

Cultural Contents in Fundamental English Coursebooks

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the cultural contents in six commercial coursebooks for the Fundamental English courses at a university in Thailand. The cultural content was analyzed in terms of cultural sources and themes employing the framework adapted from Lee (2009), Cortazzi and Jin (1999), and Crystal (2003). Findings showed that there was a strong preference for the Big “C” themes of culture while those of Small “c” cultures were demonstrated with much lower frequency. In addition, Target Culture, International Culture, and Source Culture were presented in similar frequency in the coursebooks. This study sheds light on cultural content in the materials used for the teaching and learning of English as well as draws out the implications for the teaching of cultural content in the English language classroom, especially in the context of English as an international language.

Key Words: language and culture, English as an international language, intercultural communicative competence, source of culture, theme of culture, cultural contents, English coursebooks

บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยขึ้นนี้ คือการศึกษาเนื้อหาเชิงวัฒนธรรมในหนังสือประกอบการสอนหากเล่น ที่มีจัดทำขึ้นโดยทั่วไป และที่ใช้สำหรับการสอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษพื้นฐานในมหาวิทยาลัยแห่งหนึ่งในประเทศไทย ผู้วิจัยได้วิเคราะห์ที่เนื้อหาเชิงวัฒนธรรมดังกล่าว โดยพิจารณาแหล่งที่มาของวัฒนธรรมและหัวข้อหลักเชิงวัฒนธรรมตามกรอบทฤษฎีที่ประยุกต์จากแนวคิดของ ลี (2009) คอร์ทซ์ซีและจิน (1999) และคริสตัล (2003) ผลการวิจัยพบว่าตัวราชทั้งหมดเล่นนั้น เน้นการนำเสนอหัวข้อวัฒนธรรมหลักหรือวัฒนธรรมประจำชาติมากกว่า การนำเสนอวัฒนธรรมรองที่เน้นวิถีชีวิตประจำวัน นอกจากนี้ มีการนำเสนอวัฒนธรรมของเจ้าของภาษา วัฒนธรรมนานาชาติและวัฒนธรรมของผู้เรียนเอง ในระดับความถี่เดียวกัน กล่าวได้ว่า งานวิจัยนี้เพิ่มพูนความรู้ ความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับเนื้อหาเชิงวัฒนธรรมที่ปรากฏอยู่ในเอกสารตำราสำหรับการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ

รวมทั้งได้กล่าวถึงนัยยะสำคัญสำหรับการสอนที่ใช้อาชีวะดูแลเชิงวัฒนธรรมในชั้นเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในบริบทของภาษาอังกฤษในฐานภาษานานาชาติ

คำสำคัญ : ภาษาและวัฒนธรรม ภาษาอังกฤษในฐานภาษานานาชาติ สมรรถภาพการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม แหล่งที่มาของ(ข้อมูล)วัฒนธรรม หัวข้อหลักทาง/เชิงวัฒนธรรม(วัฒนธรรมหลัก) เนื้อหาเชิงวัฒนธรรมและหนังสือประกอบการวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ

1. Introduction

Language and culture are closely related. Language is “the carrier” of culture. People all around the world use language to reflect their values, attitudes, identities, cognition, and the ways they live through the process of internationalization (Byram, 1988; Duranti, 1997; Kramsch, 1998; Moran, 2001; Smith, 1988). Intercultural communicative competence is very important and should be promoted in an English as an international language classroom to increase understanding and avoid misunderstanding between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. To develop intercultural communicative competence, the ability to recognize and understand one’s own and other cultures by communicating effectively and appropriately on several cultures (Moran, 2001), we cannot teach language separately from its culture.

In this globalization age, no one would question that English has now become an international language and plays a role as a major medium for world communication among people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Jenkins, 2003; Mckay, 2002; Smith, 1988). The goal of using English as an international language is for speakers to share their ideas and express their culture with people from various cultural and language backgrounds with mutual understanding (Kramsch, 1998).

