Developing Intercultural Awareness through Paintings and Films in an Expanding Circle Classroom Setting

Lugsamee Nuamthanom Kimura and Narat Kanprachar

Abstract

Modern language education in Southeast Asia using an Expanding Circle pedagogy has seen a swing of the pendulum from achieving a native-level competence in the target language to following the norms of 'intercultural speakers' (Kramsch, 1993). As Byram (2006) adds, these speakers maintain intercultural competences which encourage them to interpret their own cultural values, beliefs and behaviours, as well as those of others. To acquire these competences, language learners need to develop intercultural awareness as a primary step. Such awareness has received less than adequate attention in Thailand to date. In this academic article, attempts are made to demonstrate how students' intercultural awareness can be strengthened through a painting and film project, using Gee's (2011, 2014) model of discourse analysis. Readers can observe attainable positive outcomes in which learners show signs of developing intercultural awareness, which serves as a solid foundation for competent intercultural communicators, who will be able to interact effectively and appropriately in another culture.

Key words: Expanding Circle, intercultural awareness, discourse analysis

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาภาษาวิถีใหม่ในวงล้อภาษารอบนอก (Expanding circle) ของกลุ่มประเทศเอเชียตะวันออกเฉียงใต้ได้เห็นการเปลี่ยนแปลง จากความพยายามบรรลุจุดประสงค์ในการมีความสามารถทางภาษาของผู้เรียนเทียบเท่าเจ้าของภาษา สู่การปฏิบัติ

ตามมาตรฐานของกลุ่มผู้สื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม (แครมช, 1993) ดังที่ไบแรม (2006) ได้กล่าวเพิ่มเติมเอาไว้ ผู้สื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม เหล่านี้ รักษาไว้ซึ่งความสามารถข้ามวัฒนธรรมที่ช่วยให้พวกเขาสามารถตีความ พฤติกรรม ความเชื่อ และคุณค่าทางวัฒนธรรมของ ตนเองและผู้อื่นได้ เพื่อที่จะมีความสามารถดังกล่าว ผู้เรียนภาษาจำเป็นต้องพัฒนาความตระหนักรู้ข้ามวัฒนธรรม (intercultural awareness) เป็นลำดับแรก ความตระหนักรู้นี้ได้รับความสนใจไม่เพียงพอในประเทศไทย ดังนั้นบทความ<u>วิชาการ</u>ฉบับนี้จึงมีความ พยายามนำเสนอวิธีพัฒนาความตระหนักรู้ข้ามวัฒนธรรมผ่านโครงงานภาพวาดและภาพยนตร์ โดยอิงวิธีวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมของจี (2011 2014) ผู้อ่านบทความจะสามารถสังเกตุเห็นผลลัพธ์เชิงบวกโดยผู้เรียนแสดงให้เห็นสัญญาณการพัฒนาความตระหนักรู้ข้าม วัฒนธรรม ซึ่งเป็นพื้นฐานสำคัญสำหรับผู้สื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมที่มีความสามารถ ในการมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ในวัฒนธรรมอื่นอย่างมี ประสิทธิภาพและเหมาะสม

คำสำคัญ วงล้อภาษารอบนอก   ความตระหนักรู้ข้ามวัฒนธรรม   วิเคราะห์วาทกรรม

Introduction

English is used as a medium of communication by billions of people around the world. It may be categorized in three different contexts: an Inner Circle in which English is spoken as a native language (ENL), in countries such as the UK and the USA, an Outer Circle in which English is spoken as a second language (ESL), in former UK and US colonies such as Singapore and the Philippines, and an Expanding Circle in which English is considered to be a foreign language (EFL), as in China and Thailand, where it is learned at school but is not spoken in everyday life (Kachru, 1991). Examining the number of people residing in these three circles, it is estimated that the number of EFL speakers outnumbers both ENL and ESL speakers. According to Guerra (2009), there are approximately 320 to 380 million ENL speakers, and 150-375 million ESL speakers, while there are around 100 to 1,000 million EFL speakers (p.30). These numbers demonstrate that there is a large number of non-native speakers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds who use English as a lingua franca or as a medium for intercultural communication (Meierkord, cited in Dombi, 2011, p.184).

Given such vastly different backgrounds, it is not surprising that when EFL speakers communicate with each other in English not only linguistic but also cultural problems arise regularly during intercultural encounters. One of the reasons for this lies in the fact that EFL speakers may lack intercultural competence—a necessary skill that constitutes one's abilities to engage effectively in interpersonal interactions with those from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (UNESCO, 2013, p.5). This problem may become more evident in the very near future, especially among Asian countries, categorized in the Expanding Circle. This would include some which are moving toward establishing the ASEAN Economic Community by the end of 2015, such as Thailand, Myanmar, and Indonesia (Menon, 2014). To avoid these problems, it is thus necessary that EFL speakers be given more opportunity to acquire experience in any neglected cultural dimensions. Progress in improving these abilities promises more success in reducing conflicts or misunderstanding during intercultural encounters. In any classroom setting, for example, this may at the outset help enable EFL speakers to develop their intercultural awareness. In this initial stage, intercultural competence is strengthened by creating a multicultural classroom atmosphere in which the language, cultural identities, beliefs, and values of the countries involved are highlighted through an analysis of works of art, films, and the like.

