

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AMERICAN CULTURAL BACKGROUND
KNOWLEDGE AND THE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY OF
THAI STUDENTS MAJORING IN ENGLISH

A THESIS
BY
TUNTIGA POLLAP

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in English
at Srinakharinwirot University
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AN ABSTRACT

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TUNTIGA POLLAP

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This study was conducted to investigate the relationship between the American cultural knowledge and English proficiency of Thai English major students. The participants took the American Cultural Test developed by the researcher to measure their American cultural knowledge, and the English Language and Instruction System Placement (ELLIS) Test to measure their English language proficiency. A one-tailed Spearman's rho correlation was used to measure the relationship between students' American cultural knowledge and their English proficiency. From the calculation, a positive relationship was found between the American cultural knowledge and the English proficiency of the participants. A *t* test was used to determine if the cultural knowledge of participants at the university in central Thailand was higher than those studying at regional universities. It was also found that the mean score of participants in the central area was significantly higher than in the south, but there was no significant difference compared to the central and northern areas. However, the results of the study found that the mean scores of participants in the northeast was significantly higher than in the central region. In conclusion, the cultural knowledge of participants in the central area was not higher than in the remote areas, except in the southern area, and there was a positive relationship between participants' scores on American Cultural Test and ELLIS Placement Test. Therefore, American culture could be a predictor for English proficiency

ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความรู้วัฒนธรรมอเมริกันและความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ
ของนิสิตไทยวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ

บทคัดย่อ
ของ
ทัศนิกา พลลาภ

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา
ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาการศึกษามหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ

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การวิจัยนี้สร้างขึ้นเพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความรู้วัฒนธรรมอเมริกันและความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของนิสิตไทยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นวิชาเอก กลุ่มตัวอย่างของงานวิจัยนี้ได้ทำแบบทดสอบความรู้วัฒนธรรมอเมริกันซึ่งผู้วิจัยได้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อวัดความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมอเมริกันและกลุ่มตัวอย่างได้ทำแบบทดสอบทางภาษาอังกฤษในโปรแกรม English Language and Instruction System Placement (ELLIS) Test เพื่อวัดความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ การคำนวณหาค่าสัมประสิทธิ์สหสัมพันธ์สเปียร์แมนแบบทางเดียวได้นำมาใช้เพื่อวัดความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมอเมริกันและความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ ผลจากการคำนวณพบความสัมพันธ์ทางบวกระหว่างความรู้วัฒนธรรมอเมริกันและความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง และ T test ได้นำมาใช้เพื่อใช้วัดความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมอเมริกันของกลุ่มตัวอย่างว่าความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมอเมริกันของกลุ่มตัวอย่างในภาคกลางสูงกว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างในภูมิภาคหรือไม่ ผลการคำนวณพบว่าคะแนนเฉลี่ยของกลุ่มตัวอย่างในภาคกลางสูงกว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างในภาคใต้อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ แต่ไม่มีความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติระหว่างคะแนนเฉลี่ยของกลุ่มตัวอย่างในภาคกลางและภาคเหนือ ในทางกลับกันผลการคำนวณพบว่าคะแนนเฉลี่ยของกลุ่มตัวอย่างในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือสูงกว่าคะแนนเฉลี่ยของกลุ่มตัวอย่างในภาคกลางอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ สรุปได้ว่าความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมอเมริกันได้ของกลุ่มตัวอย่างในภาคกลางไม่สูงกว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างในภูมิภาคยกเว้นภาคใต้และมีความสัมพันธ์ทางบวกระหว่างคะแนนวัฒนธรรมอเมริกันและคะแนนความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษของนักเรียน ดังนั้นความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมอเมริกันน่าจะสามารถเป็นเป็นตัวทำนายความรู้ทางภาษาอังกฤษได้

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
I. Background of the Study	1
Relationship between Language and Culture	3
Foreign Language Learning and Cultural Instruction	5
Foreign Language Learning and Cultural instruction in Thailand	6
Selection of American Culture as Representative of Target culture	7
Statement of Problem	8
Hypotheses	9
Significant of the Study	10
Methodology	10
Participants	10
Selection of the universities	10
Selection of the participants	11
Instrumentation	11
American Culture Test	11
The English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test	12
Attitudes towards American Culture Survey	12
Data collection procedures	13
Data analysis	13
Confidentiality of the participants	14

Limitations of the Study	14
Organization of the Study	14
II. Review of Related Literature.....	15
Definition of Culture	15
Relationship between Language and Culture	18
Culture and Foreign Language Instruction	24
Elements of culture in language instruction.....	24
Culture in foreign language classroom objectives	26
Integration of culture learning into foreign language classrooms	27
Culture in foreign language classroom teaching strategies.....	28
Location of Thai schools as Related to English Language and Culture Learning	30
American Culture	32
Previous Studies Related to Culture and Language Learning and Teaching	35
III. Methodology.....	41
Participants.....	41
Selection of the universities	41
Selection of the participants	42
Instrumentation	43
American Culture Test.....	43

The English Language and	
Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test.....	49
Attitudes towards American Culture Survey	51
Validity of the instrument	52
Reliability of the instrument	52
Data Collection Procedures	53
Data Analysis	53
IV. Findings	54
Research Hypothesis One	55
Results.....	55
Research Hypothesis Two	56
Results.....	56
Research Hypothesis Three	57
Results.....	57
Research Hypothesis Four	58
Results.....	58
Results of the Attitudes towards	
American Culture Learning Survey.....	59
Summary.....	64
V. Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations	66
Discussion of Research Hypothesis One	66
Discussion of Research Hypothesis Two	69
Discussion of Research Hypothesis Three	69

Discussion of Research Hypothesis Four	70
Implications of the Study.....	72
Recommendations of the Further Studies.....	72
Conclusions.....	73
REFERENCES.....	75
APPENDICES	83
APPENDIX A: American Culture Test and Answer Key.....	84
APPENDIX B: Attitudes towards Culture Learning Survey.....	97
VITAE	100

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Areas and Cultural Aspects on the American Culture Test.....	43
2. Spearman's Rho Correlation between Participants' American Culture Scores and the ELLIS Placement Test	56
3. Mean Score, Standard Deviations, and <i>t</i> Values of Participants' Scores on the American Culture Test of SWU and CMU	57
4. Mean Score, Standard Deviations, and <i>t</i> Values of Participants' scores on the American Culture Test of SWU and KKU	58
5. Mean Score, Standard Deviations, and <i>t</i> Values of Participants' scores on the American Culture Test of SWU and PSU.....	59
6. Participants' Demographic Information.....	61
7. Participants' Attitudes towards American Culture	63
8. Attitudes of Participants from each University towards American Culture	64

FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. A sample question from the ELLIS Placement Test.....	50
2. Score report of ELLIS Placement Test	51

CHAPTER I

Background of the Study

Communication around the world is constantly increasing, and people need an international language to communicate with each other. Many languages such as English, French, Chinese, and Japanese are used for cross-border communication between people from various countries. Of all these, it is quite apparent that English is the most commonly used at international conferences and in the world of communication in general. Not to mention that a wide range of high-tech instruments and their support materials, such as technical guides, originate from English-speaking countries (Kitao, 1996).

In some of the non-English-speaking nations such as Thailand, China, Japan, and many others, English is the primary foreign language that students are required to learn (Wiriyaichitra, 2002). The reason for establishing English as a compulsory course in Thailand and other countries in Asia is that their people, in order to access modern knowledge, frequently use technology developed in English-speaking countries, mainly from the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK), and refer to the written materials related to it. Moreover, in order to reach a broad spectrum of technical information, it is essential, for learners in such fields as medical science, computer science, engineering, and international business, to be able to read original textbooks and journal articles published in these English-speaking countries. Native students of non-English-speaking nations may also need to access contemporary knowledge through Internet Web sites designed in English. From all this, it is obvious that students of such nations need English skills to keep up with modern technology and fast developing knowledge.

Furthermore, international companies keep increasing the number of offices around the world, and employees are thus expected to use English for business communication, via e-mail, for example, for which English reading and writing skills are required, or through telephone communication, when English speaking and listening skills are needed. Therefore, people with a good command of English have a better chance of finding successful employment.

One factor that helps learners of English achieve language proficiency is the knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries (Mackenzie, 2002). The curriculum reform committee of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in bilingualism in Thailand suggested that knowledge of English-speaking culture should be included in English courses because this knowledge plays an important role in fostering and understanding the language (Mackenzie, 2002). It helps learners successfully gather information and promotes more proficient language skills. Educators emphasize the benefits of cultural instruction because learning the target culture provides substantial motivation for studying the target language (Kitao, 1991). Cultural studies inspire students' curiosity about a country and its customs and usages, further motivating them to learn its language (Genc & Bada, 2005). Studying cultures is also useful for general education in the fields of hotel and tourism, and business and management, and facilitates the language learners' clear appreciation of the connections between culture and language through the process of transforming abstract concepts into more concrete experiences. Knowledge of cultural context also helps with pragmatic interpretation in real-life communication (Kramsch, 2000). Therefore, learning the culture of a language, the target culture, is beneficial for language learning and should be included in any language learning curriculum.

Relationship between Language and Culture

This interrelation between language and culture is discussed in books in various aspects. According to the American Committee of Language and Culture in the field of language, it covers three areas (as cited in Stern, 1983).

First, “language is a part of culture, and must be approached with the same attitudes that govern our approach to culture as a whole” (Stern, 1983, p. 251). Language must mirror the way of thinking that pervades the entire culture such as its communicative styles, social performance, religious faith, traditions, and folkways (Jiang, 2000; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003; Stern, 1983). On the other hand, a culture is also expressed by its language, and people cannot entirely understand a given culture without acquiring the knowledge of its language as well. Both language and culture are strongly related as language is an intimate part of the culture it belongs to.