According to Crystal (1997), English is used for communication in a wide variety of cultural contexts, categorized as the Inner Circle, where English is used as the first language such as England, America, and Australia; the Outer Circle, where English is used as a second language such as the Philippines, India, and Singapore; and the Expanding Circle, where English is studied as a foreign language such as Japan, Germany and Thailand. Consequently, the responsibility of educational providers in this era is to prepare students for the world of international communication. To do so, students should be equipped with an ability to use English as an international language, as well as with cultural knowledge and an intercultural communicative competence.

As the aim of teaching English in Thailand is to prepare students for international communication, teaching cultural content in English within an international language classroom is very important and unavoidable for developing their intercultural communicative competence. Teaching many different cultures can develop students' intercultural communicative competence and encourage them to be open-minded toward an international understanding (Savignon, 1997).

There are many important elements in the language classroom such as teachers, learners, and instructional materials. Coursebooks are one of the important materials used in language classrooms as a resource to tap into the content of language and culture (Cunningsworth, 1995; Richard & Renanya, 2002; Sheldon, 1988). Therefore, the presence of cultural content in coursebooks is also important for the development of students' intercultural communicative competence.

Although one of the objectives of teaching English based on the curriculum of Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University is for students to comprehend Thai and other cultures, the curriculum does not specify what sources or themes of cultural content should be taught in an English language classroom. Guidelines on what sources of culture or which cultural content should be included in the coursebooks, as well as research on cultural content in the English coursebooks are limited in Thailand. Therefore, in the context of Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University, there is a need for a study to analyze the cultural content in the English coursebooks. Such study is significant in that it fills in the gap of research in this important area. It also provides suggestions for inclusion and evaluation of cultural content in English teaching materials.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to investigate the cultural content presented in the commercial Fundamental English coursebooks used in Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University. The main aim of this study is to examine the state of the references to the sources of culture—Source, Target, and International cultures, as well as themes of cultures—Big “C” and Small “c” cultures in the commercial coursebooks.

2. Definition of Terms

2.1 Sources of Culture: Source, Target, and International Cultures

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999), the sources of cultural information in language coursebooks and materials are classified as **target culture**, **source culture**, and **international culture**. **Target culture** refers to culture of first language English speaking countries such as America, Australia, and England. **Source culture** refers to the cultural contents of the learners' own culture. **International culture** refers to the culture that contains a variety of cultures around the world including both English and non-English speaking countries.

2.2 Themes of Culture: Big “C” and Small “c” Cultures

Big “C” culture refers to the culture which focuses on a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, education, business, festival, style, etc. This type of culture is easily seen, readily apparent and easy to memorize by learners (Lee, 2009).

Small “c” culture refers to the invisible and deeper sense of culture such as way of life, daily living, socio-culture, values, norms and beliefs, way of thinking, behavior, etc. Small “c” culture is very important in language learning because it not only determines the norms of appropriateness and polite language use, but it can also create pragmatic failure in the case of interaction between people from different cultures (Lee, 2009; Paige et al., 1999; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993).

3. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to an investigation of the cultural content in six English coursebooks used in Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University, consisting of three student's books and three teacher's books. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other English coursebooks or, indeed, other contexts.

The cultural contents analysis in this study focused on sources of culture: Target, Source, and International cultures, as well as themes of culture: Big “C” and Small “c” cultures.

Since the focus of this study was on the analysis of cultural content, speaking and writing tasks, tapescripts and reading passages in the student's

books, as well as additional notes in the teacher's books were chosen as units of analysis because they contained cultural content. Other parts of the coursebooks with the objective of teaching grammatical points, explaining the meaning of new words, stress, and intonation were excluded from the analysis because they did not contain cultural content.

