Thai Cultural Aspects in English Language Textbooks in a Thai Secondary School

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Abstract

This study explores Thai cultural aspects in six English language textbooks called *World Wonders 1* and *My World Series 2 - 6* used at a secondary school located in the district of Sai Yok, Kanchanaburi province, Thailand. The findings reveal that Thai culture in these textbooks can be categorized into five main aspects, which are 1) products (*rice, sepak takraw, tuk-tuk*); 2) practices (*cooking, eating and Thai boxing*); 3) persons (*Siamese king, Vanessa-Mae*); 4) perspectives (*Thai people, traffic congestion, food, weather, and Thai language*); and 5) places (*tourist sites such as Phi Phi Island, Phuket, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Lopburi*). This study potentially offers some possible implications for English language textbook development that is culturally appropriate for language teachers and learners at a secondary school in Thailand.

Keywords: English language textbooks, Thai cultural aspects, textbook development, secondary school

Introduction

Textbooks are commonly used as a basis and supplement for English language teaching by most teachers who can be reassured that they have ready-made materials along with detailed teacher's guides that provide suggestions, activities, and resources (Harmer, 2007). Textbooks also introduce students of English cultural diversity that can foster their cultural awareness (Wu, 2010). Commercially produced English language textbooks, however, understandably aim to reach a wide audience as many as possible; and thus, cultural contexts are likely to be based on American or British culture (Alptekin, 1993; Willis & Willis, 2001). However, since English has become an international language, this leads to an increased awareness of the importance of cultural aspects represented in English language textbooks that should incorporate more multicultural aspects in order to enhance learners' awareness of cultural diversity in English language teaching and learning.

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According to Shardakova & Pavlenko (2004), English language textbooks hold a unique authority to construct and mediate alternative cultural and linguistic aspects by imagining them for students. Despite the fact that language learners need to learn cultures of the target language, Breen (2001) suggests the language learners are required to understand their own personal identity and value so that they can appreciate the diversity of the world around them. It is thus best to avoid misrepresentation, stereotyping, and oversimplification of these cultures that could potentially cause students cross-cultural miscommunication, frustration, offence, conflict, and resistance. Especially in the era of globalization, Graddol (2006) argues that language learners are expected to maintain national identity through English used primarily for international communication. It is thus vital to train them to compare and contrast cultural differences to their local and familiar cultures, which can lead to a better understanding and appreciation of differing cultural values. Learners' own culture must be critically explored so that their beliefs and attitudes will not be dominated and subjugated by the Anglophone culture represented in commercial English language teaching materials (Corbett, 2003).

With regard to English language textbooks used by teachers and students in Thailand, they are likely to be imported from native-English-speaking countries, which may be used as sources of cultural representations and references (Greil, 2004). Some of the international publishers include Cambridge University Press, Longman, MacMillan, McGraw-Hill, and Oxford University Press, which have long been available in Thai educational markets. Suaysuwan & Kapitzke (2005), for instance, investigate "*The Oxford English Course for Thailand Series 1 & 2*" written by Burrow (1960a; 1960b), which the categories of Thai cultural aspects in these early English language textbooks in Thailand were explored. The findings reveal that these textbooks represent Thailand as an agricultural-based society with an abundance of natural resources and the mundane daily life activities of Thai children in rural and urban settings during the post-war British colonialism (Suaysuwan & Kapitzke, 2005). This suggests that English language teaching and learning today is increasingly related to society and culture at both national and international scales. Consequently, it is essential for both teachers and learners to be aware of local and global issues that can facilitate their English language teaching and learning. Otherwise, learners can inevitably form their cultural bias that would have a

negative impact on their attitudes toward other 'non-Anglophone' countries including their own. Yet, cultural aspects in English language textbooks used in Thai schools are under-explored.