Second, “language conveys culture, so that the language teacher is also of necessity a teacher of a culture” (Stern, 1983, p. 251). That is, people do not use language for the course of one single generation; rather, a language is shared from generation to generation. This implies that cultural traits are also passed from generation to generation through language use. Moreover, a language is not only used among its native speakers; when a language is used between speakers of different cultures, their respective cultures are transferred during their communication. It is important for language teachers to have the knowledge of the target culture to help their learners develop a cultural awareness.

Third, “language is itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs, which cannot be ignored in the language classroom” (Stern, 1983, p. 251). Language is influenced by cultural points of view, something that cannot be neglected in language-learning classes. People speak to express and transfer their attitudes and beliefs, and it is

obvious that culture influences their conversations. Therefore, in language classes, teachers should prepare and integrate learning materials based on the attitudes and beliefs of the target culture.

In addition, concerning this importance of the relationship between language and culture, Kramsch (2000) states that they are related as per the following three aspects. First, language expresses cultural reality. The vocabulary used by the native speakers of a given language is relevant to their day-to-day experience. “They express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share” (Kramsch, 2000, p. 3) and the words they use also reveal their beliefs and opinions.

Second, language embodies cultural reality. It carries its own culture through a type of communication (verbal and non-verbal) which can be understood among people who share the same culture. Culture is created by using language through different channels that include “a speaker’s tone of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures, and facial expression” (Kramsch, 2000, p. 3), and it is the native speakers of that language who give meaning to the words or gestures. For example, it is polite for people in America to make eye contact while they are talking to show sincerity. On the other hand, making eye contact in Thailand may be interpreted as arrogance. Thus, culture is created by the use of its language.

Finally, language symbolizes cultural reality because “Language is a system of signs” (Kramsch, 2000, p. 3) which contains the values of a culture. People play out cultural symbols to others through the language they use. Moreover, through this linguistic performance, they recognize themselves and their identity, because their language reflects the uniqueness of their society.

In conclusion, according to the American Committee of Language and Culture, language and culture are interrelated because language is a part of culture and people use language to reflect those cultural ideas. Language is also used to convey culture, as much as it is influenced by cultural points of view and beliefs. This, as seen above, is supported by Kramsch (2000) who maintains that language and culture are interdependent because language expresses, embodies and symbolizes a cultural reality. Therefore, it is important for language teachers to add cultural contents to their language classes in order to enrich their learners' background knowledge of the linguistic culture they are dealing with and to increase their language performance (Xue-Wei & Ying-Jun, 2006).

Foreign Language Learning and Cultural Instruction

According to Peterson and Coltrane (2003), learning the culture of a foreign language is needed as language and culture are intimately related, and the “uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken” (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003, para. 1). In turn, Douglas (2000) adds that cultural knowledge helps language learners understand the meaning and the perspective of the language they are studying by providing “a process that continues over years of language learning, and penetrates deeply into one’s patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting” (Douglas, 2000, p. 182). Therefore, learning of the target culture in the language class encourages learners to realize the cultural patterns indicated in the language and thus leads them into using language culturally, that is, using it as part of a wider cultural context.

However, cultural learning and teaching can be carried out in many ways. According to Brooks (1964), these can be done by adding material and non-material cultural topics into the language classroom in order to help students with their language learning. This was later supported by Peterson and Coltrane (2003) who maintained that

cultural teaching can be performed by using authentic materials, proverbs, role-play, culture capsules, cultural resources, ethnographic studies, literature, and films. These ways of teaching allow language learners opportunities to observe, absorb, and experience the target culture, and finally to find their own ways of learning adapted to their specific language use.

Foreign Language Learning and Cultural Instruction in Thailand

The world is getting smaller because of the convenience of transportation. People frequently travel across continents for business, immigration, medical treatment, and tourism. In Thailand, the majority of foreigners travel to the country for tourism and business, and many of them come from the USA and the UK (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2006). Therefore, Thais need to communicate with these foreigners in English.

However, English proficiency in Thailand is lower than in some other Asian countries, such as Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore (Wiriyachitra, 2002). Examples of difficulties faced by Thai English teachers are the learners' weak knowledge of English culture and the lack of opportunities for them to practice the language in daily life (Biyaem, 1997 as cited in Wiriyachitra, 2002). Indeed, direct interactions with native speakers who are the greatest source both of English language and culture are possible mostly for teachers and students in the central area of the country, where the capital, Bangkok, is located, while teachers and students in the remote areas have fewer chances to do so. To help Thais with their learning and teaching of English, the Thai government announced in 2008 a new national curriculum which requires all students in Thailand to study the language from Grade 1 to Grade 12, and the 21st Century Learning Skills of the Ministry of Education requires students to be aware of cross-cultural communication when interacting with foreigners. That is, learners of English should be taught to

understand the culture of the language they are studying and to be sensitive to different cultures (Mackenzie, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2005).

However, understanding English culture seems to be difficult for Thai students because they tend to be more comfortable with the former language learning style and more concerned with English grammar than with cultural awareness or appropriateness (Mackenzie, 2002; Wiriyaichitra, 2002). For example, according to Baker (2003), Thai people smile when they are blamed for something, which may actually mean an apology; while in Western countries, in such situation, a smile implies a lack of concern about the problem. This disparity in reactions causes problems for Thai students, who may inappropriately smile at their foreign teachers when attempting to demonstrate an apology. According to Baker (2003), this implies that Thai students still misunderstand how to link culture and language. It is obvious, then, that research in the field of foreign language and cultural learning in Thailand is needed in order to update the available information.

Selection of American Culture as Representative of the Target Culture

English is spoken as a native language in many countries, such as the UK, Ireland, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. This study focuses on US culture as representative of the English-speaking world for the following reasons.

First, the technical written materials, academic sources and learning materials used in Thailand are issued largely from the USA. Second, the USA offers education to foreign students from around the world and, so, provides financial aid to Thai students, such as the Fulbright Scholarship and the American Field Service (AFS) scholarship. Consequently, Thai scholarship students should acquire strong background knowledge on American culture to communicate better with the native speakers while in the country. Furthermore, many American teachers work in Thai schools, colleges, and universities.

Therefore, knowledge of American culture is helpful for Thai students learning EFL with American teachers. In addition, the American programs “Work and Travel in USA,” and “Au Pair” offer Thai students and graduates a chance to work in the USA, and proper knowledge of the English language and American culture are required to help them communicate effectively. Third, numerous Americans visit Thailand every year as tourists. For example, 623,638 American tourists visited Thailand in 2007 (Office of Tourism Development, 2007).

With so many Americans coming to Thailand every year, and considering the various types of contact described above, acquiring proper knowledge of American culture could certainly help Thai students adapt their English language skills and successfully communicate with American people while studying, working, and experiencing life with them. English language accuracy and American cultural awareness are needed both to facilitate and enhance this communication.

Statement of the Problem

Many research studies on English language learning and teaching have been conducted in Thailand, addressing schemata in English learning, metacognitive strategies used in English reading and writing, translation strategies, and investigation of error types in English skills and English learning strategies. However, studies investigating the relationship between English language proficiency and knowledge of the target culture could not be found in the local literature. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine if there was any relationship between English language learners’ background knowledge of the target culture and their language proficiency. In addition, this study sought to determine if English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn the higher scores on the American Culture Test than those in the northern, northeastern, central, and southern areas of the country. The participants of this study were also asked

to rate their attitudes towards learning about American culture. To measure their interest in learning this culture, the Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey was used. The information collected from this survey was used as additional data that helped clarify and explain the results of this study.

Hypotheses

In this study, the following hypotheses were investigated:

1. There is a significant positive relationship between the scores Thai English language learners earn on the American Culture Test and the scores they earn on the English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test.
2. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than Thai English language learners in the northern area.
3. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than English Thai language learners in the northeastern area.
4. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than English Thai language learners in the southern area.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are meant to help identify the relationship between the language proficiency of Thai English learners and their knowledge of the target culture.

If a positive relationship between the scores earned on the American Culture Test and the ones earned on the ELLIS Placement Test were to be found, the English language learners' level of knowledge of English culture could be used as a predictor for English proficiency and more strength could be given to the idea that learning of English culture should be integrated into the English language classroom.

In addition, it was anticipated that the Thai English language learners from the central area of the country have greater opportunities to encounter American culture than those in the remote areas. If it were found that the participants from the central area earned higher scores on the American Culture Test than those from the north, northeast, and south areas, funds to provide supplementary cultural learning resources could be more easily granted to schools in those remote areas.

Moreover, if it were discovered that Thai English language students have positive attitudes towards learning the target culture, it could be maintained that learning that target culture should be added into language classrooms to help learners more efficiently improve their language skills.

Methodology

Participants.

Selection of the universities.

Random sampling was used to select the universities to be included in this study. Based on economic, social, and ecological factors, Thailand is divided into four geographical regions, namely, the north, northeast, central and south (The United Nations Thailand, 2008). Public universities in each region were randomly selected to participate

in this study, with the following result: (a) in the north, Chiang Mai University (b) in the northeast, Khon Kaen University (c) in the center, Srinakharinwirot University, and (d) in the south, Prince of Songkla University.

Selection of the participants.

The participants of this study consisted of fourth-year English major students from the four selected universities, and studying in the first semester of the academic year 2009. Thirty students from each selected university were randomly selected to comprise the total number of 120 participants to take part in this study.

Instrumentation.

American Culture Test.

The American Culture Test was specifically developed for this study for the purpose of measuring the participants' background knowledge on American culture. It consists of 50 items covering 25 areas related to American culture. It was checked for appropriateness and content validity by the thesis advisor and two American professors in the English language field. The items in the test were selected from common communicative topics found in studies of American culture, cultural learning, and cross-cultural learning experience written by language and culture scholars.

A multiple-choice format was used in the test to avoid any bias when grading the answers. Thus, knowledge of the American culture was evaluated by asking the participants to select, for each question, the correct answer from among a choice of four (see Appendix A).

