

## Development of an English Multicultural Curriculum to Promote Language Skills and Attitudes Among Maejo University Students, Chiang Mai, Thailand \*

การพัฒนาหลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษเชิงพหุวัฒนธรรมเพื่อส่งเสริมทักษะทางภาษาและ  
เจตคติของนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยแม่โจ้ จังหวัดเชียงใหม่

Thanutcha Preechaamornkul (ธณัฐชา ปรีชาอมรกุล) \*\*

Nitida Adipattaranan (นิธิดา อติภัทรนันท์) \*\*\*

Nanthiya Saengsin (นันธิยา แสงสิน) \*\*\*\*

Sunee Nguenyuang (สุนีย์ เงินยวง) \*\*\*\*\*

### Abstract

The purposes of this study were to 1) develop a multicultural English curriculum based on multicultural education, 2) improve English language skills and 3) study student's attitudes toward multicultural society. The target group of the study was 25 the third year English Major students, enrolling in English for Industry and Service Course (LE 217) in the first semester of

the academic year 2016 at Faculty of Liberal Arts, Maejo University, Chiang Mai, Thailand . The research instruments were 1) curriculum development instruments, including proto-type syllabus, and 10 lesson plans, 2) lesson development instruments comprising the assessments of English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and 3) data collecting instruments , attitude assessment towards multicultural society. The data obtained were

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บทความนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศึกษาศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาหลักสูตรและการสอน มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

\*\* A student of Doctor of Education Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University. E-mail: thisisjam304@hotmail.com.

นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาศึกษาศาสตรดุษฎีบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาหลักสูตรและการสอน คณะศึกษาศาสตร์มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่.  
E-mail: thisisjam304@hotmail.com.

\*\*\* Assoc. Prof. Dr., Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University.

รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร., คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

\*\*\*\* Assoc. Prof., Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University.

รองศาสตราจารย์, คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

\*\*\*\*\* Lecturer. Dr., Faculty of Education, Chiang Mai University.

อาจารย์ ดร., คณะศึกษาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

analyzed for mean, standard deviation and percentage. The findings of the study were as follows: 1) The development of English Multicultural Curriculum based multicultural education was good ( $\bar{x}=4.43$  S.D = 0.07), 2) The student's language skills with the application of communicative language teaching approach revealed that: speaking-listening was good, reading was good and writing was pretty good (70.25, 73.8 and 65.6 % respectively), and 3) the student's attitudes toward multicultural society was very good ( $\bar{x}=4.61$  S.D = 0.12).

**Keywords:** English Multicultural Curriculum, Communicative Language Teaching, Language Skills, Attitudes

### **Rationale and Significance of the Study**

Collaboration with ASEAN members brings several changes to Thailand. One obvious change is education. It is necessary to reform education to lift the standard of educational institutions so that they can have sufficient capacity to build quality learners to enter the ASEAN community in the near future (Paiwithayasiritham, 2016). To elevate the standard of educational institutions, one important thing to be aware of is a development of curriculum and instruction. However, we need to take into account many factors and elements in order to be successful in developing curriculum. Society is one of significant factors needed to be concerned. Education and society are indistinguishable. Education is a social process, and today, society is constantly evolving and rapidly changing. Therefore, we should develop curriculum, including teaching and learning management to fit our existing society (Smith, Stanley, Shores, 1950). It is similar to the ideas of Taba (1962) which suggested that developing curriculum needs a study of the circumstance, issues, and needs of the society that the students are facing at the moment. How do we develop curriculum and courses in order to develop students to live effectively in the ASEAN community? It is necessary to improve students so that they can attain success in the main areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Focusing on the first main area is knowledge. We must encourage students to learn and study to understand ASEAN in terms of government and politics, economy, society and culture. ASEAN community reflects diversities; therefore, we need to prepare ourselves to live in a multicultural society peacefully. Next, the students need to develop English skills because English is considered as the language of ASEAN; thus, it is necessary to improve students' English skills so as to use it as a media to learn about ASEAN. A positive attitude towards ASEAN is very significant as well. We must also encourage students to have a positive attitude

towards ASEAN community, a cultural diverse community, in order to build a good understanding among them. This will lead to living together happily and peacefully.