This study, therefore, aims to shed some new lights on investigating Thai cultural aspects represented in English language textbooks called '*World Wonders*' 1 and '*My World*' Series 2-6, which are widely used in Thai secondary schools nationwide. The results of this study may not only minimize the marginalization of values and lived experiences of Thai secondary school students, but also enable them to share and value their own cultural identities with students from other countries. Consequently, cultural differences and stereotypes can be alleviated. This study provides possible implications for collaborations between English language educators, authors, publishers, and teachers in order to create culturally appropriate English language textbooks and teaching materials for secondary school teachers and students.

Literature review

Studies regarding representations of cultures in English textbooks have been well documented in terms of material design, pedagogy, and research. Feng & Byram (2002) point out that the way cultures of both target and learners' own native cultures represented in the English language textbooks depends on writers' awareness and understanding of cultural studies with regard to teaching in foreign language education. According to Yamada (2010), for example, English language textbooks used at a junior high school level in Japan portray Japanese cultural diversity based primarily on Japanese people residing in native-speaking countries due to Japanese socio-economic mobility. However, Ziaei (2012) points out that the English language textbook series *American English File* used in Iran represent the UK and the USA as the main cultures as well as Japan as the most frequently mentioned Asian country, while Iranian culture is not included at all. Although these studies focus on cultural aspects in English textbooks, it is important to have a structured framework that can enable researchers to analyze cultural categories in order to gain a systematic investigation.

In this study, the conceptual framework is primarily based on Yuen's (2011) categories of cultural aspects that are drawn upon two English textbook series called *Longman Elect* and *Treasure Plus* used at a secondary school level in Hong Kong. Yuen

(2011) states that "language can be considered an 'artifact' or a system of code (products) used, to signify thoughts (perspectives), for communication (practices), and by different people (persons)" (p. 459). Consequently, Yuen (2011) provides four main cultural aspects including *products*, *practices*, *persons*, and *perspectives* are presented; each of which will be explained as follows. First of all, '*products*' include movies (e.g. *Harry Potter*, *Spiderman*); television programs (e.g. *Survivor*); foods (e.g. *fish and chips*, *tom yum soup*, *pasta*, *kimchi*); merchandise (e.g. *Barbie*, '*sari*'); print (e.g. *Time Magazine*); tourist sites (e.g. *Lotte World*, *Colosseum*, *Universal Studios*), and literary works (e.g. poems and stories). Products from Africa (e.g. *Kamuzinda Christian Orphanage in Uganda*, *Pyramids of Giza*, *Tsavo National Park in Kenya*); Asia, 'non-English-speaking' Western countries (e.g. *Eiffel Tower*) are under-represented. The second cultural aspect '*practices*' consists of customs (e.g. *Thanksgiving*, *Sapporo Snow Festival*); daily life activities (e.g. *sports such as baseball, football, basketball in America*, *street games in India*); and society (e.g. *recycling programs in New Zealand, Icelanders living in Reyklavik, poverty in Africa, schools in India*).

Thirdly, '*perspectives*' of foreign cultures in Yuen's (2011) study comprise inspirations (e.g. *equality, Aesop's Fables*); myths (e.g. *horoscopes, superstitions*); and viewpoints (e.g. *entertainments in the US and UK*). These perspectives are derived from the West rather than the Asian and African contexts. Finally, although the '*persons*' cultural aspect includes famous people from different fields (e.g. *Stephen Hawking, Aung San Suu Kyi*), there are more well-known people from English-speaking countries than those from Asia and Africa. It is undoubtedly clear that Yuen's (2011) study reveals that there is a minimum representation of Thai cultural aspects in English textbooks used in Hong Kong secondary schools.

In Thai educational contexts, it is important to explore whether English language textbooks reflect a diversity of cultural contexts and include cross-cultural components that can raise Thai learners' awareness in order to enhance effective and appropriate intercultural communication (Laopongharn & Sercombe, 2009; Nipaspong, 2011). Baker (2008) claims Thai students should be encouraged to explore cultural diversity in textbooks and compare them with their Thai culture. Wongbiasaj (2003) suggests that commercially ready-made international textbooks are suitable for learners who learn cultures of native-speakers of English as a second culture; thus, textbooks

used as core materials in the Thai educational context are not culturally appropriate that may not prepare Thai learners for their culture learning situations. It is, therefore, vital to provide an opportunity for young Thai learners to reflect their own individual cultural experience and strengthen their understanding of their Thai cultural heritage (Ratanaphruks, 2012).