A pilot test was conducted with 19 second-year English major students enrolled in the first semester of the academic year 2008 at Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, and who did not participate in the main study. The coefficient of reliability of this pilot

test leveled at .57. Consequently, changes were made to improve its validity. It was then tested again with a different group of 18 fourth-year English major students at Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, to determine its reliability, which then substantially increased to .75.

The English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test.

The English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test was used to measure the English proficiency of the participants in the study. The ELLIS test is a standardized computer-assisted examination that has been designed in the USA and was put to test with over 1500 non-native speakers from various backgrounds around the world (English Training Software, 2003). It measures the test-takers' English ability and grades their level of language proficiency, and is used for students of any levels of English.

This test has been designed with a multiple-choice format and consists of three parts: vocabulary, grammar, and listening. It also includes important topics for EFL students such as casual introductions, job interviews, and business conversations.

Therefore, it was determined that the ELLIS Placement Test was an appropriate instrument for the assessment of the participants' English proficiency.

Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey.

The Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey was specifically developed for the purpose of this study. It aimed at obtaining information concerning the participants' background information on American culture and their attitudes towards learning about it.

The survey is divided into two parts. The first part was devised to obtain the demographics of the participants, who were asked to specify their age, gender, hometown, interests, goals, years of English studies, experiences in English-speaking countries, and experiences with native speakers of English. The second part meant to observe the participants' attitudes towards learning American culture (see Appendix B).

This survey used the Likert scale graded 1 to 5 to indicate feelings towards the target culture. The scale was set at 5 for "strongly agree," 4 for "agree," 3 for "undecided," 2 for "disagree," and 1 for "strongly disagree."

Data collection procedures.

The data for this study were collected during the first semester of the academic year 2009. The American Culture Test and the Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey were administered the same day, in June 2009. The participants were then asked to take the ELLIS Placement Test after the American Culture Test had been administered in the following day.

Data analysis.

The data were analyzed after the hypotheses. A one-tailed Spearman rho correlation coefficient was used to test the statistical dependence between the participants' scores on the American Culture Test and their scores on the ELLIS Placement Test. A *t* test was used to measure if the participants from the central area of Thailand earned higher scores on the American Culture Test than the ones from the northern, northeastern, and southern areas.

Also, the data collected from the first part of the Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey were analyzed for demographic and descriptive information, and

the mean score of the second part was analyzed to identify the participants' attitudes towards learning about American culture.

Confidentiality of the participants' personal data.

The participants' personal background information such as their name, age, and gender was kept confidential. It does not appear in the study or the analysis of the data, and it was destroyed immediately after the study was completed.

Limitations of the Study

The participants in this study were limited to fourth-year English major students studying in the first semester of the academic year 2009. This sample was also restricted to those who were willing to participate in the study. The study was also culture-specific in that it concerned itself with English as the chosen target language and was explicitly restricted to English communicative skills in American culture.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I introduces the background and problems related to the study. Chapter II presents a review of the related literature, related theories and previous research that have examined the questions raised in this study, while chapter III provides details of the methodological approach conducted throughout the research. Chapter IV offers an analysis of the results, as Chapter V, in turn, provides a discussion of these results and adds recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this study was to investigate if the American cultural background knowledge of fourth-year English major students from four major universities in Thailand had a positive influence on their English language proficiency. This chapter reviews the theories, related literature, and previous studies that support this investigation. It is divided into the six following parts:

1. Definition of Culture
2. Relationship between Language and Culture
3. Culture and Foreign Language Instruction
4. Location of Thai schools as Related to English Language and Culture Learning
5. American Culture
6. Previous Studies Related to English Culture and Language Learning and Teaching

Definition of Culture

The concept of culture is rather broad in definition, for it relates to nearly every aspect of human life (Datesman, Crandal, & Kearny, 1997).

Academically, scholars describe culture with a wide variety of definitions. Kachru (1995), for instance, defines culture as “shared knowledge, i.e., what people must know in order to act as they do, make the things they make, and interpret their experience in the distinctive way they do” (Kachru, 1995, p. 178). Kachru also adds that cultural practices can be referred to as “acts” which include interpersonal communications such as speaking face-to-face, talking on the telephone, and writing letters and e-mails. “Those of us who share a common language and culture have an easier time making sense of each other’s utterances and actions” (Kachru, 1995, pp. 178-179). It is this knowledge of

language and culture within a society that helps individuals communicate and interpret meaning. This, in turn, explains why people who share language and culture understand each other better than those who do not (Kachru, 1995). Five years later, Kramsch (2000), wrote the following:

Culture can be defined as membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings. Even when they have left that community, its members may retain, wherever they are, a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting (p. 10).

Hence, culture refers to a common social sense shared by members of a given society. People act within the range of agreed-upon cultural rules and patterns, and these social agreements are a foundation of common knowledge, experience, and faith. Moreover, people tend to retain their unique cultural characteristics even if they move and live outside their original culture.

In the same vein, Goode, Sockalingam, Brown, and Jones (as cited in Peterson and Coltrane, 2003) wrote:

Culture is an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of racial, ethnic, religious or social groups, and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations (para. 1).

In this view, culture is a combination of many factors of human life. It influences people's performance within their group, including the performance of their conversational styles, norms, and traditions. Thus, according to these scholars, and in

agreement with the two authors cited above, culture determines the way people act among their contemporaries.

But apart from these definitions, culture can also be defined as “a way of life” (Kuo & Lai, 2006, p. 2) comprised of many aspects such as thoughts, traditions, capabilities, and arts, each of which indicates a particular point in history that further defines the cultural way of life. According to these researchers, social beliefs, values, and material objects contribute to stereotypes, which in turn establish people’s understanding of the individual characteristics of the culture they belong to. Thus, everything that people do can become routines, which in turn become traditions that evolve into archetypes that contribute, at a deep level, to the establishing of group characteristics and the evolution of a culture. These group characteristics serve as the foundation of a given society, influencing its ideas, communications, and relations. In a word, culture and communication are related through the conveyance and interpretation of content and context. Consequently, and this is also important for the purpose of this study, in the absence of a shared cultural background, communication failures may occur. In view of this, Kuo and Lai (2006) concluded that “culture is the foundation of communication” (p. 2).

To summarize these various definitions, it can be said that culture can be identified as social characteristics based on the uniqueness of a society that develops over time and is transferred to subsequent generations through language, which is a vital part of it. Thus, communication is a prime tool in the development and acquisition of cultural knowledge. In terms of language, to put it briefly, culture can be described as “speech acts, rhetorical structure of text, social organization, and knowledge constructs” (Hinkel, 1999, p. 1).

Relationship between Language and Culture

According to Kuo and Lai (2006), “language stands for the whole culture because language represents culture in the mind of its speakers” (p. 5) and people use language to express their culture. Every language contains examples of the speakers’ ideas; that is, people reflect culture in their use of language, and when speakers of a same culture communicate with each other, they understand each other better than when communicating with foreigners. For example, the word bread suggests a loaf of sliced bread for Americans, while the French are more likely to think of a baguette (Ramírez, 1995). Opposed to this, non-native speakers of a language may misunderstand words or metaphors, because culture is concerned with everyday things related to the context of a specific culture. The above example shows that language and culture are intimately related and connected and that they cannot exist without each other (Bonvillain, 2003; Jiang, 2000).

In the early 1960s, the American Committee of Language and Culture covered three important aspects of the relationship between language and culture and described them in the following manner (as cited in Stern 1983, p. 251):

1. Language is a part of culture, and must be approached with the same attitudes that govern our approach to culture as a whole.
2. Language conveys culture, so the language teacher is also of necessity a teacher of a culture.
3. Language is itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs, which cannot be ignored in the language classroom.

From these statements, it can be extrapolated that language is a component of culture, because “language is the sounds and written symbols that allow people to express their thoughts, their feelings, their hopes, and their dreams with themselves and with one

another” (Papadopoulos, 2007, p.18). As a matter of fact, language is an important component of culture because people cannot interact with each other without language, and without interaction, people cannot create their cultural uniqueness (Papadopoulos, 2007).

However, communications among people from different communities who speak different languages may not be effective because the speakers do not share the same ideas, values, and concepts (Kramsch, 2000). For example, most people from English-speaking countries value dogs as good companions. Idioms in English such as “man’s best friend” and “lucky dog” reflect positive cultural attitudes towards dogs. On the other hand, dogs in some Chinese households might serve as watchdogs, defending the home from thieves, as reflected in the Chinese idiom “gou tui zi,” which means “hired thug” (Jiang, 2000). Thus, while Americans may say hello to a dog after it has been introduced to them. Chinese people may show no respect towards the dog. This example shows that culture and language are integrally related and cannot be separated because language is an element of culture.

Language conveys culture through cross-generational or cross-cultural communication. Language is extended from generation to generation. Therefore, cultural knowledge also transfers to other generations. For example, a mother teaches her children appropriate ways of talking, eating, greeting, and interacting with others. This is not only a mother’s instructions, but also the transferring of culture via language. In addition, language transfers its cultural content to other cultures. Nowadays, communication around the world has become very easy, through talking on the phone, writing e-mail, or chatting on the Internet. People do not only communicate with their peers in their country, they also communicate with other people from foreign countries. For example, Thai students communicate with their American friends, each using their

own cultural context. Therefore, one culture extends itself to another via cross-cultural communication. Consequently, language teachers are also teachers of culture who guide their language learners into better understanding and clearer awareness of the target culture.

As has been stated above, language is itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs, which cannot be ignored in the language classroom. Language is influenced by cultural point of views, which should be of concern in language-learning classes (Stern, 1983). In this approach, Xue-Wei and Ying-Jun (2006) discussed how culture influences the learning of a foreign language. They maintain that knowledge of a culture influences many aspects of language learning, such as vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, and translating. They explain their points in the following manner.