The concept of multicultural education is one useful and powerful way to organize learning in multicultural society. Banks (1994), who proposed the concept of multicultural education stated that, "Multicultural Education" is "Education within a multicultural society should affirm and help students understand their home and community cultures." Education in multicultural society should help students understand their own culture. Banks also offer an acceptance and understanding of the others' cultures. Multicultural education can be used successfully, it is necessary to takes into account several factors, such as the language learning model, communication, participation, measurement and evaluation, educational media, teaching aids, courses, teaching methods and attitudes. Also, Cortes (1996) supported that these factors help build positive attitudes toward cultural difference to students so that they can understand cultural differences and learn to adapt themselves to live with different groups and truly understand that people are different; this will eventually lead them to be a good member of multicultural society.

Besides, multicultural education, Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) is important concept that should be used to integrate with in multicultural education since it allows learners to effectively use English communication to learn the social and cultural aspects of ASEAN countries. As Hymes (1981) said, language ability helps us correctly interpret the language in order to interact with other people in society. And it will help us learn how to communicate in a way that suits our social and personal circumstances. Also, Littlewood (1981) proposed the teaching of English as a communication tool. By making language learning meaningful to learners, multiple skills should be integrated into teaching. Let students do things in the same way as they do in their everyday life and organize a variety of activities to provide students chances to use language as much as possible. This method is a natural learning which allows students to use English in the real communication.

Bachelor of Arts course in English, Faculty of Liberal Arts of Maejo University is one of courses that is in the ongoing improvement. The mission is to improve curriculum to prepare the students for the coming of ASEAN community and to meet the Desired Graduate characteristics of ASEAN. However, there are some problems which are the serious barrier to enter ASEAN; for example, the curriculum and almost course contents and teaching and learning management have no reflects and integrations of knowledge about ASEAN. Also, the English Major students' English language ability needs being concerned. Thus, we should

develop curriculum and instruction in order to help students to be proficient and meet the standard of ASEAN citizen.

According to the information above, the researcher is seeking to develop the course of English for Industry and Service (LE 217). The guidelines for teaching multicultural society, the researcher is following what Banks (1994) suggested as Content Integration Dimension and Equity Pedagogy Dimension. Focusing on the first dimension, it is the idea of inserting multicultural diversity and differences into the lessons, adjusting teaching and learning method to suit the multicultural environment, and emphasizing multicultural content by showing and giving students multicultural examples and practices to illustrate multicultural concept. Equity Pedagogy Dimension is another one significant concept used to improve teaching and learning style by using a variety of learning and teaching formats and encouraging students to participate in the class and work together as a team. Equity pedagogy is the teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students to learn and understand diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society. One of primary methods of teaching in equity pedagogy is fostering cooperative method groups rather than having competition based learning. The academic achievement of students is increased when cooperative activities and strategies, rather than competitive ones, are used in instruction. Equity pedagogy uses these cooperative methods that ensure students have equal opportunity to achieve.

As mentioned above, the researcher sees that this concept can be integrated with the concept of Communicative Language Teaching. Both of these concepts share similarities in teaching and learning style. They focus on the cooperative and collaborative activities and strategies such as Role Play, Simulation, and Discussion Activity. Hymes (1981) also stated that the concept of communicative language teaching will help students be exposed to a real-life communication by practicing activities and doing tasks related to real communication; these can help students to practice their English language. The researcher believes that multicultural education and communicative language teaching approach are very interesting as well as important to help encourage the students to have a positive attitude towards ASEAN, multicultural society and develop proficiency in English of students.

### Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of English Multicultural Curriculum based on multicultural education and how effective are they?
2. Does communicative language teaching help to develop language skills?
3. What is level of student's attitudes towards multicultural society?

### Purposes of the Study

1. To develop English Multicultural Curriculum based on Multicultural Education
2. To develop language skills based on Communicative Language Teaching of the third year students, majoring in English, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Maejo University
3. To study the attitude of students towards multicultural society

### Target Group

The target group was 25 students from the third year English Major students, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Maejo University, Chiang Mai Thailand. They enrolled in the course of English for industry and service (LE 217) in the first semester of the academic year 2016. The content scope used in this research is the content of the course English for the industry and services (LE 217), by integrating with the two dimensions of multicultural education; Content Integration Dimension and Equity Pedagogy Dimension

### Variables

1. The independent variables were English Multicultural Curriculum and Communicative Language Teaching Approach.
2. The dependent variables were positive attitude towards multicultural society and language skills.

### Definitions of Terms

**1. English Multicultural Curriculum Development** refers to developing English for industry and service (LE 217) subject course through the curriculum development process. It integrates multicultural education into teaching and learning covering 1.) Content Integration; adding multicultural content of 10 member countries of ASEAN with tourism industry and service content and adapting method of teaching in accordance with the conditions of ASEAN community and 2.) Equity Pedagogy; adjusting teaching and learning methods into the

condition of multicultural society by teaching a variety of styles and by encouraging students to participate in the class thoroughly, either in expressing opinions or working together.