4. Methodology

4.1 Coursebooks and Units of Analysis

The target materials for the cultural content analysis in this study were chosen from popular commercial coursebooks for three Fundamental English courses in Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University entitled “New Headway”: Elementary part A, Elementary part B, and Pre-intermediate part A. “New Headway”: Elementary parts A and B were written and edited by Liz Soars, John Soars and Amanda Maris and were published by Oxford University Press, in 2006. “New Headway”: Pre-intermediate part A was written and edited by Liz Soars, John Soars and Mike Sayer and was published by Oxford University Press, in 2007. These coursebooks were chosen because they were required and used in the Fundamental English courses by the majority of the students and teachers in the university. Their design was based on the integrated syllabus. Each coursebook consists of a student's book and a teacher's book. Altogether, three student's books and three teacher's books were analyzed for cultural content in this study.

There are altogether 20 units in the three Fundamental English coursebooks. In each student's book, each unit contains seven sections: grammar or language focus, vocabulary, everyday English, reading, speaking, listening, and writing. In addition, tapescripts are included in the back of each book. The teacher's book contains additional notes for teachers, which are variously termed in the book such as Extra Information, Cultural Notes, Note, Suggestions, Background Information, About the Texts, and Language Notes.

The analysis of the cultural content of the student's books focused on 140 speaking tasks, 42 writing tasks, 99 tapescripts and 80 reading passages, while that of the teacher's books focused on 42 additional notes. Altogether they constituted 403 units of analysis covering both tasks and texts. Non-linear texts such as pictures and tables which accompany the tasks and texts were also used to support the analysis of cultural content in those tasks and texts.

4.2 Framework for Cultural Content Analysis

In order to examine the cultural content in the Fundamental English coursebooks, they were analyzed in terms of sources and themes of culture using an analytical framework based on Cortazzi and Jin (1999), Crystal (2003), and Lee (2009). The sources of the cultural content in the coursebooks in this study were distinguished in terms of Source culture, Target culture and International culture (Cortazzi & Jin 1999, Crystal 2003). The framework for the analysis of themes of culture in the coursebooks was modified from Lee's (2009) model which categorizes themes of culture into Big "C" and Small "c" cultures, consisting of 22 and 21 themes respectively.

4.3 Procedure

Since the purpose of this study was to examine the cultural content in Fundamental English coursebooks in terms of sources and themes of culture, it was necessary, first of all, to establish elements in the coursebooks which contain cultural content which, in turn, served as units for further analysis. To do so, the researchers proceeded as follows.

Firstly, the tasks and texts in the Fundamental English coursebooks that contain cultural content were identified. It was found that the student's books contained 361 tasks and texts with cultural contents consisting of 140 speaking tasks, 42 writing tasks, 99 tapescripts and 80 reading passages, while the teacher's books contained 42 additional notes with cultural content. Altogether they constituted a total of 403 units of analysis covering both tasks and texts which, in turn, served as units for analysis in the second phase.

Secondly, the identified tasks and texts with cultural content in both the student and teacher's books were analyzed for cultural content in terms of sources of culture (Source, Target, and International Cultures) and themes of cultures (Big "C" and Small "c" cultures).

To analyze the tasks and texts for sources of culture, three criteria were established. First, the source of culture was evaluated based on the identification of nations or other words related to the nations such as cities, nationalities, or currencies of particular countries, or by using other alternative ways to find the origin of sources of culture. Second, in case a task or text contained one theme of culture belonging to many sources of culture, it was labeled as "International Culture." Third, in case a task or text contained only a single theme of culture and the source of the culture could not be found, it was labeled as "Unidentified Source of Culture".

To analyze the tasks and texts for themes of culture, the following criteria were established. First, the theme of culture was examined based on the main idea. Second, to identify the theme of culture, the cultural content of each task or text was coded according to the definitions and guidance adapted from Lee (2009). Third, in case problems arose in making a decision, dictionaries especially the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (6th Edition) and the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (5th Edition), as well as other sources were consulted in order to distinguish whether certain cultural content belonged to a particular theme or not. Fourth, on clarification of a certain theme, cross-checking between the researchers was made in order to achieve a common agreement and validity on the cultural theme identification by subjective interpretation.