1. Culture influences vocabulary, such as colors that denote different metaphorical meanings in various cultures. Feeling blue in the American context connotes sadness, while it may be interpreted differently in other contexts in other languages.
2. Cultural knowledge influences listening. Some topics such as arts, sports, and traditional ceremonies relate to cultural aspects. If foreign-language students study the cultural background of the language, they will be better prepared to understand the exact meaning of words from context, even in quickly-spoken speech on difficult topics.
3. Knowledge of culture positively influences speaking because it influences selection of vocabulary, speaking patterns, and communication styles. In addition, as proper pronunciation and intonation are needed to communicate successfully, cultural knowledge helps students select proper words, responses, and ways of speaking in situations such as making an apology, making a refusal, or expressing

gratitude. For example, a native English speaker may apologize differently than an Asian. The latter might routinely express reasons before making an expression of regret, such as “I’m sorry,” whereas native English speakers typically express regret before reasons. The Asian style might be interpreted as impolite in some cultures, but actually, it suggests that non-native speakers do not have linguistic competence in the target culture to express apologies appropriately (Gracia, 1989). Another example concerns contrasting styles of complaining and refusing that may be sensed as harassment or impoliteness in conversations between native and non-native speakers of English. It is necessary for non-native speakers to learn appropriate manners for expressing complaints and refusals, and this cultural learning should be added to the language-learning curriculum (Tanck, 2002). Linguistic competence can be demonstrated through the ability to use structure, function, and culture of the target language. A lack of linguistic competence in the target culture might cause misinterpretation (Doms, 2004). Therefore, studying target culture helps students gain linguistic competence to communicate culturally.

4. Cultural knowledge bears influence on reading. Many studies have investigated how background experience or schemata theory helps readers understand texts. To understand texts, readers make the connection between the new knowledge they have gained and their existing knowledge schemata. Without schemata, foreign readers fail to concentrate on the same points as members of a culture, subsequently forming opinions influenced by their own culture (Sani, 1995). Background knowledge also becomes valuable for gaining a better understanding of foreign literature. Authors often put their life experience or religious

preferences into their works. Students with knowledge of a culture can more effectively predict and understand texts.

5. Translation is also strongly dependent on cultural knowledge. An example is when English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students are assigned to translate between English and their native language. Cultural knowledge helps translators interpret ideas in a text as intended by the author. Cultural awareness helps them translate clearly and effectively.

As Kramsch (2000) states it, language and culture are related in the way that language expresses, embodies, and symbolizes culture reality. These can be extrapolated as the following explanation.

Language expresses cultural reality. People express words that are always related to their culture and life experiences. For example, they express attitudes and ideas from their own society in conversations. Speech act functions include greeting, apologizing, asking questions, and making promises. These speech acts are easily understood among members of the culture because they share background experience. Their language is connected to their thinking, so sharing beliefs and points of view helps them to communicate successfully with each other.

Language embodies cultural reality. Members of a society use language for more purposes than to share opinions. Cultural communication includes phenomena such as stressing words or syllables, emphasizing meaning through body language, and mannerisms. Personal uniqueness can be identified through tone of voice, conversational style, gestures, and facial expressions that define their communication style, which embodies the cultural reality of their communication style. For example, when speakers stress or project their voice in words or syllables, or emphasize their meaning through

body language and mannerisms while communicating, these actions can become examples of cultural communication (Kramsch, 2000).

Language symbolizes cultural reality. Language is a symbolic system used in a community. The meaning of symbols is given by the speakers of the language, and members of each language give meaning to things differently. Also, people can be identified by other people from their interpretation of things, language styles, accents, and forbidden uses of language, as these involve the norms of the community. Therefore, language can be described as a symbolization of culture (Kramsch, 2000).

Furthermore, according to Leveridge (2008), “the relationship between language and culture is deeply rooted. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties” (para. 1). Leveridge further explains the relationship between culture and language by emphasizing the fact that everyone is born similarly “until the child is exposed to their surroundings that they become individuals in and of their cultural group” (para. 1). Members of a group appear according to their culture and social manners, while people who live in a different group will appear differently. Group members learn the concepts of culture and social manners through their language and they use language to express ideas of right or wrong among their members and others. However, people who have limited knowledge of language can misinterpret the culture even if they share that same culture, because “language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language.” Therefore, the discussion raised by Leveridge (2008) shows that language and culture are related because language is a foundation of culture and culture can be expressed via language.

In conclusion, it is apparent that language and culture are closely related, so culture exists in language usage. Learning of other languages should add cultural learning to build the background for language learners. Cultural background knowledge

also helps language learners develop their understanding of other people's point of views, values, ideas, and beliefs, and become more aware of their culture while communicating with them.

Culture and Foreign Language Instruction

According to Thannasoulas (2001), "Foreign language learning is comprised of several components, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency, as well as a change in attitudes towards one's own or another culture" (para. 1). Learning a language is not only concerned with learning language functions, but culture of the language should also be concerned and integrated into the language classroom. Students require aspects of knowledge of conversations, customs, beliefs, and systems of meaning, from the target culture to help them communicate naturally. Cultural knowledge allows for better and deeper understanding of both context and content and helps students develop written, spoken, verbal, and nonverbal communication skills. Recognizing the importance of learning culture in the language classroom, several scholars have presented significant support for the integration of culture into language learning.

Elements of culture in language instruction.

According to Brooks (1964), culture plays an important role in the language classroom. Words transfer more than one concept, a situation that can lead to misinterpretations unless people share similar cultural preconceptions. Thus, Brooks maintains, language teachers should be well versed in the culture of the language they teach to improve second and foreign language instruction. Consequently, they need to include the target culture in their classrooms to provide their learners with the cultural information necessary to avoid misinterpretations.

In the early years of culture and second or foreign language instruction, Brooks (1964) made the following distinction concerning culture: “The discrete elements of culture divide themselves into two principal classes: material and nonmaterial” (Brooks, 1964, p. 85).

Brooks explains that material culture is concerned with the concrete cultural objects of a given society. These objects are products of specific cultures and indicate the behavioral standards of that culture. The cultural phenomenon guides people in their experiencing and comprehending objects around them. Conversely, people also use cultural objects to explain their culture. Examples of material culture are houses, tools, clothes, and vehicles (Brooks, 1964).

On the other hand, non-material culture concerns conceptual aspects that are invisible or intangible and relates to situations such as ordering food, interacting with people of the opposite sex, talking space, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as to concepts of right and wrong, religious beliefs, and the cultural values people assign to things. Members of a culture learn non-material culture through daily experiences and interactions within their community. The most important aspects of non-material culture include symbols, language, values, and norms (Brooks, 1964). In conclusion, non-material culture concerns intangible aspects such as opinions, speech acts, gestures, and values. On the other hand, material culture is more tangible, concerning architecture, arts, and literature.

In addition to categorizing culture into material and non-material, Brooks also distinguished 64 topics specifically related to American culture, to give teachers ideas of cultural topics that could be taught in their language classrooms. Sample topics included greetings, politeness patterns, invitations, sports, and schooling. These topics should be

included in the language curriculum to help students learn the target language more effectively.

Culture in foreign language classroom objectives.

Regarding learning culture in the language classroom, Lafayette (2003) said learning standards for foreign-language learning in the 21st century include communications, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities (Lafayette, 2003, Phillips, 2003). These five standards led to 11 national standards in language learning in America, four of which refer directly to culture learning objectives as follows:

1. Standard 2.1: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.
2. Standard 2.2: Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.
3. Standard 3.2: Students acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its culture.
4. Standard 4.2: Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through making comparisons of the target culture with their own.

(Lafayette, 2003, pp. 57-58)

These standards reveal the goals of culture learning in the language classroom which help language learning be more effective. Furthermore, Lafayette (2003) suggested that to achieve these goals, teachers need to create cultural tasks or activities for students to increase their cultural knowledge. Modern technology can be employed to provide an effective means for learning culture, including the Internet, live visuals, and mass media.

Integration of culture learning into foreign language classrooms.

According to Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, and Colby (2000) perspective on cultural education emphasizes a shift from merely remembering texts to understanding texts. In this view, language students also learn to acquire cultural knowledge on their own. For example, they learn: (a) about their own culture; (b) about the influence of culture on daily speech and gestures; (c) general culture that helps with adaptation to cultural differences; (d) specifically about the target culture and language, which is fundamental to understanding people in cross-cultural communications; and (e) on the way to acquire culture helps to help them with language learning and to successfully acquire knowledge of both language and culture (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, & Colby, 2000). Based on these points of view, Paige et al. (2000) also introduce the idea of integrating culture into the language classroom, which is composed of several aspects.

One of these aspects is what they call a structured setting, that is an environment that resembles a real language situation with native speakers, such as using role-plays or practicing the language used in English-speaking countries. While the students are engaged in these activities, the teacher acts as a model for the students to learn and understand the culture of the target language. In this capacity, the teacher takes the important role of guiding the students into understanding the target culture by using authentic cultural skills that clarify the target culture for the language learners. After introducing ways of learning culture, teachers should allow students to practice and apply their cultural knowledge by using the target language (Paige et al., 2000).

In addition to this, it is important to motivate and improve the learners' attitudes toward learning the culture of the target language. Language students become successful learners when they experience authentic interest in learning the culture of the language they study. These positive attitudes can improve their motivation towards learning

language or culture. This stage prepares students with positive attitudes and introduces backgrounds of the target language which can motivate and help them learn the language.

Moreover, the educators maintain that instructional methods and materials include textbooks and computer-assisted cultural learning materials. Teachers can use textbooks to present the culture and students can access textbooks for information to establish their knowledge of the target culture. Computer-assisted learning involves using a computer to provide live situations for students to observe and learn culture from the lives situations on computers. Teachers can use computers as tools to transform information from a textbook to make it livelier and more relevant by developing abstract ideas into concrete observations and experience. However, materials and curricula must be related to the teaching objectives to make studying more effective.