This paper thus reports on a classroom experience which aims to elaborate on the idea of promoting intercultural awareness in an EFL environment, focusing on the introduction of paintings and films to a college-level classroom in Thailand. The paper first explains the term intercultural awareness. Then, it examines previous research on attempts to foster the development of intercultural awareness and demonstrate how intercultural awareness can be potentially developed through paintings and films. The implementation in this part is based on Gee's (2011, 2014) model of discourse analysis. The final section of the paper highlights some student reactions and reflections on classroom activities, as well as a discussion of some pedagogical implications, especially for the Expanding Circle teaching context. This work may lead to significant benefits regarding the initiative for ASEAN integration in the Southeast Asian region.

Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural communication occurs when people from different cultures come into contact with each other through verbal or nonverbal means (Jandt 2013; Neuliep, 2012; Watson, 2013). This is, for example, when a Thai student interacts with his Indonesian classmates, or when a Filipina teacher communicates with her Thai students. The basis for effective intercultural communication involves intercultural competence, which is predicated on the acquisition of a certain level of intercultural awareness. Intercultural competence is the interactants' ability to reach out to one another appropriately and succeed in maintaining mutual conformity (Fantini, 2000). It consists of five dimensions: awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and a proficiency of another culture (Fantini, 2000, p.28). Among these elements, "…awareness has also become increasingly recognized as another essential component of intercultural competence development" (Fantini, 2000, p. 28). Intercultural awareness is defined by Baker (2012a) as follows,

> Intercultural awareness is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices, and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication (p. 66).

In essence, intercultural awareness refers to one's ability to comprehend the basic aspects of one's own culture in conjunction with an understanding of another culture (Zhu, 2011; Kourova & Modianos, 2013). It encompasses twelve components, which can be divided into three levels (Baker, 2012a, p. 66), as seen below.

Level 1: basic cultural awareness

An awareness of:

1. Culture as a set of shared behaviours, beliefs, and values;
2. the role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning;
3. our own culturally induced behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to articulate this;
4. others' culturally induced behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to compare this with our own culturally induced behavior, values, and beliefs.

Level 2: advanced cultural awareness

An awareness of:

5. The relative nature of cultural norms;
6. cultural understanding as provisional and open to revision;
7. multiple voices or perspectives within any cultural grouping;
8. individuals as members of many social groupings including cultural ones;
9. common ground between specific cultures as well as awareness of possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between specific cultures.

Level 3: intercultural awareness

An awareness of:

10. culturally based frames of reference, forms, and communicative practices as being related both to specific cultures and also as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication;
11. initial interaction in intercultural communication as possibly based on cultural stereotypes or generalizations but an ability to move beyond these, through;
12. a capacity to negotiate and meditate between different emergent socio-culturally grounded communication modes and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication.

When interactants from different cultures come into contact with one another, as in the two cases mentioned earlier—a Thai student and his Indonesian classmates, and a Filipina teacher and her Thai students—they use their own understanding, experiences, beliefs, and values to understand and interpret another culture. However, "…cultural differences can cause conflict..." (Martin & Nakayama, 2013, p. 436). This conflict may easily lead to misunderstanding or communication breakdowns during intercultural exchanges, which may originate from one of the six barriers acknowledged by LaRay M. Barna (1997, as cited in Jandt, 2013, pp. 81-163): anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretations, and language. To avoid cultural conflict stemming from these barriers, it is necessary that the interactants' initial sense of intercultural awareness be heightened and developed.

In this respect, several attempts have been made in the Outer Circle and Expanding Circle classrooms during the past decades to enhance the students' intercultural experiences. This consists of a pathway geared towards developing their intercultural awareness through processes that give students opportunities for self-exploration, to experience other cultures, and to reflect and comment on their experiences. For example, Gerritsen and Verckens (2006) used an e-mail project to develop intercultural awareness among Dutch and Flemish students. McConachy (2008) conducted a qualitative study that covered a 100-minute period to investigate Japanese students' understanding of interactional norms in textbook dialogues of native English speakers in their workplace on a Monday morning. Subramaniam et al. (2009) investigated the development of intercultural awareness among Malaysian kindergarteners by using English picture books. Andenoro et al. (2012) used storytelling and narrative to help develop students' self-awareness in order to improve intercultural competence. Rodriguez and Puyal (2012) examined whether intercultural competence can be fostered through the use of literary texts within a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) context. Also, Kourova and Modianos (2013) used the Connecting Classroom Project to improve students' communication skills, raise students' pride in their cultural identities, and build up students' intercultural awareness.