Finally, the occurrences of sources and themes of culture in the tasks and texts were summarized in frequency and percentages. It should be noted that during this procedure of cultural content analysis the analytical frameworks were also refined and redefined.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Sources of Culture in Fundamental English Coursebooks: Source, Target, and International Culture

The results of the analysis of sources of culture in the student and teacher's books are presented in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 1: Sources of Culture in Student's Books

Student's Books	Number of Tasks and Texts	Source Culture	Target Culture	International Culture	Unidentified Source of Culture
Book 1	104	27	41	36	0
Book 2	131	43	34	52	2
Book 3	126	46	41	34	5
Total	361 (100%)	116 (32%)	116 (32%)	122 (34%)	7 (2%)

It can be seen, in Table 1, that there was a total of 361 tasks and texts with cultural content in the three student's books including 104 in Book 1, 131 in Book 2 and 126 in Book 3. The results show that International Culture was presented in 122 (34%) tasks and texts which was slightly higher in frequency than Source and Target Culture each of which was presented in 116 (32%) tasks

and texts. Only seven (2%) tasks and texts belonged to an Unidentified Source of Culture.

In detail, the tasks and texts with International Culture did not specifically focus on the culture of any country; the cultures of a range of countries such as France, Italy, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Hungary, Norway, Spain, Germany, etc. were presented. Of the 32% of tasks and texts with Target Culture, those with British cultural content constituted of 20% while those with American, Irish, Canadian and Australian cultural content were 12%. Interestingly, among 32% of the occurrences of Source Culture—the Thai culture was presented only three times (1%) in the texts. The other 113 times (31%) occurred in the tasks which required students to practice speaking and writing about their own culture after learning the cultural content of other countries.

Table 2: Sources of Culture in Teacher's Books

Teacher's Book	Number of Additional Notes	Source Culture	Target Culture	International Culture	Unidentified Culture
Book 1	4	0	1	3	0
Book 2	13	0	12	1	0
Book 3	25	1	17	7	0
Total	42 (100%)	1 (2%)	30 (72%)	11 (26%)	0 (0%)

In Table 2, it can be seen that the three teacher's books contained a total of 42 additional notes including four in Book 1, 13 in Book 2, and 25 in Book 3. The results show that Target Culture was presented in 30 (72%) additional notes while International Culture was presented in a limited portion with 11 (26%) occurrences and Source of Culture was presented only in one (2%) additional note.

In detail, the additional notes on Target Culture mostly focused on British cultural content (60%) while those with cultural content of the USA, and Ireland made up 12%. Of the 26% of the additional notes on International Culture, 7% were on the French culture while those on cultural content of Samoa, Portugal, Italy, Croatia, China, Germany, and Morocco constituted 19%. Interestingly, there was only one (2%) note on the Thai culture, under Source Culture.

It should be noted that in both the student and teacher's books there was a clear tendency of presenting more cultural content when the students reached a more advanced level. Moreover, the authors paid considerably similar attention to presentations of cultural content of International Culture (34%), Source

Culture (32%) and Target Culture (32%) in the student's books. The findings were different from Xiao's (2010) study which found that Target Culture was the main focus and occupied more than half of the total tasks in an in-use English textbook.

However, the cultural content in the additional notes in the teacher's books mostly focused on the cultures of English-speaking countries, especially England. Similar findings can be found in Yamanaka (2006) and Xiao (2010), where most cultural content focused on the American and British culture. In this study, there was a lack of emphasis on Source Culture and International Culture. It is evident that the explanation of cultural content in terms of source of culture in the teacher's books was designed with the aim of enhancing the students' cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries. The reason may have been that the authors were English native speakers; therefore, the presented cultural content in the additional notes in the teacher's books mainly focused on explanations of cultural content of English-speaking countries.