The last of the aspects highlighted by the educators is that the assessment of learning culture involves the provision of feedback to students. Students can see that they have done well and know what they should improve. Assessment helps both teachers and students look back to evaluate whether or not they have met their learning objectives.

Culture in foreign language classroom teaching strategies.

As language and culture are related, teachers can employ culture of the target language into language classroom to foster students with their language learning. However, teaching cultures can be done in many ways. According to Peterson and Coltrane (2003), culture can be taught using the following strategies.

1. Using authentic material from the native-speaking countries. Cultural teaching material includes “films, news broadcasts, and television shows; websites; and photographs, magazines, newspapers, restaurant menus, travel brochures, and other printed materials” (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003, para. 1). Teachers can adjust and select teaching materials that are appropriate for the students’ age and after

watching, for example, a video, they may help their students with translation and explanation. After that, they can give their students assignments to review what they have learned from their observation in the video.

2. Comparing proverbs. Proverbs can be used to teach culture by comparison between the proverbs of the foreign language and of the native language. From this activity, students have a chance to analyze the differences between their culture and the target culture.
3. Using role-play. Teachers can assign students to act the differences between these two cultures while asking other students to try to find the different points of these cultures.
4. Using culture capsules. The teacher can also assign students to find information about the target culture to share with their classmates. Information sharing can be done in a class presentation.
5. Asking a student of the target culture. Exchange or immigrant students can be a great cultural resource for the culture learner to learn, experience, and observe from.
6. Using ethnographic studies. Students can go on field trips to meet with native speakers of the target language to talk about cultural topics and gain knowledge about their culture.
7. Studying literature. Many examples of literature reflect human life and culture is also contained in the story. Reading a piece of literature of the target language can give ideas to students about the target culture.
8. Watching films. Watching films allows students to observe culture from both audio and visual perspectives. Students can see, hear, and feel the culture from watching films.

In summary, according to the above statements concerning culture and foreign-language instruction, educators in the culture and foreign-language fields have suggested that culture and foreign-language instruction can be carried out in the following ways: (a) Shifting the concepts of teaching from remembering texts to understanding texts; (b) Being concerned with setting, teachers, motivation, learners' attitudes, instructional methods, instructional materials, and assessment approaches; and (c) Setting the reliability objectives, class activities, and authentic cultural teaching materials. Instructors in language classrooms should follow these suggestions to enrich students' experiences and senses of the target culture.

Location of Thai schools as Related to English Language and Culture Learning

According to Peterson and Coltrance (2003), learning about language only is not enough for students to be successful in language communication, and the use of language has to be related to its culture. As mentioned earlier, the learning of English and its culture can be done through interacting with native speakers, watching films, accessing the English language source from the Internet Website, getting information from the embassies, having experience in the native speaking countries. However, through the ways of cultural learning, Thai students in the central area of the country have more chances to access the language and culture learning sources than students in the remote areas because the location and the facilities of schools are different. This can be explained as per the following reasons.

1. The main destinations for the majority of tourists coming to Thailand are attractive beaches, beautiful temples, and flea markets, most of them located in the central area of the country. Most tourists prefer traveling to bigger cities where people are able to communicate in English. Conversely, there are fewer tourist destinations in the remote areas; therefore, fewer tourists visit them. Thus, it is in

the central areas that students have more opportunities of meeting with English native speakers who are the best sources to learn about their language and culture. On the other hand, the English learning opportunities for students in remote area are lower than students who live in the central area. As a result, students of English in remote areas find it difficult to compete with the more privileged students in the Bangkok area for both studying and finding greater job opportunities (Worldteach, 2010).

2. Getting information from the embassies of English native speaking countries is one of the best ways to acquire the language and information on the culture. However, in Thailand, most of the embassies are located in the central area (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kingdom of Thailand, 2010). And the American, British, and Australian embassies, for example are no exceptions as they are located in Bangkok. Therefore, English students in the capital or in the central area of the country can visit the library of those embassies for their inquiry much easily than students in the remote areas.
3. In Thailand, there are more English and cultural learning facilities in the central areas than in the remote areas. Typical facilities in the central area include Internet access, movie theaters, musical theaters, and English television programs. For example, the Internet is easier to access and faster in the central area. The Internet network called Green Bangkok Wi-fi provides free wireless connection covering most of the Bangkok area (True Wi-Fi, 2010). In contrast, accessing the Internet may be available at universities or in the urban area only. Moreover, most of the Internet network companies' headquarters are located in the capital. Thereby, the Internet network is stronger than in the remote area. Thus, English

language learners from the central areas have more chances to access these facilities and to ease their language and cultural learning.

4. The family income of the students living in the central area tends to be higher than the one of the students living in the remote areas. According to Gerald (2002), the Gross Provincial Product of Bangkok and the other provinces in the central area of Thailand is higher than GDP in the others areas. From this, it may be implied that the family income of students living in the central area is higher than the one to the students living in the remote areas, and the families in the central area can support their children in their language and culture learning in native English speaking countries program. Therefore, students in the central area have a better chance to enjoy a direct experience of native-speaking countries to learn English and its culture while students in the remote area have a fewer chance to do so.

In conclusion, the location of their schools affects Thai language students' learning opportunities. It is obvious that English language learners in the central area of the country are privileged in their learning, and are more able to see, feel, and directly experience the English language and its culture than learners in the more remote areas.

American Culture

Global transportation has expanded tremendously during the last few decades, with dramatic increases in the number of people traveling for their careers, education, immigration or asylum. Of these people, Americans play an important role worldwide as business partners, employers, and investors. It is thus easy to understand that knowledge and awareness of American culture would effectively facilitate cross-cultural communication performed in English. For example, people would be able to choose appropriate talking patterns and gestures to prepare themselves for cross-cultural interaction with Americans.

Culture is a very broad topic, encompassing art, literature, values, music, and numerous other realms of human activity. This section presents some of the most important aspects of American culture.

Early American culture was shaped by a multiplicity of immigrants. In the 16th century, nearly half of all new settlers were from England. Early immigrants to America were escaping religious persecution in England (Oxford, 2005) and other European countries. Meanwhile, 19% of the people living in the New World were Africans who were brought as slaves. The majority of American immigrants during that period were Europeans who brought their languages and cultures and planted them in American society. Religious beliefs which strongly influenced American culture were Protestantism and Roman Catholicism (Moss, 2000). Religion deeply influenced American traditions, customs, and ceremonies. For example, Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus-Christ. Traditional Christmas activities include gift-exchange, family gatherings, eating traditional food, and singing Christmas carols. Nowadays, Christmas is celebrated around the world by people from numerous different cultures (Genzel & Cumming, 1994).

Through much of the course of American history, the notion of “whiteness” privileged Caucasians who were more welcome to become American citizens than immigrants from other races. The Naturalization Act of 1790 specified that any white immigrant was welcome to become an American citizen, which attracted further waves of British Protestants. During that period, Anglo-Americans did not accept other races. African immigrants were held as slaves who did not have the right or freedom to follow their own religions (Vecoli, 2000).

The suffering of African-Americans was expressed in literature, most notably in works such as Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn*. The issue of slavery as discussed in

literature is what divided the nation during the civil war from 1861 to 1865. As a result of the war, the nation was once again united, albeit at enormous costs. The benefit for the black race was that slaves were granted their freedom. However, structural racism persisted for another century up until the 1950s when activist Martin Luther King Jr. led the black people to fight for social equality. He led the African-American civil rights movement which started with a small incident on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama and culminated in the landmark Civil Rights Act a decade later that guaranteed all citizens the right to enter any public place and take any method of public transportation among various other rights that had long been denied people of color (Ritchie, 1999; Vecoli, 2000). These events played an important part in the evolution of American values, traditions, concepts of equality, and freedom which can be occurred while interacting with American.

In this study, American culture was selected as representative of the target culture for the following reasons. As America offers scholarships to Thai students to study in the U.S, American background knowledge as mentioned above may be needed to help them understand the American culture while they are in America. On the other hand, there are many Americans coming to Thailand for different purposes such as retirement living, traveling, studying, working, and training. The cultural background knowledge can also help Thais to understand cultural differences while interacting with Americans. In addition, Thai students studying at the university level might have a chance to study with American professors, and American cultural awareness is needed to help them in the communication with their professors. Also, they might be required to take American cultural courses or read textbooks related to the American literature, so American cultural knowledge is needed for this requirement. Therefore, American culture is selected as a target culture for this study.

Previous Studies Related to Culture and Language Learning and Teaching

A great deal of past researches focused on the between culture and language learning and teaching. Some educators explored cross-cultural communication to solve the problems they experienced while communicating with native speakers. These educators conducted various studies into culture and language learning in classrooms.

Radzienda (1998), for example, discussed the topic of teaching Western culture in the Asian classroom of English, focusing on three themes; (a) suitable places to teach Western culture; (b) the objectives and methods of teaching Western culture in Thai universities; and (c) the opportunities to teach English reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in foreign culture classrooms. In his study, he proposed that Asian learners of English must improve their cultural awareness through the study of the values and beliefs of Western culture. His study also suggested providing students with Western cultural knowledge and with experience in cultural situations such as interacting with members from the target culture and accessing its media. He suggested guiding the students to determine “fact from fiction, individual from stereotype, and to develop insight beyond superficial consumption” (Radzienda, 1998, p.211). This teaching of Western culture can be conducted by instructors who provide suitable materials and cultural situations to their students who, then, can make their own observations to facilitate critical thinking and become more sophisticated in Western culture. Instructors of culture should select cultural materials that present the deeper aspects of culture while giving practice with language skills. The study concluded that Western culture instruction should balance lessons between culture, sociology, and linguistics.