There is considerable similarity among the results of these studies that indicate students' intercultural awareness can be developed when intercultural experiences are introduced systematically. As the students take advantage of opportunities to delve into cultures from different angles, they are able to understand themselves better, cultivate relationships with others, while developing more positive attitudes towards other cultures (Andenoro et al., 2012, p. 105; Kourova & Modianos, 2013; Subramaniam et al., 2009). Moreover, students become aware of certain complexities within cultures: for example, that "individual variation exists in cultures, …that culture can change, …and that countries and regions that have the same mother tongue…need not necessarily share the same cultural background" (Gerritsen & Verckens, 2006, p.56).

While intercultural competence is needed during intercultural encounters, and intercultural awareness is a gateway to achieve this goal, there is little doubt not enough attention has been paid to the issue of intercultural awareness in the classroom context, especially in Thailand. More specifically, much class time here is spent dealing primarily with the students' linguistic problems, and there is a noticeable lack of exploration and examination of the cultural dimension—the key element which leads to success in intercultural encounters. The following section will deal with this issue in more detail. It will illustrate how to introduce the exploration of the target cultures to the classroom setting. In this respect, paintings and films will be employed, and an investigation through Gee's (2011, 2014) model of discourse analysis will show the linguistic and cultural balance that helps promote intercultural awareness.

The Theoretical Ground of Intercultural Discourse as a Gateway to Intercultural Awareness

To help students develop intercultural awareness (Baker, 2012a), Gee's (2011, 2014) model of discourse analysis has been adopted for an investigation of paintings (a text-a static or moving image) and films (a multi-model text-a combination of text, sound and verbal message). Attempts to bridge the two disciplines − Discourse Analysis and

Intercultural Communication – underscore the necessity to make language teaching and learning culturally relevant. It is particularly important for both teachers and students to realize that (1) cultural and linguistic backgrounds can deeply impact their experiences in the classroom and that (2) while having emotional responses when learning through paintings or films, students are offered non-verbal and verbal methods of communication and understanding and platforms to communicate ideas about themselves and others. Paintings and films which best mirror our society are selected to provide a window of opportunity to see ourselves and others from new perspectives. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to see how human beings integrate language with non-language such as valuing, believing, or using symbols to realize various identities and activities (Gee, 1999). As Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2010) point out, "art, be it painting or sculpture, in addition to being a creative expression of beauty, is also a method of passing on the culture" (p. 33). In a similar vein, the same group of scholars adds that films are also a great source of culture since they present information and entertain viewers, while offering images and stories full of cultural life in which beliefs and values are illustrated. Through film a broader sense of identity can be shaped.

By exploring paintings and films, students will be able to move along an intercultural awareness continuum from a basic level to a more challenging stage. On the one hand, paintings are intended to help promote Baker's intercultural awareness at a basic level in which learners could become aware of (1) their own and others' culturally induced behaviors, values, and beliefs, and the ability to express them. Additionally, there are films better suited to an advanced stage where learners become aware of (2) different social or cultural groups to which a person may belong, common ground existing between specific cultures, and the possibility of mismatch or miscommunication between them. Not surprisingly, developing intercultural awareness is not an easy task and deserves a great deal of attention since intercultural communication is generally considered to exist in "third places" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 223), which are neither part of the users' native language nor a target language. In these circumstances, a systematic

approach should essentially be required to explore these "third places", in order to help transform them into a more familiar social and cultural environment.

With these requirements in mind, a systematic approach known as discourse analysis is applied to the study of Intercultural Communication to highlight a strongly unifying theme of both fields which states "all communication is constitutive of cultural categories" (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010, p 110). That is to say that when communicating, we are performing social actions which are integral to a variety of contexts, including historical and cultural ones. In this article, the term 'discourse' will be paired with the word 'mediated' to form 'mediated discourse,' which considers paintings and films as a kind of social action (Scollon, 2001), and thus the major questions posted here will be concerned with how the concepts of culture arise in the social actions conveyed by paintings and films and what their consequences could be. As Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003) emphasize, the unit of analysis for mediated discourse should concentrate more on people taking action in a particular and concrete task. Then the question becomes how this action has cultural resonance, or what the role of culture is in the action taken.

Paintings and Films: Fostering Classroom Experiences Full of Cultural Life

In order to help students explore the role of culture in today's social actions, paintings and films were inserted into a classroom project, known as the painting and film project. The project aims at raising two levels of students' intercultural awareness as previously stated. Incorporating both forms of communication is integral to one of the important premises: meaning is not only communicated through linguistic codes, but it is also recognized through non-linguistic or visual features. Moreover, the project itself is intended to articulate a frequently observed reality − that visual analysis, having been in the fields of Media and Cultural Studies for quite some time, tends to be overlooked in the area of language study. Until recently, linguists such as Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), Baldry and Thibault (2006), and Gee (2011, 2014) were developing their own models

which look at how language, image, and other modes of communication (e.g. toys, monuments, and films) combine to create meaning. It was decided that Gee (2011, 2014) will serve as the most suitable theoretical framework for students to analyze the paintings and film as the model represents one of the most recently refined and comprehensive works in the field.