5.2 Themes of Culture in Fundamental English Coursebooks: Big "C" and Small "c" Themes

The results of the analysis of themes of culture in the student and teacher's books are presented in Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3: Themes of Culture in Student's Books

Big "C" Culture		Small "c" Culture	
Theme	Frequency	Theme	Frequency
1. Style/Dress/Food/Housing	58 (16%)	1. Individualism	111 (31%)
2. Leisure/Music/Dance/ Sport	34 (9%)	2. Future-oriented	8 (2%)
3. Business/Shopping/ Currency/Market	29 (8%)	3. Nurture	5 (1%)
4. People	24 (7%)	4. Rules	4 (1%)
5. Literature	18 (5%)		
6. Metropolis/Infrastructure	15 (4%)		
7. Geography/Historical sites/ History	12 (3%)		
8. Festival/Celebration/Ceremony/Party	11 (3%)		
9. Holiday	11 (3%)		
10. Weather/Season	9 (2%)		
11. Art/Artifact	8 (2%)		
12. Telecommunication	2 (0.6%)		
13. Family	1 (0.2%)		
14. Region	1 (0.2%)		
Total	233 (65%)	Total	128 (35%)

Table 3 shows there was a considerable amount of devotion (65%) to Big “C” culture in both the tasks and texts of the three student’s books. On the other hand, Small “c” culture was observed with a much lower portion of themes (35%). Calculating the frequency, 14 out of 22 themes of Big “C” culture occurred 233 times, while four out of 21 themes of Small “c” culture occurred 128 times in the tasks and texts in the three student’s books.

When all the 18 cultural themes found in the three student’s books, including 14 themes of Big “C” culture and four themes of Small “c” culture, were rank ordered, it was found that the five most frequently occurring themes of cultural content in the three student’s books were one theme of Small “c” culture and four themes of Big “C” culture.

“Individualism” under the theme of Small “c” culture was the most frequently found theme (111 times, 31%). It was mostly spotlighted in the input in the form of practical speaking and writing tasks for the students. “Style/Dress/Food/Housing” was the second most frequently found theme at 58 times (16%), followed by the “Leisure/Music/Dance/Sport” theme at 34 times (9%), the “Business/Shopping/Currency/Market” theme at 29 times (8%), and the “People” theme at 24 times (7%).

However, it should be noted that eight themes of Big “C” culture and 17 themes of Small “c” culture in Lee’s (2009) model, adapted as an analytical framework in this study, were not found in the three student’s books.

Table 4: Themes of Culture in Teacher’s Books

Big “C” Culture		Small “c” Culture	
Theme	Frequency	Theme	Frequency
1. Geography/Historical sites	11 (26%)	1. Nurture	3 (8%)
2. Festival/Celebration/		2. Rules	1 (2%)
Ceremony/Party	9 (21%)		
3. Housing	4 (10%)	3. Individualism	1 (2%)
4. Music/Sport	4 (10%)		
5. Business/Market	4 (10%)		
6. Metropolis/Infrastructure	2 (5%)		
7. Literature	1 (2%)		
8. Weather	1 (2%)		
9. Art	1 (2%)		
Total	37 (88%)	Total	5 (12%)

As can be seen from Table 4, the results of the analysis of themes of culture in the three teacher’s books were similar to those in the three student’s

books in that most cultural contents, 37 out of 42 times or 88%, belong to the themes of Big “C” culture. The remaining five times or 12% belong to those of Small “c” culture.

To explain the results in more depth, “Geography/Historical sites” was the most frequently found theme at 11 times out of 42 times (26%) of the presented cultural contents in the three teacher's books. “Festival/Celebration/Ceremony/Party” as the second most frequently found theme at nine times (21%) of the presented cultural contents followed by “Music/Sport”, “Housing” and “Business/Market” each of which exhibited four mentions (10%) of the total cultural contents found. Moreover, these top five themes were of the Big “C” culture.

On the other hand, only three themes of Small “c” culture were found in the three teacher's books. That is, “Nurture” was mentioned three times (8%). “Rules” and “Individualism” were mentioned only once (2%) each.

It is noticeable from the analysis results that the majority of themes of cultural content in both the student and teacher's books were those of Big “C” culture. Interestingly, the cultural theme with the top ranking frequency in the student's books, “Individualism”, belongs to Small “c” culture whereas that with the top ranking frequency in the teacher's books, “Geography/Historical sites,” belongs to Big “C” culture.