The aforementioned studies suggest how cultural stereotypes in English language textbooks can be misrepresented or generalized by textbook writers or designers who can eventually lead to a mismatch of cross-cultural understanding among English language learners. Therefore, how and the extent to which Thai cultural aspects are represented in English textbooks entitled '*World Wonders*' 1 and '*My World*' *Series 2-6* employed at a particular secondary school are the main scopes of this current study.

Research methodology
Research setting

The research setting in this study was a secondary school located in the district of Sai Yok, Kanchanaburi province. This school was chosen because it was part of the university social responsibility project for the local community in order to enhance the quality of education for teachers, students, and the school. Based on the Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 with regard to English as a compulsory subject at the secondary school level, six commercial ELT textbooks including *World Wonders 1* and *My World Series 2 - 6* were approved by the Ministry of Education to be used in Thai secondary schools. Yet, schools were given freedom to select any textbook title of their own choice due to their socio-cultural contexts and students' English proficiency.

These selected textbooks were widely used in secondary schools in Kanchanaburi as they were recommended by Secondary Educational Service Area in Kanchanaburi. The head of foreign languages department gave these textbooks which had been used in this school for a year to the researcher for the investigation in order to improve English language teaching and learning in this school. The Grade 7 textbook called *World Wonders 1* was written by Michele Crawford and published by Heinle Cengage Learning (Hampshire, UK) in 2010. It was reprinted and distributed in Thailand by Mac Press Co. Ltd. Its target learners were Grade 7 (Mattayomsuksa 1) students aged 12 years old. The other five textbooks entitled *My World Series 2 – 6* were written by Manuel dos Santos and published by McGraw-Hill (New York, USA) in 2006. They were

reprinted and distributed by Thai Watana Panich Publishing. They aimed for Grades 8-12 (Mattayomsuksa 2-6) students aged between 13-17 years old. These textbooks were compulsory and required for all students, approximately more than 700 students from Grades 7-12, because they served as a main teaching material according to the requirements of Thailand's Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008.

Data collection and analysis

In order to collect the data, these textbooks were initially skimmed for their general presentations in terms of content, topics, illustrations and written texts. According to LaBelle (2010), coding technique for textbook research depends on researcher's observation and interpretation of the narrative texts and illustrations within the scope of the study. In this study, each page of these textbooks was later scanned for the overall cultural information represented, which enabled the researcher to observe their cultural aspects as a whole. Each page was then carefully scanned for Thai cultural aspects represented in terms of written texts, which were manually coded according to Yuen's (2011) categories.

Content analysis was employed in this study. Wallen & Fraenkel (2001) state that content analysis is an appropriate research tool that explores particular written words, texts or visual contents of selected documents. Written texts stated in these textbooks were qualitatively analyzed according to Yuen's (2011) content analysis of cultural categories in English language textbooks at a secondary school level. Thai cultural aspects in these textbooks are represented in terms of their qualitative contents consisting of *products, practices, persons,* and *perspectives*. Moreover, there is an emerging cultural aspect called *places,* which is an additional category that mainly represents famous tourist sites in Thailand. The following section will present these five cultural categories in turn.

Findings

This section presents and discusses the main findings by presenting the extracts from the written texts stated in the textbooks, which can be categorized into *products, practices, persons, perspectives,* and *places* as follows.

1. Products

In this study, there are three main Thai cultural artifacts, namely rice, '*sepak takraw*,' and '*tuk-tuk*,' which will be discussed as the following.

Extract 1: Rice

Rice is usually served steamed or fried. It is a staple food in Asian countries, and has fed more people over a long period of time than any other crop. In Thailand the same word, khao, is used for both food and rice.