Project objectives and requirements

The painting and film project was initiated as part of a variety of analysis assignments, which aimed at providing students with opportunities to explore and interpret their learning experiences to gain new understanding, a process also called reflection (Schon, 1983), in an elective course titled *Introduction to Discourse Analysis*. The course was offered in the 2nd semester of the academic year 2013 for 4th year English major students who had already completed different pre-requisite courses such as *Cross-cultural Communication*, *Report Writing*, and *Language Style and Communication*. To encourage reflective practice in this course, Thai university students and Cambodian students who were on short-term scholarships in Thailand were requested to analyze various discourse types while completing different reflective tasks (Muir and Beswick, 2007). These included a class discussion (throughout the course), an oral presentation (one for the painting, following the whole class discussion), and a written movie reflection (one for the film, following a small group discussion). Particularly, by analyzing paintings as part of visual discourse and film extracts as part of spoken discourse, students' reactions were prompted by being asked questions that sought reason and evidence. In so doing, the project was divided into two separated phases, the painting and the film respectively. It was designed to achieve two important objectives. Firstly, by comparing and contrasting paintings from Eastern and Western cultures, students would be able to make an oral presentation reflecting on how they formulated ideas relating to cultural dimensions originally developed by Hofstede (1991). This could later be linked to Baker's intercultural awareness development at a basic level. Secondly, watching the chosen film, *the Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, provided students with the

tools to write a movie reflection that would include cultural issues evident in the story. Achieving success in this exercise represented progress toward an advanced level.

Data sources

The two major sources of data came from images (both static and moving) and language (dialogues), which can be found in the paintings and film under investigation. Whereas the former is available in both channels of communication, the latter is only specific to the film.

Painting (text)

**Figure 1 The Great Wave (Hakusai, 1829-1832)**

By completing the first half of the project, students were requested to work in small groups to collect paintings found in both Eastern and Western societies. The illustrations that appear in Appendix 1 were drawn from the samples repeatedly chosen by students of different groups. For example, readers exhibited an appreciation of the world's most famous masterpiece, the Mona Lisa, by the great Italian painter Leonardo da Vinci. The other paining attracting the most attention was the Great Wave off Kanagawa (Fig. 1), the work of Katsushika Hokusai. It is one of the best recognized works of Japanese art in the world. To obtain the painting collections, students were initially instructed to look for paintings well-known to a majority of people from a variety of sources including books, magazines, and the internet. By following these guidelines, they should have been able to discuss the reasons why their selection was considered to be famous, at least among people of their age. The next step would be a search for any shared characteristics that could be discerned from the various selections. This exercise would illustrate aspects of Hofstede's value dimensions, including individualism/collectivism, low/high power distance, and masculinity/femininity.

Film (multi-model text)

To complete the second part of the project, students were required to work on the film *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, which was selected because it met the fundamental criterion of illustrating the difficulties that can arise from communication between and among cultures or co-cultures. In particular, the film describes the forbidden friendship between the son of a Nazi commandant and a Jewish concentration camp inmate. Besides being a story of the unlikeliest of friends and a child's innocence, the film shows the importance of breaking down the fences we put up around ourselves. As shown in Fig. 2 below, the film's major characters, Gretel (Bruno's sister), Bruno, and Shmuel are illustrated:
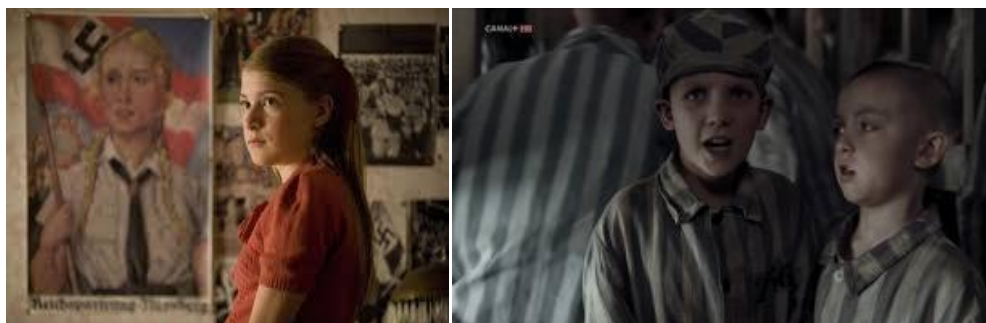
Figure 2. The three main characters of the film (The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, 2008)

Along with the pictures, an example of their dialogue is included (Fig. 3), to be analyzed for any emerging intercultural communication related issues:

Gretel: The Jew slandered us and incited our enemies// The Jew corrupted us
              through bad books// The eventual result of which was our nation's collapse//
Bruno: I don't understand/: a nation's collapse is only down to this one man?
Tutor: The Jew here means the entire Jewish race//

Figure 3 A sample of the film's dialogue

As an example, it is immediately clear in the conversation above that a number of statements are patently demeaning, based on stereotypes formed unfairly about Jews.

Examples include the 1st and 2nd statements by Gretel, who expressed well-known negative attitudes towards Jewish people. Also observed here is a coding system, following Gee (2014), which is used to break down each sentence into a smaller idea unit when "/" represents a non-final intonation contour (an utterance with only a small rise or fall) and "// or ?" signifies a final intonation contour (an utterance with a falling pitch glide). More detailed analysis of linguistic data as seen in Fig. 3 can be found in the next section.