In a different context, Jiang (2000) conducted a study into the relationship between culture and language, surveying their inseparability. Jiang also explored cultural content in the target language through the use of a word-association survey consisting of

10 categories, including food, clothes, and family. The author selected both tangible and intangible topics mostly related to human life. The study revealed that Chinese students associated words to Chinese culture while English students made word associations to English culture. For example, the Chinese participants associated food with noodles and rice while English participants responded with hamburgers and pizza. This survey firmly established the integral and interactive link between language and culture.

Liaw and Johnson (2001) conducted a study of e-mail writing as a cross-culture learning experience. Their study investigated cultural improvement via e-mail between Taiwanese EFL students and ESL teachers from three universities in the United States. EFL freshmen from Taiwan were paired up with ESL teachers from Texas A & M University in the first semester. In the second semester, students from Tunghai University were paired up with ESL teachers from Northern Arizona University. In the third semester, students from Tunghai University were paired up with ESL teachers from the University of Houston. The participants were instructed to maintain e-mail contact with their partners and turn in copies of their e-mails plus reflective reports at the end of the semester. The most common topics identified during the communication process included geographical information, holiday celebrations, school systems, history, language, religion, interpersonal relationships, and current events. Cultural differences contributed to communication gaps and some questions received no response. The Taiwanese always apologized for their cultural ignorance and their limited linguistic proficiency. On the other hand, the Americans' language was direct and specific. Liaw and Johnson concluded that target culture knowledge was necessary for students to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Formulating a very different approach, Cowen and Garrity (2004) conducted a case study to investigate the effects of cultural schema on understanding and

remembering texts. Two participants from Japan were asked to read folk tales in English taken from the target culture and answer comprehension questions. They were then instructed to summarize the story immediately after the reading and again two weeks afterwards. In the first summary, the participants were able to recall the folk story taken from their native culture more readily than the one from the target culture. In the subsequent summary, the participants tended to modify the story by adding their own ideas. Interestingly, they were better able to recall details while writing in their first language than in their second. The number of modifications increased when writing in their second language. Cowen and Garrity concluded that the cultural schemata theory is important for English comprehension and recall of texts.

Genc and Bada (2005) conducted a study to investigate the idea concerning the effects of culture of perspective students teaching EFL. The study aimed to collect data for future teaching of culture. The study included ELT students from Turkey who were also taking a culture course. Questionnaires were employed to investigate their English language skills, cultural awareness, attitudes towards the target culture and their potential contribution to the teaching profession. The findings showed that the culture course helped students improve language skills. They thought that it helped them improve their speaking skills the most. Nearly 70% of the participants felt they had become more aware of the target culture. Nearly 75% of them expressed positive thoughts towards the target culture. Therefore, knowledge of culture gained from the culture course helped these prospective teachers to be familiar with the target society, assist in teaching grammar, enhance communication competence in their second language, expand vocabulary, and provide information prior to visiting an English-speaking country.

In a topically related study, Khanthuan (2007) investigated the relationship between knowledge of Thai culture and Thai language proficiency among Singaporean

students who studied Thai as a foreign language. The study investigated whether any relationship existed between Thai cultural knowledge and Thai language proficiency. A cultural test was used to measure the participants' Thai cultural knowledge and a questionnaire was used to obtain personal data and level of Thai language proficiency. On the Thai cultural test, the participants were asked about various topics such as Thai arts, lifestyles, government, and social manners. A positive relationship was found between the level of Thai language proficiency and knowledge of Thai culture. Khanthuwan concluded that Thai culture should be included in Thai language courses to improve the language proficiency of students.

More recently, Hayati (2009) investigated the effect of cultural knowledge on listening comprehension improvement of Iranian EFL students. The research questions asked if target culture, international target culture, source culture, and culture-free instruction effect listening comprehension. The participants studied under varying cultural conditions: target culture, international target culture, source culture, and culture-free. In this study, the target culture referred to English and American culture, international target culture referred to the culture of foreign countries, source culture referred to the Persian culture, while free culture referred to free materials of any cultures. The study indicated that the participants who received instruction in the target, international, and source cultures significantly improved their listening scores. On the other hand, the participants taught with culture-free material did not show any significant improvement. Hayati concluded that there was an important relationship between cultural knowledge and listening comprehension, adding that language students should learn about culture to improve their listening skills.

Lee (2009) investigated how English textbooks were used to teach culture in South Korea. His study investigated the cultural aspects and methods of teaching English

conversation skills. The data were analyzed according to the conceptualization model, which divides cultural learning into general and specific cultural topics. The study found that most of the textbooks were less concerned with general culture and that American culture was the main source of cultural information in the textbooks. The instructors used textbooks along with information available on the Internet to teach about the target culture. The study suggested guidelines to develop teaching materials for English conversation classes such as presenting the target culture from different English-speaking countries, including both culture-general and culture-specific aspects into language classes, and using computers to present the culture. The author further suggested that conversation textbooks should be more concerned with general culture.

In conclusion, these studies have demonstrated that cultural knowledge plays an important role in EFL by supporting students in the development of their language skills.

The present research has been designed to investigate the correlation between the American cultural knowledge and the English language proficiency of Thai English major students. If the results indicate a positive relationship between the two, it would be necessary to include American culture in the English language learning curriculum.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the American cultural knowledge and English proficiency of fourth-year English major students from four universities in Thailand. It sought to see if students in the central area of Thailand earned higher scores on the American Culture Test than students in the northern, northeastern, and southern areas. Additionally, the study surveyed participants' background information to examine if students had positive attitudes towards learning about American culture in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes.

This chapter describes the prime elements of research methodology employed during the study, namely: (a) selection of the universities and participants, (b) instrumentation, (c) data collection procedures, and (d) data analysis.

Participants

Selection of the universities.

There are 139 universities and institutes in Thailand. This includes 78 public universities and 61 private universities (Ministry of Education, 2005). A majority of high school students in Thailand prefer to study in public universities. Over 100,000 students from all over Thailand apply to study in public universities each academic year (Ministry of University Affairs, 2005). This research focuses on students from public universities. The universities selected to participate in this study were chosen based on the following criteria:

1. The selected public universities had offer English courses towards an English major degree in the Department of Western languages and had fourth year students in attendance.

2. The selected universities had to be granted permission to use the English language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test.

Therefore, 15 universities met the criteria to participate in this study. These were categorized according to the four regions of Thailand: north, northeast, central, and south. One university was selected from each region, and participating universities included: (a) Chiang Mai University in the northern area, (b) Khon Kaen University in the northeast, (c) Srinakharinwirot University in the central area, and (d) Prince of Songkla University in the south.

Selection of the participants.

Fourth-year English major students in the Department of Western Languages in the first semester of academic year 2009 at the selected universities participated in this study. These students had studied English for more than three years and had also taken the class of American culture. They were asked to participate because they were approaching graduation, and they were expected to be familiar with the subject and had sufficient knowledge to respond to the test. Taking both the American Culture Test and the ELLIS placement test would help them realize whether they needed to improve their knowledge of American culture or English language skills before joining the workforce. If they were to seek employment with foreign companies or work with Americans, American cultural knowledge and good English proficiency would definitely be necessary. According to Charunrochana (2000), a number of 30 students could be an appropriate number to represent the sample of each university. Therefore, thirty students from each selected university were randomly selected to comprise the total number of 120 participants to take part in this study.

Instrumentation

Three instruments were used in this study: (a) the American Culture Test, (b) The English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test, and (c) a researcher-developed survey. A detailed description of the research instruments follows.

American Culture Test.

The American Culture Test was used to measure students' knowledge of American culture. The test was developed in cooperation with research advisors, a cross-cultural communication specialist, and two American instructors (see Appendices A). The American instructors checked the appropriateness and content validity of the test. The 50-item test was also classified into cultural aspects consisted of both material and non-material culture. It was divided into 25 areas.

Table 1

Areas and Cultural Aspects on the American Culture Test (50 items)

	Item	Area	Cultural Aspect
1.	What do children do on Easter day?	Holidays	Material
2.	Which of the following is not an official government holiday in America?	Holidays	Material
3.	What kind of dessert is traditionally served on Thanksgiving?	Holidays	Material
4.	What are you most likely to see on Independence Day?	Holidays	Material

(continued)

Table 1

Areas and Cultural Aspects on the American Culture Test (50 items)

	Item	Area	Cultural Aspect
5.	When do Americans put up their Christmas tree?	Holidays	Material
6.	Which of the following is true about the first Thanksgiving celebrations?	Holidays	Non-material
7.	Which of the following actions is considered impolite?	Etiquette	Non-material
8.	What is an acceptable behavior in America?	Etiquette	Non-material
9.	When you are invited for dinner, which behavior is considered unacceptable?	Etiquette	Non-material
10.	What should you do after you are given a present?	Etiquette	Non-material
11.	What does “keeping your fingers crossed” mean?	Superstitions	Non-material
12.	What does “knocking on wood” mean?	Superstitions	Non-material
13.	Where do children put their baby teeth for the “Tooth Fairy” to find?	Superstitions	Non-material

(continued)

Table 1

Areas and Cultural Aspects on the American Culture Test (50 items)

	Item	Area	Cultural Aspect
14.	Which of the following is considered good luck in America?	Superstitions	Non-material
15.	Which is considered the most serious fault if you are studying in America?	Schooling	Non-material
16.	Which type of class at high school is not allowed in America?	Schooling	Non-material
17.	In which year do high school students go to the traditional Prom ceremony?	School traditions	Material
18.	What sport is played during the traditional Homecoming Game in American High Schools?	School traditions	Material
19.	What should you do after you have attended your boss's party?	Customs	Non-material
20.	Which is a normal American behavior after eating at a restaurant?	Customs	Non-material
21.	Which of the following is true in America?	Customs	Non-material

(continued)

Table 1

Areas and Cultural Aspects on the American Culture Test (50 items)