(*My World # 5*, p.80)

This extract represents rice as a main Thai food through acknowledging a Thai word '*khao*,' which Thai students can relate to their daily consumption and locality in terms of different types of rice grown in their respective regions in Thailand. Rice is also one of the cultural elements in Suaysuwan & Kapitzke's (2005) study, which confirms that it is considered the staple food among Thai people.

Extract 2: Sepak Takraw

Can you imagine a sport that is a combination of soccer, volleyball, and gymnastics, played on a badminton court? There is really a sport like this. It's called sepak takraw. The name comes from two languages. Sepak is "kick" in Malay, and takraw is "ball" in Thai. Sepak takraw is a very popular sport in Asia and is growing rapidly.

(*My World # 2*, p.71)

This extract is suitable for learning linguistic differences between Thai and Malay with regard to the word '*sepak takraw*,' which is now one of the famous regional sports in Southeast Asia.

Extract 3: Tuk-Tuk

In Thailand, the tuk-tuk is a popular way of transporting people for short trips. People on their way to school or work, shoppers and business people, all ride on tuk-tuks. The tuk-tuk is like a motorcycle with three wheels. It has a small open cabin in the back for passengers. The tuk-tuk gets its name from the noise that its engine makes. It's faster than the taxis because it can move easily in and out of heavy traffic. Visitors from the West are not used to this form of transportation, and the tuk-tuk remains an attraction for tourists.

(*My World # 6*, p.2)

This extract states that '*tuk-tuk*' is a renowned vehicle among foreign tourists in Thailand. When communicating with foreigners, Thai students can easily refer to it as '*tuk-tuk*' instead of a tricycle, which creates a mutual comprehensibility between Thai students and their foreign interlocutors. It should, however, be noted that '*tuk-tuk*' is normally used in Bangkok and its vicinity instead of the whole country. It is clear that rice (*khao*), '*sepak takraw*,' and '*tuk-tuk*' illustrate not only common products for Thai learners, but are also internationally well-known among foreigners. These products can also be referred with Thai instead of English, and this can promote Thai students' national identity and pride.

The issues of Thai people's practices will then be discussed in the next section.

2. Practices

Cooking, eating, and Thai boxing are familiar practiced in Thailand. How and the extent to which each activity is practiced will be discussed next.

Extract 4: Cooking

Cooks in Thailand are used to _____ meals with lots of chilies.

(*My World # 6*, p.20)

The most appropriate answer for the blank in this extract is '*preparing*,' which suggests that Thai dishes are generally perceived as hot and spicy due to '*lots of chilies*,' and that can create a cultural space for discussion with Thai students whether this extract truly represents Thai way of cooking.

Extract 5: Eating

In Thailand, people eat grasshoppers.

(*My World # 5*, p.83)

Similarly, the above extract claims that eating grasshoppers is a common practice in Thailand, which sounds rather exaggerating and superficial because grasshoppers are, of course, eaten by some Thai people who may find them delicious and even nutritious. Yet, eating grasshoppers can negatively be perceived by others who may consider grasshoppers a rather 'strange' insect that is normally avoided by foreigners.

Extract 6: Thai Boxing

> *In Thailand, everyone loves Thai boxing. Thai boxing is different from boxing in other countries. You can use your hands and arms, but you can also kick. You must be strong too.*
>
> (*World Wonders # 1*, p.68)

Another practice in Thailand that has become a world-renowned sport is Thai boxing, which is properly described. The statement "*In Thailand, everyone loves Thai boxing*" can be over-stated because how and the extent to which all Thai people love Thai boxing is still debatable. This statement should, therefore, be changed to "*the majority of Thai people love Thai boxing,*" which sounds more truthfully represented.

The cultural aspect of '*persons*' will be presented next.

3. Persons

There are very few cultural representations with regard to persons including Siamese King and Vanessa-Mae, presented below.

