural content from each source and in each dimension was concerned, the teachers positively showed their confidence in the same extent. However, they were most confident to teach Thai Melayu Culture, along with Thai, Target, and International Culture respectively. In terms of cultural dimensions, the teachers were most confident to teach cultural products and practices in their English courses.

The relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching cultural content in English courses was mostly weak, but positive. However, the relationship between teacher perceptions of and confidence in teaching Thai Melayu cultural content is the strongest among all cultural sources.

The results of this study show that International Culture was considered by the teachers as, within the same range, the least important cultural content to teach in their English courses and they felt least confident to teach it when compared with other cultural sources. From the perspective of teaching English as an international language, the teachers should be made aware of the importance of including International Culture in English language pedagogy in this new era. There should be cultural learning experiences provided for teachers, such as seminars on cultural knowledge, intercultural communicative competence, teaching approaches for cross-cultural understanding, and cultural exchange programs which can be held both in Thailand and abroad. Definitely, financial supports are highly needed to accomplish the activities.

Then, which cultural dimension should be highlighted first? This study found that cultural perspectives was perceived as the first cultural dimension to teach in English courses, but the teachers had least confidence to talk about it due to their lack of cultural information and resources. Therefore, teachers should be offered the activities mentioned above to learn a wide variety of cultures concentrating on cultural perspectives.

To build our young generation for cross-cultural understanding, the notion of teaching English as an international language should be highly considered. No doubt, teachers of English play a great role to achieve it. Therefore, it is necessary to put the greatest effort to boost their ability to teach English as an international language.



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