Similar results can be found in Lee (2009) and Xiao (2010) underlining that all of the coursebooks for EIL classrooms in Korea and China neglected Small “c” culture learning. This finding shows a conflict with the suggestions of many scholars (Chastain, 1988, p. 303, Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, Pulverness, 1995) that culture learning and teaching should aim at learners' familiarization with both Big “C” and Small “c” cultures and that the priority of culture learning and teaching in the EIL classroom should be given to Small “c” culture in order to improve the learners' intercultural communicative competence and to expand their world view.

The following sections elaborate on the themes of Big “C” and Small “c” cultures found in the coursebooks in this study.

5.2.1 The Big “C” Culture Presented in the Coursebooks

In the student's books, the “Style/Dress/Food/Housing” theme was the second most frequently found, at 58 times. The “Style” theme covered life styles of overseas students in England living with English families, greeting styles, the way tickets were purchased in England, and the food eating customs of various

countries. The “Food” theme covered many countries such as African ‘kuku paka’, Korean ‘kimchi,’ Turkish ‘baklava’, and Portuguese ‘bacalhau,’ and international food such as hamburgers, pizza, salad, etc. The “Housing” theme covered design of houses, such as houses in England being white, “bubble houses” in Hungary, houses in Samoa, Korea, Portugal, etc.

The “Leisure/Music/Dance/Sport” theme was observed at a high frequency of 34 times. The “Music” theme presented only American and English singers and bands, while the “Dance” theme referred to various countries such as the Tango from Buenos Aries, Salsa from Havana, and Flamenco from Seville.

The “Business/Shopping/Currency/Market” theme was found 29 times. It covered England, America, and European currencies such as the Pound, the Dollar, and the Euro. The “Shopping” theme presented the activity of shopping and buying in various markets, such as the “Floating Market” in Thailand, “L’ Isle-sure-la-Sorgue” in southern France, and “Souk” (the Arab word for market) in the Marrakech, Morocco.

The “People” theme was found 24 times. Famous people in various fields such as the author—Christopher Paolini (USA), the politician—Shirley Temple Black (USA), the singer—Joss Stone (England), the artist—Salvador Dali (Spain), the pilot—Amelia Mary Earhart (America) and cosmonaut—Yuri Gagarin (Russia) were presented.

The “Literature” theme was found 18 times, introducing novels, stories and cartoons such as Romeo and Juliet, Mickey Mouse, James Bond, and so on.

In the teacher’s books, the “Geography/Historical sites” theme of Big “C” culture was found 11 times, presenting the geography of Croatia, England, USA, China, and France, as well as historical sites of England (historical university—Cambridge), Germany (historical university—Nuremburg), and Italy.

The “Festival/Celebration/Ceremony/Party” theme was found 9 times, presenting how some British people celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, Mother’s Day, wedding days, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Easter Day, New Year’s Eve, Valentine’s Day, and Christmas Day.

The “Business/Market” theme was found four times. The region, surface geography and what is sold in a market such as that in Thailand which sells local food and traditional clothing were presented.

The majority of themes of the Big “C” of culture mentioned above were found in both the student and teacher’s books in this study. However, they were presented in a superficial way in the teacher’s books. Cultural content related to Big “C” culture should be presented with more explanation in relation to how particular Big “C” cultural content reflects on underlying cultural values and in-depth beliefs.

5.2.2 The Small “c” Culture Presented in the Coursebooks

In the student’s books, the “Individualism” theme was found at 111 times and mostly in the texts. In these texts, the theme of “Individualism” presented differences among people in various fields and countries in their ways of doing things. In the tasks, students were trained in speaking and writing by using their own information to present their own culture. In contrast, other themes of Small “c” culture such as “Future-Oriented”, “Nurture”, and “Rules” were presented in the coursebooks only eight times, five times, and four times, respectively.