	Item	Area	Cultural Aspect
22.	What should you do when you are invited to someone's house and they introduce their dog to you?	Invitations	Non-material
23.	What are you expected to do if you are invited to a "baby shower?"	Invitations	Non-Material
24.	What should you do if you are invited to a party at someone's house?	Invitations	Non-material
25.	What is a suitable topic for small talk?	Casual conversation	Non-material
26.	Which of the following topics is considered impolite to discuss in conversation with Americans?	Casual conversation	Non-material
27.	What would you say if someone gave you a compliment on the way you were dressed?	Casual conversation	Non-material
28.	What does it mean when Americans say they feel "blue?"	Colors	Non-material
29.	What feeling does "green" represent to Americans?	Colors	Non-material

(continued)

Table 1

Areas and Cultural Aspects on the American Culture Test (50 items)

	Item	Area	Cultural Aspect
30.	What does “gold” represent in American culture?	Colors	Non-material
31.	Which of the following is considered poor manners?	Manners	Non-material
32.	Which of the following is considered poor manners?	Manners	Non-material
33.	Which sport is considered the “American Past-time?”	Sports	Material
34.	Which sport is played during the “Super Bowl?”	Sports	Material
35.	Which food or drink was first created in America?	Food and Drink	Material
36.	What kind of drink do Americans prefer when eating beefsteak?	Food and Drink	Material
37.	Where is the napkin placed for a formal table setting?	Table setting	Material
38.	Who is seated at the head of the table?	Table setting	Non-material
39.	Which is not normal behavior for Americans?	Eating	Material

(continued)

Table 1

Areas and Cultural Aspects on the American Culture Test (50 items)

	Item	Area	Cultural Aspect
40.	A “wishbone” is part of which American tradition?	Traditions	Material
41.	What should you do when you are invited to dinner in America?	Time	Material
42.	Which American is famous for helping free the black slaves?	History	Non-material
43.	How do you address professors at universities in America?	Name and Title	Non-material
44.	After English, what is the second most common language used in America?	Language	Material
45.	Which is considered improper to say to someone you just met?	Greetings	Non-material
46.	What is the appropriate distance you should stand while talking to an American?	Space	Non-material
47.	Which is the most polite way to refuse an invitation?	Politeness when refusing	Non-material

(continued)

Table 1

Areas and Cultural Aspects on the American Culture Test (50 items)

	Item	Area	Cultural Aspect
48.	How much is a nickel in American money?	Money	Material
49.	Which city is known as the “Big Apple?”	Place	Material
50.	Who created jazz music?	Music	Material

The test distinguished various aspects of American culture. Some of these topics were drawn from Kitao (1979) who investigated the American cultural knowledge of Japanese students. Some of the cultural topics such as greetings, patterns of politeness, holidays, invitations, and schooling came from Brooks (1964).

The English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test.

The ELLIS Placement Test is a computer-assisted program which can be used to measure the English proficiency of non-English speakers. The program is available in 236 countries around the world (English Training Software, 2003). It offers students of all levels an opportunity to practice and improve their English proficiency. It is designed to build students' confidence in English and prepare them for academic success by increasing their knowledge of English used in daily life through real life situations. The program helps students with all skills at 12 levels of communication. This placement test was used to measure participants' English language proficiency with a focus on grammar, vocabulary and listening. An example of the test is shown in Figure 1:



The screenshot displays a software interface for the ELLIS Placement Test. At the top, a small tab labeled '1' is visible. Below it, a instruction bar reads: 'Click on the choice you think is the BEST ANSWER to fill in the missing part.' The main question area contains the text 'The _____ of the sky is blue.' Below the question, there are four horizontal buttons, each with a small square icon on the left and a label: 'color', 'form', 'style', and 'height'. At the bottom left, the text 'ELLIS PLACEMENT' is displayed. At the bottom right, there are two circular buttons: one labeled 'EXIT' and another with a right-pointing arrow.

Figure 1. A sample question from the ELLIS Placement Test from “English Training Software” by English Language Learning and Instruction System (ELLIS). Copyright 2003 by English Language Learning and Instruction System (ELLIS).

The figure shows a sample grammar question. Participants were asked to select the best answer and proceed to the next question. The ELLIS placement test program randomly selects the next question for each user. After completing the test, the program automatically calculates the score and level of each user as shown in Figure 2:



SKILLS	SCORE	LEVEL	TIME
Vocabulary	390	9	00.01.58
Grammar	390	9	00.02.07
Listening	85	2	00.06.58

Figure 2. Score report of ELLIS Placement Test from “English Training Software” by English Language Learning and Instruction System (ELLIS),. copyright 2003.

In the final score report, the screen shows the user’s score and level in vocabulary, grammar, and listening. At the top right of the window, the screen shows the final level of the user. The raw scores from the ELLIS placement calculation were then compared with participants’ American cultural knowledge score to establish the relationship between the two factors.

Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey.

Another type of instrument was used in this study to gather participants’ demographic information and attitudes towards learning about American culture, and this instrument was developed by the researcher (see Appendices B). . The first part of the survey was used to obtain demographic information such as age, gender, hometown, interests, goals, number of years of English study, experience in native English speaking countries, and experience with native English speakers. In the second part, 10 items were developed using the Likert scale to observe participants’ attitudes towards learning about

American culture along with studying the English language. They were asked to respond to the survey on a scale of 1 to 5; 5 for strongly agree, 4 for agree, 3 for undecided, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree.

Validity of the instruments.

The study was based on the relevant relationship of American cultural background knowledge and English language proficiency. The research hypotheses were predicated on the relationship between participants' scores on the American Culture Test and the ELLIS Placement Test. The research hypotheses were examined and approved by the thesis advisors for validity relative to the purpose of this study. Moreover, two native English speaking American instructors in the English language teaching field and thesis advisors were asked to check the content validity of the American Culture Test and the survey as well.

Reliability of the instruments.

A pilot study was conducted to confirm the reliability of the American Culture Test. The first pilot study was done with 19 second year English major students in the second semester of the 2008 academic year at Srinakharinwirot University. The reliability of the first pilot test was .57. The easiest and hardest questions were removed to improve reliability. The test was then administered again to a group of 18 fourth-year English Education students during the second semester of the 2008 academic year to re-determine the reliability of the test. The reliability increased to .75, establishing the reliability and validity of the test for use in this study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected during the first semester of the 2009 academic year. A letter issued by the graduate school was sent to Srinakarinwirot, Chiang Mai, Prince of Songkla, and Khon Kaen Universities to request permission to collect data from their students. Before collecting data, students were asked for their consent to participate in the study. On the first day, participants were asked to take the 50 item American culture test and answer two parts of the survey. The following day, participants were asked to take the ELLIS Placement test at their respective university's computer labs.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with respect to the research hypotheses. Hypothesis One, the data were analyzed using a one-tailed Spearman rho correlation to test the relationship between scores on the American Culture Test and the ELLIS placement test. Hypothesis Two to four, the statistical tool was a *t* test to identify if students in the central area earned higher scores on the American Culture Test than students from other regional universities. Finally, data from the demographic information section of the survey was analyzed descriptively. Mean scores were used to analyze the second part of the survey to identify participants' attitudes towards Americans and learning about American culture. The level of significance was established at .05 for all statistical tests.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between American cultural background knowledge and the English proficiency of fourth-year students majoring in English. The differences in the cultural background knowledge of students of each area were also investigated. Therefore, this study was conducted to investigate the following hypotheses:

1. There is a significant positive relationship between the scores Thai English language learners earn on the American Culture Test and the scores they earn on the English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test.
2. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than Thai English language learners in the northern area.
3. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than English Thai language learners in the northeastern area.
4. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than English Thai language learners in the southern area.

The data were collected from 120 fourth-year English major students from four different universities, each university representing a different region in Thailand. Therefore, four universities were selected, Chiang Mai University in the northern area, Khon Kaen University in the northeastern area, Srinakharinvirot University in the central area, and Prince of Songkla University in the southern area. The data were collected in

the first semester of the 2009 academic year. The participants were asked to answer 50 items on an American Culture Test, to take the ELLIS Placement Test, and to fill in the demographic information survey and rank their attitudes towards learning about American culture. The scores from the American Culture Test and the ELLIS Placement Test were later used to examine their relationship by using the statistical tool called a one-tailed Spearman's rho correlation. *T* test also used to test the differences between the participants' scores from the central university and the three regional universities.

This chapter presents the findings concerning the relationship between students' American cultural background knowledge and their English proficiency. It also identifies the differences in American cultural background knowledge of the participants from each region of Thailand. This chapter also includes information on students' demographic background and attitudes towards learning about American culture.

Research Hypothesis One

There is a significant positive relationship between the scores Thai English language learners earn on the American Culture Test and the scores they earn on the English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test.

Results.

The outcome of Spearman's rho correlation on the two variables revealed a low significant positive correlation ($r_s = .35$) between participants' scores on the American Culture Test and scores on English language skills on the ELLIS Placement Test. Consequently, the outcome of the Spearman's rho correlation revealed a low positive correlation ($r_s = .35$) between the participants' scores on the two tests, thus supporting the first hypothesis of this research project as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Spearman's Rho Correlation between Participants' American Culture Scores and the ELLIS Placement Test

<i>Tests</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>r_s</i>	<i>p</i>
Culture score	120	.35*	.00
ELLIS score	120	.35*	

* $P < .05$

Research Hypothesis Two

Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than Thai English language learners in the northern area.

Results.

A *t*-test was used to test Research Hypothesis Two. The results of the *t* test reveal that the mean scores on the American Culture Test of participants from Srinakharinwirot University (SWU) ($M = 27.83$, $SD = 5.42$) were not significantly higher than those of participants from Chiang Mai University (CMU) ($M = 29.06$, $SD = 6.18$, $t(58) = -.81$, $p = .42$). Thus, participants from the central area (SWU) did not earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than participants from the northern area (CMU), and the difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, the results of the study did not support the second hypothesis. Table 3 shows the participants' mean scores on the American Culture Test.