**2. Communicative Language Teaching** refers to language-oriented approaches that focus on student achievement and interaction directly with the language. It also enables students to use the language in real life situation or close to reality and enables learners to correctly and appropriately communicate through various media, learning sources, task-based language learning and learning activities; Information Gap, Jigsaw, Role Play, Simulation, Opinion Exchange, Interview, Group Discussion and Oral Presentation.

**3. Language Skills** refer to the ability to use English for communication, covering all four areas of speaking-listening, reading and writing. Speaking-listening is evaluated from content, vocabulary and grammar, fluency, organization and body language and voice. Reading is evaluated from comprehension, interpretation, and analysis. Writing is evaluated from content, vocabulary, language use and grammar, and organization.

**4. Attitude** refers to represents the opinions of students on the multiculturalism of ASEAN Community covering the aspects of economy, government and politics, society and culture.

## Research Instruments

### 1. Curriculum Development Instruments

The curriculum development instrument included four parts consisting of 1.) Survey 2.) Proto-Syllabus, 3.) Ten Lesson Plans, and 4.) Curriculum Evaluation. The instruments were developed according to the theories and principles of multicultural education and communicative language teaching and the requirements of English for Industry and Service Course (LE 217), Faculty of Liberal Arts, Maejo University. Each lesson plan was conducted in two periods. There were 15 periods in total. Each period took 90 minutes. The class met twice a week.

### 2. Lesson Development Instruments

The language skills were the ability to use English for communication, covering all four areas of speaking-listening, reading and writing. Speaking-listening is evaluated from content, vocabulary and grammar, fluency, organization and body language and voice. Reading is evaluated from comprehension, interpretation, and analysis. Writing is evaluated from content, vocabulary, language use and grammar, and organization.

### 3. Data Collecting Instruments

The instrument used for data collecting was the survey of student's attitudes towards the multiculturalism of ASEAN Community covering the aspects of economy, government and politics, society and culture.

#### **Data Collection**

The study was conducted the experiment and collected the data as follows:

- 1) Surveying student's general information, ASEAN background knowledge, needs and interests of teaching and learning management.
- 2) Collecting data of the student's language skills during and after completing using the curriculum consisting of 10 lesson plans based on multicultural education and applying an approach of Communicative Language Teaching.
- 3) Collecting data of student's attitudes towards multicultural society after completing curriculum implementation, covering 3 aspects; economy, government and politics, society and culture, 25 questions total.

#### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis was divided into three categories as follow:

- 1) Analyzing the data obtained from the survey by using basic statistics; mean and standard deviation
- 2) Analyzing the data obtained by evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum, the lesson plan, the four language skill assessment: Speaking-listening, reading and writing by using basic statistics, mean, percentage and standard deviation.
- 3) Analyzing the data obtained from the results of attitude towards multicultural society using basic statistics; mean, and standard deviation.

## Research Results

### Result 1. The Effectiveness of English Multicultural Curriculum

**Table 1** Mean, standard deviation and the effectiveness level of curriculum

Lesson Plan	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Effectiveness
Thailand: The Land of Smiles	4.60	0.10	Highest
Singapore: The Multi-ethnic City	4.47	0.06	High
Philippines: The Island Country	4.33	0.06	High
Laos: The Neighboring Country	4.58	0.06	Highest
Vietnam: Xinchao!	4.43	0.06	High
Cambodia: East meet West	4.37	0.06	High
Myanmar: The Golden Pagoda	4.50	0.00	High
Brunei: A Pearl of Southeast Asia	4.57	0.06	Highest
Indonesia: The Spice Islands	4.43	0.06	High
Malaysia: Multi-Cultural Country	4.53	0.06	Highest
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>0.07</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 1 shows the results of the curriculum development which was found that the results of the curriculum development based on the opinions of three experts, covering the curriculum template and 10 lesson plans, 30 hours total, the 10 lesson plans were at an average level of 4.43, with a standard deviation of 0.07, which was at a high level.

### Result 2. The Student's Language Skills

**Table 2** Mean, standard deviation, percentage and quality level of student's Language skills

Language Skills	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage	Level
Speaking-Listening	14.05	5.5	70.25	Good
Reading	15.02	1.4	73.80	Good
Writing	10.50	5.9	65.60	Quite Good



Table 2 shows that the result of the language skills with the communicative language teaching from the 10 lesson plans, the students had a good level of speaking-listening, reading, and writing skills at a relatively good level at 70.25, 73.80 and 65.6 percent, respectively.