Framework of analysis

Based largely upon Gee's (2011, 2014) framework, various steps in the field of visual and linguistic analysis were applied. The following diagram will summarize these points:
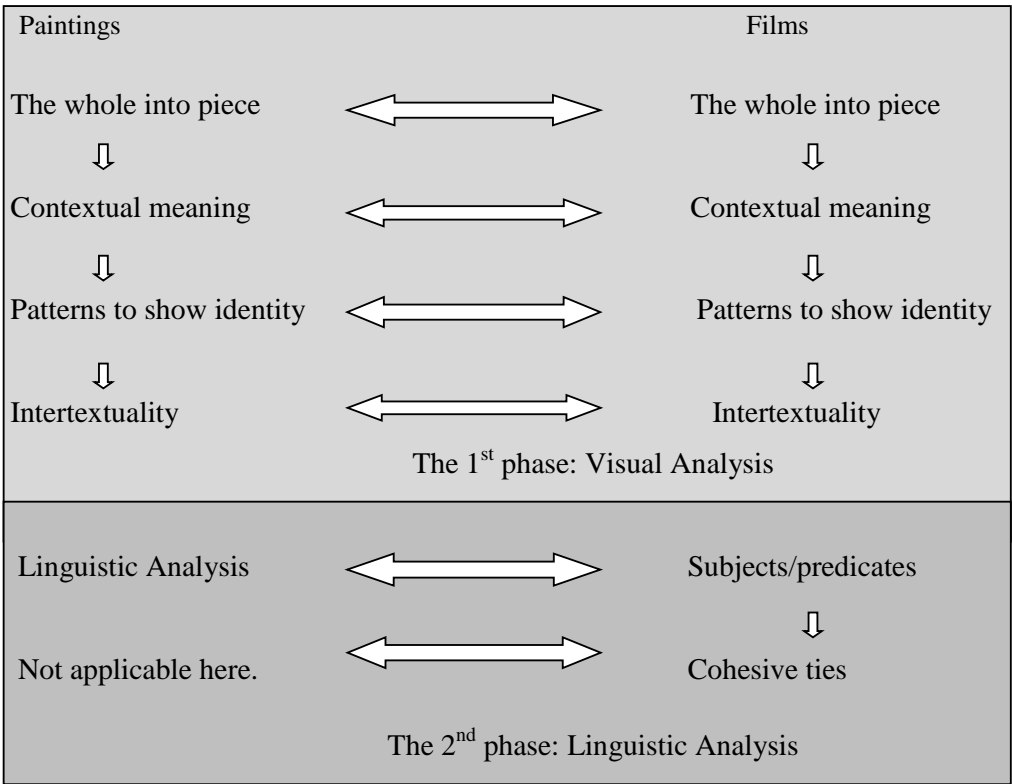
Figure 4 Important steps in the analysis of paintings and films

During the 1st phase, students had to complete four main steps to conduct a visual examination of the paintings and film: breaking the whole into pieces, attaching contextual meaning to each small piece, putting pieces back into a pattern to reveal their style or identity, and discovering the intertextual reference of the whole. The 2nd phase comprised a linguistic analysis that included two major tasks that were adopted only for an investigation of the film: identifying the subjects/predicates and finding cohesive devices to discover links within a mediated discourse.

Visual analysis

As an initial step, each painting as a whole and some chosen images of the film were broken down into smaller elements. In other words, students were advised to identify important parts within the paintings, and certain elements in the selected film scenes. Take for example *Spring Morning in the Han Palace* (Fig. 5).

Students had to describe how the painting illustrates various daily activities in the palace in the early spring.

Figure 5 Spring Morning (Ying, 1530)

These included enjoying the zither, watering and arranging flowers, and playing chess. Then they discussed the large group of characters present. This diverse group includes concubines, children of the imperial family, eunuchs and painters. Trees and rocks can also be seen decoratively placed in the garden of this lavish palace. The students were subsequently required to determine whether the elements they took into consideration carried any contextually specific meaning or 'situated meaning' as used in Gee's (2011) terminology.

Figure 6 Girl with a Pearl Earring (Vermeer, 1665)

As an example, students may find different situated meanings attached to the same elements in the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* shown in Fig. 6. For instance, the large pearl earring may denote a high status in society for some students, but simplicity and elegance for others.

Furthermore, while the girl's fair radiant complexion might reflect common standards of youthfulness and beauty, her headband and dress may suggest a more exotic or tribal look. Even though different elements in the *Girl with a Pearl Earring* could suggest a number of situated meanings, culturally and historically, such a white, unblemished complexion in Europe at that time was strongly associated with beauty and attractiveness.