Extract 7: Siamese King

> *Gengkis Khan was _____.*
> *a.   a samurai*
> *b.   a Siamese king*
> *c.   a Mongol conqueror*
>
> (*My World # 2*, p.95)

A Siamese king is one of the three choices for this fill-in-the-blank exercise that, at least, helps Thai students not to choose as the Siamese king is not related to Gengkis Khan, who was a Mongol conqueror. The word '*Siamese*' can also be further discussed in relation to Thailand that was formerly known as '*Siam*.'

Extract 8: Vanessa-Mae

> *Vanessa-Mae Vanakorn Nicholson was born on October 27, 1978, in Singapore. The daughter of a Chinese mother and a Thai father, Vanessa-Mae moved to London at the age of four with her mother, who was an accomplished concert pianist.*
>
> (*My World # 6*, p.42)

Being born to a Thai father, half-Thai Vanessa-Mae was once famous for her brilliant violin talent that had inspired a lot of young Thais to follow her footsteps. Although she had set a good role model for Thai teenagers, she might not be familiar for Thai students to relate themselves to in this present time. English teachers could elicit students' interests regarding their favorite musician in Thailand to create a closer familiarity for a better discussion.

4. Perspectives

The following topic is from a Thai man who comments about his money spending.

Extract 9: Money Spending

Money is the cause of a lot of problems. I'd keep some for myself, and
I'd give the rest away. Noi, Bangkok

(*My World # 4*, p.75).

Noi viewed money as a cause of troubles; as a result, he preferred to have some money to live by and donate the rest to others. His comments suggest that he was not money hungry, but rather a generous and sufficient person, which could provide teachers and students a further discussion with regard to how and the extent to which Thai people spend their money and attitudes toward donation.

This following extracts reveal perspectives regarding Thai culture in terms of people, traffic in Bangkok, food and weather, and the language, which are exchanged in the conversation between a Thai woman and a foreign man, and money spending by a Thai man.

Extract 10: People

Mike: Thank you for bringing me to this great restaurant.
Kanya: You're welcome. So, tell me, Mike, are you getting used to living
           in Thailand?
Mike: Yeah. I haven't had a lot of trouble adjusting to life here so far.
Kanya: Really? What was the easiest thing?
Mike: I would say the people. They're so easy to relate to. They are
           kind, friendly, and willing to help.

(*My World # 6*, p.3)

This extract illustrates that Kanya invited Mike for a meal in order to talk about his living in Thailand in general. She was rather surprised by his answer that he had no difficulties adjusting himself in Thailand as she could have expected that he might have encountered a rough time due to his living adjustment. His reply about Thai people's personalities for being kind, friendly, and helpful, revealed his positive attitude from his actual encounter, which could differ from other foreigners' experiences. Kanya also continued to ask him whether he found traffic in Bangkok stressful like she did.

Extract 11: Traffic in Bangkok

Kanya: Don't you find the traffic in Bangkok stressful?

Mike: It doesn't bother me in the least. I lived in Sao Paulo before I moved here, so I'm used to heavy traffic. Also I prefer taking the subway to driving a car.

(*My World # 6*, p.3)

Like Sao Paulo, Bangkok is well known for traffic congestion that did not cause any stress for Mike, who also liked to take a subway instead of driving. The term '*subway*,' the American English meaning an underground railway in a city, implies that there is a subway in Bangkok that is portrayed as a modernized city. Food and weather were the following topics that Kanya would like to learn from Mike.

Extract 12: Food and weather

Kanya: And what things aren't you used to yet?

Mike: I'm not used to the spicy food and the hot weather. Those are going to take a while.

(*My World # 6*, p.3)

Spicy food and hot weather seem to be '*typical*' difficulties foreigners come across in Thailand although not all Thai foods are spicy, and there are three seasons (i.e. hot, cool, and rainy seasons) in Thailand. Thai language was the last topic of discussion between Kanya and Mike.

Extract 13: Thai Language

    Kanya   :   What about the Thai language?