### Result 3. The Student's Attitudes Towards Multicultural Society

**Table 3** Mean, standard deviation, and level of attitude of the students towards multicultural society

Opinion	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Attitude
Economy	4.75	0.23	Very Good
Government and Politics	4.21	0.45	Good
Society and Culture	4.85	0.26	Very Good
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.61</b>	<b>0.12</b>	<b>Very Good</b>

Table 3 shows that the students had a very good attitude towards ASEAN multicultural society at the mean level of 4.61 with standard deviation of 0.12. The student's attitudes toward social and cultural issues were the highest at the average level of 4.85 with the standard deviation of 0.26. For the economic issues, government and political issues, the mean was 4.75 with the standard deviation of 0.23 and 4.21 with the standard deviation of 0.45 respectively.

### Discussions

1. The effectiveness of English Multicultural Curriculum was at high level according to the following reasons:

Firstly, the content plays a crucial role in developing the curriculum. For selecting content for multicultural curriculum development, the study is based on Banks' ideas (1994), covering the dimension of Content Integration and Equity Pedagogy. The curriculum is developed by integrating the content of the ASEAN with the context of the tourism industry and services. In addition, the researcher prioritizes the content of the multicultural education starting from the level of acceptance and appreciation of one culture to the level of acceptance and appreciation of other cultures. For example, the first lesson plan, the content is about Thailand and other lesson plans are about the nine other ASEAN Member Countries.

By doing so, it will help students to develop their learning starting from their background and leading them to a level that reflects cultural diversity. Next example, the third lesson plan regarding Philippines, the researcher taught the language content relating to the tour in the first place. For the post-teaching phase, the research showed examples of tours guiding to major religious sites and inserted the knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity simultaneously.

Next, teaching and learning management was very useful in developing the curriculum. The researcher applied Banks' approach based on Equity Pedagogy Dimension. It offers a wide range of teaching styles, teaching methods, various media and learning resources, various evaluation and assessment to respond to the needs, interests, abilities and aptitudes of different learners to receive equal education. All learners can learn and have no different learning achievement. The activities used in this study also encouraged students to participate in the class thoroughly in discussions, exchanging opinions and comments, group work, and so on.

Furthermore, method of teaching and learning based on the concept of multicultural education was applied in the study. According to Grant and Sleeter (2003), the curriculum should include the following: the teaching and learning activities are varied because of the level of learning ability of each student and must be consistent with needs, interests and individual learning guidelines, to make everyone be involved in creating a successful learning experience, and to develop knowledge about multiculturalism. For example, in lesson plan 2, Singapore, to help students understand the multicultural issue of this country, method of role playing was used because the role playing is another way to learn and develop awareness of social and cultural differences. Role-playing helps learners learn and explore the similarities and differences naturally. It enables learners to practice the use of knowledge, ideas, problem solving and decision making. Learners understand the behavior and feelings of others. Learners have adapted their behavior in the right way. Learners have a good understanding of their attitudes and ideas.

The lesson plan 4, Laos, is another example. The method of simulation based on multicultural education was applied in the study. As Patricia and Leslie (2003) presented that teaching by using simulation scenarios simulates a real event for the students to gain knowledge, have the opportunity to practice various skill process, such as a problem-solving process, interaction process with others, communication process, decision-making process, process of thinking and coping with different situations, including the development of attitude and values. The result of using such teaching methods was very interest. The students gained

knowledge, had understanding, paid attention to the situation, shared comments, accepted others' opinions, willing to co-solve problems, and showed a better attitude towards Laos.

In addition, based on the idea of Kemp and Smellie (1989), they stated that media must be created for understanding abstract because the learner will be able to understand and perceive the subject matter as well as stimulate the thinking and the attention for practicing. To make learning so effective, a variety of media was used in the study to help learner to understand the content clearly and to think through the process. Next, learning resources will help learners to learn multicultural issue very well. According to Yongyuan (2007), instructor as important learning resources needed to adapt teaching methods to facilitate learners' equality. The instructor is very important in making students be positive about diverse society and culture. The researcher learned about ASEAN to gain a better understanding of ASEAN to lead to an acceptance of the concept of cultural differences and coexistence in diverse societies by studying the concept, theories in teaching management that enhance learners' attitudes. These help learners understand and accept cultural differences and diversity.