In the same way, there were only three themes of Small “c” culture presented in the teacher’s books: the “Nurture” theme presented the organization of Médecins Sans Frontières, an international medical charity which works in developing countries. The “Rules” theme presented the practice of buying medication in Britain where a prescription by a doctor or dentist for the drugs and remedies is required. The “Individualism” theme presented information about a blind date, an arranged meeting between people of the opposite sex who do not know each other to find out if they would like to have a relationship with each other. This practice has been very popular for many years in the UK.

The occurrence of Small “c” culture in the teacher’s books was limited, while the majority of the cultural content was devoted to Big “C” culture. All the teacher’s books neglected a variation in socio-cultural values, norms, and beliefs in any explanation of cultural content. In other words, there were no explanations of how people may have different values and norms depending on their socio-cultural variables such as age, gender, ethnic group, region, or social status. This finding seems to be an indication that the teacher’s books contain superficial explanations of cultural content.

This limited presentation of Small “c” culture and its explanation in the teacher’s books may lead learners and teachers to misunderstand, stereotype and overgeneralize the information given in the text. These problems may cause a lack of integration and teaching of cultural content in the classroom because teachers may not feel confident to teach them.

6. Conclusion and Implication

This study examined cultural content in commercial English coursebooks used in Thailand. Specifically it investigated what sources and themes of culture were included that may facilitate learners' intercultural communicative competence.

In terms of sources of culture, the results of the analysis of the tasks and texts in the student's books show that International Culture gained a slightly higher frequency than Source and Target Cultures. The teacher's books mainly focused on the explanations of the cultural contents of English-speaking countries while those of Source and International Cultures were still limited.

Although many sources of cultural content were presented in the student's books, the tasks and texts were designed to teach the contents of other cultures in various themes. The explanations in the additional notes in the teacher's books were not enough for teachers to understand and have confidence to teach cultural content because they mostly focused on the cultures of English-speaking countries. Thus, the teacher's books may not be considered adequate for teachers who are considered the main providers of information of other countries' cultures to students (Mckay, 2002). The additional notes for teachers should contain cultural information of various sources and the cultural information presented in them should be congruent with that in the student's books in terms of both sources and themes of culture so that the teacher's books can serve as helpful guidelines for teachers in their presentations of other countries' cultures.

With respect to themes of culture, it was found that in both the student and teacher's books there was a strong preference for Big "C" culture and most of the cultural contents appeared to present facts, statistics, products, and contributions of Big "C" culture, such as facts and statistics regarding "Style/Dress/Food/Housing," "Leisure/Music/Dance/Sport," "Business/Shopping/Currency/Market," and "People." A low percentage of Small "c" culture was observed with a limited portion of themes.

The results show a distinct conflict with researchers' statements that Small "c" culture could play a more significant role in encouraging learners' intercultural communicative competence (Lee, 2009; Paige et al., 1999; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). Therefore, the evidence from this study does not suggest a positive contribution of the coursebooks towards the learners' intercultural understanding because the Small "c" culture presented in them is limited. Such a slight portion of Small "c" culture may provide insufficient cultural content to

promote the learners' intercultural communicative competence, or to achieve the goal of teaching and learning English as an international language.

The results of the analysis of the coursebooks in this study may raise teachers' awareness of teaching cultural content in English within an international language classroom. In addition, these results may provide useful suggestions for inclusion and evaluation of cultural content in English teaching materials for the development of learners' intercultural communicative competence.

7. Suggestions for Further Study

This study investigated the cultural content in Fundamental English coursebooks used in a university in Thailand in terms of sources and themes of culture. However, many issues were beyond the scope of this investigation and deserve further analysis. First, other types of coursebooks, such as an in-house coursebook, should be examined. Second, it would be useful to interview teachers on their perceptions of teaching cultural content using the coursebooks as well as their views on the value of integrating culture in their teaching. Third, it may also be necessary to investigate the students' attitudes on which sources and themes of culture are of interest to them and whether or not their preferences agree with the cultural content presented in the coursebooks

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