In the next stage, Gee recommends that discourse analysts find ways in which different elements can be pieced together to form a pattern which creates a style or, in his term, 'social language.' Regarding the previously discussed Vermeer painting, students are likely to discern an "exotic style of beauty" in the image of the girl. The style defined as such would then communicate a certain kind of identity or activity (practice). In this painting, the style or social language of exotic beauty could form an identity of the young girl with a white and flawless complexion who dressed herself up in an oddly non-European way. According to Gee, the style, recognized either through text or multimodal text, can have 'intertextual reference.' In his explanation, text (spoken, written, or image) can quote or refer to other texts (what others say, write or create image). This can be illustrated through the movie scene in Fig. 2 in which Bruno and Shmuel are standing inside the concentration camp in their striped pajamas. Here, the inmate style might trigger another picture of anyone dressed in a similar uniform who will spend the rest of his life behind bars. By completing intertextual reference, language users can add new information to their existing knowledge. In this case, we learn that the striped blue and white pajamas were worn by inmates in World War II concentration camps, signifying

complete submission to their jailers. We are reminded that we associate striped uniforms with prisoners under various circumstances around the world.

Linguistic analysis

To complement a visual analysis of the film, students were offered two other basic principles of linguistic analysis, namely, the subjects/predicates and cohesion so as to detect important emerging intercultural communication themes. Firstly, they were presented with the assertion that all the world's languages are arranged grammatically around the basic structure of subjects and predicates. Grammatical subjects in English can refer to what the sentence is about, the topic, which basically contains information known, or *old*, to the hearer. Predicates, on the other hand, are what has been said about the subjects by others and carries information not known, or *new*, to the listeners or readers. With this accepted as a foundation, identifying subjects and predicates is therefore useful for students, since it will help them realize who or what the focus or center of attention (topic) is and what has been said about it. To perform an analysis of this type, students first broke down utterances into a smaller idea unit marked off by intonation contours (refer to Fig. 3). They were then asked to divide a sentence into a subject/predicate. For instance, in " The Jew here/ means the entire Jewish race//," students should be able to label the grammatical subject "The Jew," who is the topic of conversation. Later, they should be able to say that "means the entire Jewish race" is the predicate, which adds *new* information that reveals "The Jew" is not a single individual. It alludes, rather, to all people of the Jewish race, or ethnicity.

In addition to the subject/predicate framework, students had to work on another linguistic principle called "cohesion" to help them see how different sentences can be connected to form a unified mediated discourse. It is important to note that cohesion has been found to make a spoken or written communication sound like it hangs together, which depends largely on lexical and grammatical relationships that allow sentence sequences to be understood as a connected mediated discourse rather than as an

autonomous sentence (Halliday, 1985). Cohesion can be recognized through different cohesive devices such as conjunction, substitution, and ellipsis. In "The Jew slandered us and incited our enemies," for instance, the word 'and' is part of the conjunction system, performing an additional function that provides a connection to clauses or sentences. In this case, upon hearing the statement, listeners learn that besides slandering the German people, the Jew incites their enemies as well. Also importantly, while completing a linguistic analysis, students need to realize that (1) language use allows us to build or destroy things in the world and (2) language-in-use, along with non-verbal clues, can help us shape or reshape different realities such as making things significant, building a more complex identity here and now, and carrying out actions that may involve discrimination and stereotyping (Gee, 2011).

Intercultural awareness that prevails among students' reflections

Generally speaking, encouraging different realities to appear in the eyes of our students is a worthwhile pursuit. By more closely examining the paintings and film, the students reflect more deeply on pertinent issues as evidence found in different reflective practice gathered from the classroom observations of class discussions, a video recording of an oral presentation, and the students' written assignments. This process brings to the surface social and intercultural perspectives that are truly reflective of social realities in the larger world today.

Paintings

Seeing the world through painting encourages students' to engage in a process of self-exploration. This invites comparisons to others from different cultural backgrounds. A majority of students were able to thoughtfully reflect on the importance of culture in the formation of identity as shown in the video recording of their oral presentations. Such explorations included cultural dimensions, which refer to "the interrelated orientations that help us understand the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a culture" (Samovar, Porter,

McDaniel, 2010, p 230). More specifically, through guided questions and introductory sentences (e.g. what helped you connect the Eastern painting collection to individualism was…), students seemed to show a better understanding of the concepts of 'individualism vs. collectivism', which emerged from applying Gee's framework to the analysis of paintings. Also important was the fact that guided questions which triggered students' prior knowledge of their previous course materials were particularly helpful. The conversation between the author and students below will demonstrate these points as well as a strong connection among different elements (1), their situated meanings (2), styles (3), and intertextuality (4). Having understood this, a basic level of intercultural awareness can be achieved in which an individual can recognize his own and others' cultural patterns through comparison and contrast:

Dialogue 1

Teacher (T):   What are the major features in the "Asian style" of painting?

Student A (S A): **Nature, and maybe group harmony (3)** ?

T: In what way?

S A: Every painting depicts **parts of nature (1)** such as waves, trees, & rivers.

S B: Look! In the Hanagawa painting, you can see a small group of men on the boat, fighting bravely with **the forces of nature (2)**.

S C: Oh, I often see groups of men and women in both Chinese and Thai paintings (See Appendix 1) . They seem to **enjoy each other's company (3). Asians prefer living in groups (4)**.