Lastly, authentic assessment plays a significant part in developing the curriculum. Grant and Sleeter (2003) stated authentic assessment is necessary for instruction. It should be regarding needs, interest, learning skills and language skills of each learner. It is the evaluation and assessment focusing on the student's ability to express understanding and thinking skills since students need integrating knowledge and skills in doing activities. Besides, it focuses on what students learn, how they learn, and why learn so. Authentic assessment can respond to the goal of the multicultural curriculum because it can change the behavior of learners as well as the student's skills, knowledge and attitudes.

2. The results of language skills based on Communicative Language Teaching Approach.

The results of the language skills had a good level which can be discussed as follows.

Focusing on speaking-listening, Littlewood (1981) proposed guideline that should be implemented by the instructor. Instructors should give the learners the opportunity to speak as much as possible, provide various speaking and listening activities and use real media to make learners be interested, excited, entertained and intently listen (Savignon,1983). Steps for language skills teaching based on communicative language teaching also plays a crucial role. Warm up, presentation, practice, production and wrap up step were very useful in promoting language skills. Warm up step will make and interest students ready to classroom activity.

Presentation step provided accuracy language use to the learners to help them practice and apply what the learners studied in the next step of practice and production respectively. The learners need to have knowledge of vocabulary, structure, and language use in communication to practice using the language and they have learned in the presentation and production step correctly. Conclusion step also helps learners understand and see their progress of skills.

For reading skill, the learners did it at a very good level for several reasons; for instance, a variety of teaching materials and real-world instructional media, such as brochures, pictures, journals and so forth to improve reading skills were used in the study. The advantage of using real media to use in teaching will make students familiar with and it will find on everyday life will encourage students to be more eager and interested in reading. Using a variety of exercises in this study helps develop reading skill as well. As Jolly and Bolitho (1998) said exercises make student a keen interest and fun. The practice of repetitive exercises through multiple formats will also help to develop students' reading skills well. Exercises are important tools that teachers use to examine students' knowledge, understanding, and skill development in a variety of subjects.

For writing skill, the learning outcomes assessed was just quite good. It may be due to several reasons. As mentioned in the importance and background of the problem that English major students were relatively low in language ability and almost courses of English programs focus on linguistic stream and literature stream. Skill Stream courses are very limited which made it not be enough for developing writing skill. In exercise of writing short answers for quizzes or some writing exercises, such as language for tour guide, students did well because they have basic knowledge of vocabulary, structural language for communication, so they could apply those knowledge to perform those exercises. However, students' writing skill outcomes in various tasks such as role-play script writing, travel diary, summary writing, and reflective writing help students improve writing skill. As Taraporn (2014) said that task-based approach based on communicative language teaching encourage learners develop language skills.

3. The results of student's attitudes towards multicultural society were at a good level which can be discussed that the development of curriculum based on the concepts of multicultural education can develop good attitudes towards multicultural society. Both Content Integration and Equity Pedagogy dimension will help develop the right experiences to help students improve the skills, develop knowledge, increase understanding and have attitude needed to live in an ASEAN community composing differences and diversity. Attitudes

result from learning occurred in the interactions. If you learn that that thing is good, you will have a positive attitude towards it. Also, Allport (1967) states that helping learners develop positive attitudes must involve collaboration rather than competition. To arrange activity such as role play, discussion, use of situation simulation model; these activities help students analyze other people from a variety of perspectives, have a greater understanding of racism. The change in attitudes of students is evident from the example of classroom activities, like discussion activities and exchanging idea activity which is used in this study.

The instructor is the person who plays an important role in strengthening rational attitudes towards racial values to learners through the teaching process and acting as a good role model for the learner, therefore, the perception, attitudes and behavior of the instructor about ethnic differences, religion and culture of students must be in a positive direction. The instructor must accept the concept of cultural differences and coexistence in diverse societies. The instructor must have knowledge, attitude and skills to create classroom atmosphere and organize activities in lessons in order for the learner to understand and accept cultural differences and diversity. The instructor must be free of prejudice, bias towards learners who are different from each other and learn from each learner to communicate and practice teaching activities appropriately and promote mutual recognition.

### **Suggestions**

There should be the study of educational achievement by multicultural education in other dimensions, like dimension of Knowledge Construction, Prejudice Reduction, and Empowering School Culture and Social Structure. Also, there should be the study of educational achievement by applying multicultural education in other subjects. Next, it is a good idea to do a conduction of a secondary experimental research to compare differences between two groups who study based on multicultural learning management and learning management.

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