    Mike   :   I'm able to communicate the basic things, but I still find
                     speaking Thai very hard. You see, I'm a slow learner, and
                     Thai has all these different tones, which is difficult for
                     Westerners.

    Kanya   :   Are you taking language classes?

    Mike   :   No. I was thinking of hiring a really good teacher. Would
                     you be interested in teaching me?

    Kanya   :   OK. If you help me with my reports in English.

                                                    (*My World # 6*, p.3)

Thai language is perceived as a tonal language that is challenging for Westerners like Mike to master, especially in speaking. Kanya was asked to teach him the language under the condition that he had to help her with reports in English in return. In sum, this series of conversation represents some common Thai socio-cultural aspects, namely, people, traffic congestion, spicy food and hot weather, and Thai language, through the foreign man's perceptions.

The emerging cultural aspect of '*places'* will be discussed as follows.

5. Places

In addition to Yuen's (2011) cultural categories, tourist attractions in different famous places in Thailand are considered as national treasures being promoted and advertised by Tourism Authority of Thailand; and thus, they are recognized by people all over the world. Despite the fact that Thailand is definitely a tourist destination, a few places such as Phi Phi Island, Phuket, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Lopburi, are particularly chosen to represent tourist attractions in these textbooks.

Extract 14: Phi Phi Island

    Place: Phi Phi Island

    Movie: The Beach

    Actor: Leonardo di Caprio   (*My World # 6*, p.95)

Phi Phi Island is considered as a product as it has always been used as a Hollywood filming location and well-known natural treasure in Thailand. Although *The Beach* was, to some extent, famous among movie goers, some Thai students at this

secondary school in the district of Sai Yok, Kanchanburi province might not even know what, who, and where it was. English teachers may, however, show the movie *The Bridge over the River Kwai*, which was filmed in the areas located near the school, which can enable students to be proud of their local community that was once on screen worldwide.

Extract 15: Itinerary

October 15	*Bangkok*	*The Royal Palace*
October 19	*Chiang Mai*	*Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep*
October 22	*Phuket*	*Beaches*

(*My World # 5*, p.29)

This travel itinerary illustrates main provinces i.e. Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Phuket, with its famous tourist attractions such as The Royal Palace, Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep, and beaches, respectively. It is important for English teachers to keep in mind that Thai students may not previously have visited or known about these places, which may discourage them to engage in the lesson. Teachers can make use of local tourist attractions such as the historical rail line from World War II, elephant camp sites, River Kwai, and natural caves, which are culturally familiar for the students in this school, to be employed in language learning tasks.

Extract 16: Phuket

Tilly Smith was on Maikhao beach at Phuket in Thailand, and she
noticed that the water started to 'go funny,' and the tide went out all
of a sudden.

(*My World # 4*, p.71)

This extract focuses on a tourist who experienced the tsunami in Maikhao beach in Phuket, which could stimulate students' response by showing them news that shocked the world. Teachers can explain the expression '*go funny*,' which means something is going wrong, to students. Although students in Kanchanaburi province are not likely to have a direct exposure to the tsunami, they can be asked about natural disasters such as earthquakes or forest fires that normally take place in Kanchanaburi province.

Extract 17: Lopburi

> *The story is about monkeys. It happens in Lopburi, Thailand.*
> 1. *In the town/ village of Lopburi, Thailand, monkeys are everywhere.*
> 2. *They let monkeys run around the streets and cause problems/ trouble.*
> 3. *Most people in Thailand are Buddhists and for many of them, monkeys are very important animals/ heroes.*
> 4. *Every day people give food to the monkeys. They think that it will bring them good/ nice luck.*
> 5. *Every year there are a lot of people who come and help with the monkey festival / banquet.*

(*World Wonders # 1*, p.120)

This extract is about '*Monkey Party*' annually taken place in Lopburi province. It is an exercise following watching a video that demonstrates what Monkey Party is all about and how it is celebrated. Although some of the exercise items (i.e. 1, 2, and 5) represent the nature of the '*Monkey Party*,' the rest of the exercise items (i.e. 3 and 4) require further discussion whether these may be applicable to other Thai people's beliefs whether monkeys are symbols or heroes of luck.