T: Great! Now, what do you see in the Western paintings?

S B: I can see **faces of individuals, their clothes, and the eyes (1).**

S A: **Their eyes look so powerful (2)**.

T: So, what would you call this kind of style?

S D: I'm not sure. But can we call it **an individual person style (3)**?

T: So, what does this individual person's style tell us about Western societies?

S D: I guess Westerners, unlike Asians, may put more stress on their
          individual needs than group desires.

T: What else can you say? Think about our *Cross-cultural Communication*
          course last semester!

S E: OK, I got it! Privacy is more valued than group reliance?

Considering the major differences between the two collections, students put forward the proposition that while Asian paintings tend to depict objects, landscapes and people in groups, Western art is likely to portray the image of an individual person. With these differences in style and content in mind, the students hypothesized that Asians and Westerners maintain significantly different cultural values in their societies.

As Hunter and Sexton (1999) explain, Asian art, especially Chinese art, often represents "Buddhist and Taoist concerns with the mind in meditation, with the relative insignificance of human striving in the great cosmos, and with the beauty of nature" (p. 158). American and European art, in contrast, gives greater emphasis to people. Therefore, the reality of seeing significant things differently might well result in different cultural norms and preferences. As the students came to recognize, whilst works featuring landscapes, nature, and people living in groups are thought to be closely linked to the cultural concept known as 'collectivism,' the portraits of single persons could be readily associated with the concept of 'individualism'. As the name suggests, collectivistic cultures stress the benefits of people who value strong relationships among group members and believe in interdependence. Individualistic cultures, in contrast, look at an individual as the single most significant unit in a social setting of any size, and value independence over interdependence.

When reflecting on who they are, and who others may be, through the medium of paintings, students should also become aware that different cultural patterns could yield various consequences for people in a wide range of settings, especially in a classroom environment. Among several works dealing with these issues is Hofstede (2001), who is mainly concerned with how a culture may influence a country's educational system, and

the associated teaching and learning style preferences prevalent in each case study. In one concrete example by Chang (2006), it was reported that individualistic cultures may view in-class group assignments as a bother because certain members of the group may get stuck with an unfair share of the work. Conversely, collectivistic cultures will see the same kind of assignments as a great opportunity to work together and draw on other's expertise and viewpoints.

Films

An advanced level of Baker's intercultural awareness involved the analysis of film excerpts. This phase of the project aimed to reinforce the idea that while belonging to different cultural groups brings with it differing perspectives, there is common ground to be found. However, even within specific cultures a mismatch or miscommunication can exist between certain members. As in the analysis of the paintings, students were initially provided with guided questions before arriving at the target concepts of multiple group identities and cultural mismatch. When these social dynamics are present, it can result in more serious problems such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and racism. In the following dialogue between the author and students, the entire class discussion was based on the film excerpt found in Fig. 7 below, in which students were assigned to look for the main topic of conversation (1), what is said about it (2), and cohesive ties (3), which help create a unified mediated discourse:

Grandfather: So, your mother told me you have **a tutor (1, 3)** //!
Gretel: Yes, **he (1, 3)** is nice//. **But (3) he (1, 3)** w**on't let us read**
adventure books (2)//.
Bruno: All we do is boring/, old history//

Figure 7 The point of departure for intercultural communication problems

The following illustrates how students find their way in the intercultural world:

Dialogue 2

Teacher (T):   What did the tutor do with the books for the children?

Student D (S D): Liszt insists that the kids learn only about the history the fatherland.

T: Then, what is the problem here?

S A: I guess the tutor is exercising ethnocentrism, encouraging an idea

              that Germany is the center of everything.

T: How so? With statements like this: "Germany is the greatest of all...We're

              superior!"

S B: These are Bruno's words, which seem to be a clear example of the

              concept of ethnocentrism.

Evidently, by discussing this excerpt students were able to uncover in the dialogue instances where intercultural communication resulted in expressions of ethnocentrism, as illustrated in the scene above and in the majority of their written movie reflections. Fundamentally, ethnocentrism is the notion that one's own culture is superior to any other, as articulated in the statement "Germany is the greatest of all...We're superior." Ethnocentrism, at the same time, gives members of a culture feelings of identity and belonging. This is apparent when Liszt, the tutor, tries to promote Nazi propaganda and anti-Semitism through his insistence that the two children, Gretel and Bruno, are allowed to read only books on German history. This has a great impact on Gretel, who then imagines herself as belonging to the Nazi Party. She then proceeds to decorate her bedroom's walls with pictures full of Nazi ideology and pageantry (see Fig. 2).

Also interesting are the students' reflections on other intercultural communication themes such as multiple group identity and stereotyping. In the former case, students showed an understanding that an individual could assume different role identities as was the case with Pavel, one of the Jewish servants in Bruno's house. Pavel had taken on different identities as a doctor, an inmate in the concentration camp, and adopted both a

Polish and Jewish persona. This example of the multi-layers of identity shows that who we are is a matter of comparison (similarities) or contrast (differences) with others. Our natural preference for the things with which we are familiar can in certain instances adversely affect our perception and attitude toward new and different things or people. This can lead to intercultural problems that manifest themselves in such behaviors as prejudice, stereotypes, and ethnocentrism.

Students were able to detect these characteristics in statements which contained various ways of stereotyping, which were the result of identity mismatches such as "The Jews are not creative, but destructive." and "The Jews are the enemies of culture." According to psychologists Abbate, Boca and Bocchiaro (2004), stereotyping may be defined as "a cognitive structure containing the perceiver's knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some human social groups" (p 1192). Stereotyping can be negative or positive, but usually it is likely to narrow our perception, and thus jeopardize intercultural communication.   Indeed, although voices from the painting and film project may sound encouraging, more effort needs to be made to fully raise students' intercultural awareness.

Pedagogical Implications

Some pedagogical implications are discussed below to introduce paintings and films to create a more complete picture of students' intercultural awareness in the Expanding Circle classroom setting, at the college level:

1. Visual analysis consisting of, for example, analyzing textual meaning or patterns to show identity, and linguistic analysis comprising an analysis of the subject/ predicate and cohesive ties have long been neglected in the area of language study in the Expanding Circle classroom setting, especially in Thailand. Teachers would do well to incorporate both visual and linguistic analyses into their syllabi to foster student's intercultural awareness.

2. It was demonstrated in the previous section that by using paintings and films, students showed signs of awareness of their own and other cultural values and beliefs as well as

possibilities for mismatch and miscommunication between cultures. However, this has been achieved thus far only at the basic and advanced levels. To attain the highest level of intercultural awareness, or what Baker (2012a) calls the intercultural awareness level, it is advised that simulation activities (e.g. an e-mail exchange with the painters or film producers) be introduced to the class. This type of activity involves an immersion in socio-cultural situations. It is designed to foster interaction, negotiation, and exploration of the target culture in terms of language, cultural identity, beliefs, and values in a meaningful, creative way. If effectively presented, it could be a rich linguistic and cultural resource for the students to broaden their experience in an increasingly inter-connected world.

3. When choosing paintings and films to be introduced to students, teachers ought to develop a set of criteria in advance. For example, the paintings should be by well-known artists and in familiar genre. Moreover, they should be thematically connected to each other, or to the lesson's objectives. The films should take into consideration the students' age, and religious and cultural backgrounds. In this regard, films that may give rise to religious or political conflicts should be introduced to the class very carefully.

4. Before considering cultural elements, teachers should arouse students' interests by explaining the background of the paintings, such as the biographical details of the painters and the techniques used. As for the films, they should also be accompanied by relevant background information such as a synopsis, the plot, the characters and any critical reaction the film received.

5. Handouts that contain an accurate transcript of the films' dialogue, as well as vocabulary and idiomatic expressions from the films are always very useful for students at this level, although academic requirements in these courses predominantly target cultural analysis.

Conclusion

The development of intercultural awareness is vital for people to function effectively in an Expanding Circle classroom setting. It helps promote intercultural competence and prepares one for success when intercultural communication is required. As we have seen, through an analysis of paintings and films using Gee's (2011, 2014) model of discourse analysis, Thai students' intercultural awareness can be developed extensively and further refined in Baker's (2012a) terms, e.g. both at the basic and advanced stages. The students' reactions and reflections during the course were largely positive. Expanding one's cultural awareness creates valuable tools that help prepare students linguistically, coping in situations where greater intercultural knowledge can make a significant difference. These tools are potentially quite useful for teachers who wish to prepare their students for the challenges of ASEAN integration in the Southeast Asian region, which is set to get underway in the very near future. The task ahead is to welcome intercultural language teaching and see that it is widely implemented across the country. A greater awareness of the inter-relationship between language and culture needs to be nurtured with all the resources available. The necessity of providing language learners with skills in intercultural communication in an increasingly multicultural classroom is a high priority both locally and nationally.

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Appendix 1

The Western and Eastern painting collections

Western Paintings	Eastern Paintings

Mona Lisa- Leonardo da Vinci

(da Vinci, 1503-1507)

The Great Wave off Kanagawa-Katsushika Hokusai

(Hokusai, 1829-1832)

Self-portrait without Beard-Vincent van Gogh

(van Gogh, 1889)
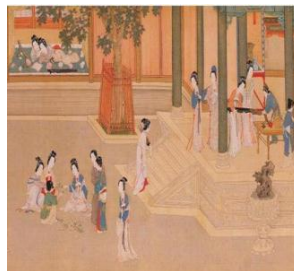
Spring Morning in the Han Palace-Qiu Ying

(Ying, 1530)

Girl with a Pearl Earring-Johannes Vermeer

(Vermeer, 1665)
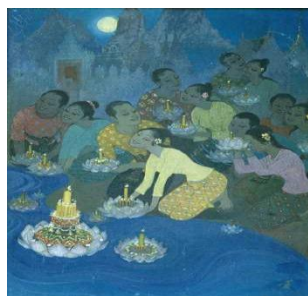
Loy Kratong Festival-Chalerm Nakiraks

(Nakiraks, 1971)