The following section discusses possible ways to develop English language textbooks used in Thai educational contexts.

Discussions

In this study, these Thai cultural aspects are selectively chosen to be included in these commercial textbooks for secondary school students to be aware of cultural diversity and differences. Drawing upon the findings of this study, it is evident that Thai cultural aspects are, to some extent, recognized by foreign textbook writers. *Perspectives* are the most represented cultural aspect as they reflect how Thai people might express their thoughts and opinions, especially with other foreign speakers. *Places* are also mainly included as they are relatively recognizable.   As these textbooks are commercially produced, *persons* are least shown since students in other countries may not know particular Thai people to whom they cannot relate. *Products* are quite typical to students especially in Southeast Asia.

The findings of this study are similar to a research project implemented in Indonesia with regard to the inclusion of cultural elements in English language textbooks that enabled learners' intercultural communication.   This project was initiated by

Kirkpatrick (2010), who was involved in 'Asian culture-based project' funded by the Australia Indonesia Institute with the aim to produce an English textbook entitled '*Culture Based English for College Students*' for Indonesian university students. Although the content of this textbook was mainly based on Indonesian cultures such as '*Ayam Taliwang*' (Indonesian cuisine), '*Wayang*' (Traditional arts), and its capital city, this textbook provided students the opportunities to discuss and explain their own cultural heritage and values to non-Indonesian counterparts through English (Kirkpatrick, 2010, p.184). Even though this project was aimed at a university level, its initiative is practical and possible for the English language teaching in Thailand. As Thailand's English Language Basic Education Core Curriculum 2008 aims to equip young Thai learners to be aware of their own and other cultures in order to gear them for the globalized society (Nomnian, 2013), it is worthwhile for textbook writers, Thai teachers of English and scholars to create English textbooks based on Thai and regional cultures that can prepare our learners for the region and the world. Corbett (2003) calls for intercultural textbooks written in partnership between native and non-native speakers who can share their different cultural values to meet the target needs of a particular society. In respond to the need of culturally appropriate English language learning resources and materials for secondary school students, English language textbook writers and designers should adopt a more critical view when developing their textbooks.

Although there are some English language textbooks developed and produced by Thai writers and publishers, cultural elements such as the use of sexist language are not appropriately addressed (Na Pattalung, 2008). It is, nevertheless, crucial for English language textbook writers to balance local and international cultural elements that are beneficial and relevant for students in their particular socio-cultural and educational contexts. Tomlinson (2012) also suggests that language teachers should incorporate localized and personalized cultural aspects into their lessons or even develop textbooks that can represent learners' inner voices. This study hopes to encourage Thai writers, scholars, and relevant stakeholders to develop English language teaching textbooks by balancing students' local cultures and intercultural issues that can allow them to further discuss their own and other cultures while learning English. Culture-based English language textbooks produced by Thai writers for Thai learners can, therefore, potentially enhance both teachers' and students' awareness of the interdependent relationship

between language and culture, which can have an impact on their language teaching methodology, material selection and development in order to meet the English language education goal in this globalized society.

Conclusion

This study has significant implications for textbook writers, scholars, and Thai teachers of English who not only wish to uphold Thai students' cultural identities and values, but also respect the diversity of cultures represented both inside and outside of the English language textbooks that can transform them into regional and global citizens. It is important for teachers of English to raise language learners' awareness of different cultures so that their beliefs and attitudes will not be dominated by the Anglophone cultures represented in commercial English language textbooks. There should be a further step taken with regard to the production of culture-based English language textbooks in Thailand that can enable our learners to talk about and explain their own cultural aspects to outsiders through English. This study hopes to shed some new lights on cross-cultural elements in the development of English language textbooks that can potentially offer a cultural space where teachers and learners at a secondary school level can share and learn from one another for a better understanding of our multicultural society.

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