Table 3

Mean Score, Standard Deviations and t Values of Participants' Scores on the American Culture Test of SWU and CMU

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
SWU	30	27.83	5.42		
				-.81	.42
CMU	30	29.06	6.18		

* $P > .05$

Research Hypothesis Three

Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than Thai English language learners in the northeastern area.

Results.

A t -test was used to test Research Hypothesis Three. The results of the t -test indicate that participants at Srinakharinwirot University (SWU) earned lower scores in the American Culture Test ($M = 27.82$, $SD = 5.42$) than participants at Khon Kaen University (KKU) ($M = 31.33$, $SD = 3.95$, $t(58) = -3.15$, $p = .00$). Thus, the participants in the central area (SWU) did not earn higher scores than participants in the northeastern area (KKU). On the other hand, participants in the northeastern area (KKU) earned significantly higher scores than participants in the central area (SWU). This result did not support Research Hypothesis Three. Table 4 displays the comparison between participants in the central and northeastern areas.

Table 4

Mean Score, Standard Deviations, and t Values of Participants' Scores on the American Culture Test of SWU and KCU

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
SWU	30	27.83	5.42		
				-3.15*	.00
KCU	30	31.33	3.95		

* $P < .05$

Research Hypothesis Four

Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than Thai English language learners in the southern area.

Results.

A t -test was used to test Research Hypothesis Four. Significant differences were identified between participants' mean scores at Srinakharinwirot University (SWU) and those of participants at Prince of Songkla University (PSU). The SWU participants' mean scores on the American Culture Test ($M = 27.83$, $SD = 5.42$) were significantly higher than those of participants from PSU ($M = 22.10$, $SD = 4.58$, $t(58) = 5.58$, $p = .00$). Therefore, these results support Research Hypothesis Four. Table 5 presents the descriptive results of statistics used to compare the scores of participants at these two universities.

Table 5

Mean Score, Standard Deviations and t Values of Participants' scores on the American Culture Test of SWU and PSU

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
SWU	30	27.83	5.42		
				5.58*	.00
PSU	30	22.10	4.58		

* $P < .05$

To conclude these findings, the results of the Spearman rho correlation reveal a low, but significant positive correlation ($r_s = .35$) between participants' scores on the American Culture Test and their English proficiency scores on the ELLIS test, thus supporting the first hypothesis. The mean score on the American Culture Test of participants from the central area was not significantly higher than participants from the northern and northeastern areas, disproving the second and third hypotheses. The mean score of participants in the central area was higher than that of the participants in the southern area, confirming the fourth hypothesis.

Results of the Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey

A survey was used to obtain information concerning participants' demographic background and attitudes towards learning about American culture. The most important information from the survey focused on participants' attitudes as gleaned from the Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey in which participants were asked about their age, gender, hometown, number of years studying English, experience in English-speaking countries, experience working with native English speakers, and friendships with native English speakers. However, age, gender, and hometown are confidential information, these results do not appear in the study. Therefore, the

researcher selected information of more relevance for inclusion such as number of years studying English, experience in English speaking countries, experience working with native English speakers, and friendships with native English speakers.

Years of English experience were classified into three levels: level one = 9-12 years, level two = 13-16 years and level three = 17-20 years of experience. The results indicate that most SWU participants (40%) had studied English for 17 to 20 years, while most PSU participants (53.3%) had studied English for 9 to 12 years, and most KKU participants (43.3%) had studied English for 9 to 12 years. On the other hand, the number of years of experience of participants from CMU was distributed equally across the three levels.

The researcher also investigated participants' experience in English speaking countries. The results reveal that 30% of SWU participants had experience in America compared to 53.3% of students at CMU, 16.7% of students from KKU, and 0% from PSU.

Results show that 30% of SWU participants, 6.7% of PSU participants, 60% of CMU, and 60% of KKU participants had worked at some time in the past with Americans.

The results reveal that 40% of SWU participants had American friends, while 6.7% of PSU participants, 56.7% of CMU students, and 50% of KKU students also had American friends. Table 6 shows participants' demographic background.

Table 6

Participants' Demographic Information

Survey	SWU (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)	PSU (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)	CMU (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)	KKU (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)
English Study Experience				
Studied English for 9-12 years	7 (23.3%)	16 (53.3%)	10 (33.3%)	13 (43.3%)
Studied English for 13-16 years	11 (36.7%)	11 (36.7%)	10 (33.3%)	12 (40.0%)
Studied English for 17-20 years	12 (40.0%)	3 (10%)	10 (33.3%)	5 (16.7%)
Experience in English-Speaking Countries				
Experience in America	9 (30%)	0 (0%)	16 (53.3%)	5 (16.7%)
Experience in other English-speaking country (ies)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)
No experience in English-speaking country (ies)	17 (56.7%)	28 (9.3%)	13 (43.3%)	23 (76.7%)
Experience working with Native-English Speakers				
Worked with American(s)	9 (30%)	2 (6.7%)	18 (60%)	18 (60%)
Worked with other native English speaker(s)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)
Never worked with native English speaker(s)	16 (53.3%)	25 (83.3%)	10 (33.3%)	11 (36.7%)

(continued)

Table 6

Participants' Demographic Information

Survey	SWU (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)	PSU (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)	CMU (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)	KKU (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)
Friendships with Native English-speakers				
Have American friend(s)	12 (40%)	2 (6.7%)	17 (56.7%)	15 (50%)
Have other native English speaking-friend(s)	6 (20%)	5 (16.7)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)
No native English speaking friend(s)	12 (40%)	23 (76.7)	10 (8.33%)	12 (40%)

The 120 participants in this study were asked to rate their attitudes towards learning about American culture. A five-item Likert scale was used in the study, defined as 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. The results indicate that participants have positive attitudes towards American culture ($M = 4.03$). Table 10 presents the participants' mean ranking for each item regarding attitudes towards learning about American culture.

Table 7

Participants' Attitudes towards American Culture

<i>Attitudes</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I am motivated to learn language by learning culture	120	3.73	.86
Learning culture helps improve my listening and speaking skills	120	3.85	.83
Learning about culture helps improve my reading and writing skills	120	3.90	.84
English newspapers and magazines help me learn the target culture	120	3.95	.73
Learning culture in the language classroom is interesting	120	4.17	.86
I am curious about the culture of the target language	120	4.00	.80
Learning culture should be integrated into language classrooms	120	4.05	.80
It is helpful to practice using English and culture in language classrooms	120	4.10	.76
Practicing culture with role plays helps me understand the target culture	120	4.10	.78
I would like to go to the United States of America	120	4.47	.80
Total	120	4.03	.20

Attitudes were also classified by university, revealing that students at CMU ($M = 4.16$) had the most positive attitudes towards learning about American culture, followed by students at PSU ($M = 4.08$), KKU ($M = 4.06$), and SWU ($M = 3.83$) as shown in the following table:

Table 8

Attitudes of Participants from each University towards American Culture

Universities	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
SWU	30	3.83	.25
KKU	30	4.06	.24
PSU	30	4.08	.24
CMU	30	4.16	.19

Summary

The Research Hypothesis One was supported by the results of the research reveal a positive relationship between American cultural knowledge and the English proficiency of the participants. It was also found that the mean score of participants in the central area was not significantly different from that of participants in the northern area. On the other hand, it was found that the mean score of participants in the northeast area was significantly higher than that of those in the central area. Therefore, the Research Hypothesis Two and the Research Hypothesis Three were not supported. Nevertheless, the Research Hypothesis Four was supported. The mean score of participants in the central area was significantly higher than in the south. Thus, the cultural knowledge of participants in the central area was no higher than in the provincial areas, except in the south.

The results of the survey showed that most of the participants in the north, northeast, and central areas had been studying English for 17 to 20 years, whereas most participants in the south had been studying English for only 9 to 12 years. Approximately half of the participants in the north had experience in America, whereas only one-third of participants in the central area had such experience. It was interesting to find that most of

the participants in the northeast and south had no experience in America. More than 30% of the participants in the north and northeast had worked with Americans compared to less than 10% of participants in the south. More than 40% of participants in the north, northeastern and central areas had American friends compared to less than 10% for southern participants. Most of the participants had positive attitudes towards America and learning about American culture.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between background knowledge of American culture and the English language proficiency of fourth-year English major students from four universities in Thailand. The data were analyzed to test the four following hypotheses:

1. There is a significant positive relationship between the scores Thai English language learners earn on the American Culture Test and the scores they earn on the English Language and Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement Test.
2. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than Thai English language learners in the northern area.
3. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than English Thai language learners in the northeastern area.
4. Thai English language learners in the central area of Thailand earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than English Thai language learners in the southern area.

This chapter discusses the findings of the study of these hypotheses. Implications and recommendations for further study are included at the end of the chapter.

Discussion for Research Hypothesis One

The results from this study reveal a positive relationship between student English language learners' knowledge of American culture and their level of English language proficiency. The results are consistent with previous research outcomes that indicated a

positive relationship between knowledge of a target culture and language learning success. It can be implied that general cultural knowledge should be integrated into the English language curriculum to help learners with language learning. This is consistent with the conclusions of several other researchers (Khanthuan, 2007; Paige et al., 2003).

This study has confirmed the relevance of general knowledge of the target culture in respect to EFL learning outcomes. The results of this study relate to the work of Khanthuan (2007) who identified a positive relationship between Singaporean students' knowledge of Thai culture and their Thai language proficiency. This study strengthens Khanthuan's findings that revealed the relationship between knowledge of a target language and its culture. The hypothesis had assumed that participants who earned higher scores on cultural knowledge tests would also earn higher scores on language proficiency tests.

American cultural knowledge predicts the English proficiency of English language learners. According to Xue-wei and Ying-jun (2006, p. 73), cultural awareness influences foreign language teaching because "culture is a comprehensive composite with abundant implications, and each factor in it may be exhibited in words. Learning vocabulary, while paying attention to culture, is vital and crucial," so that an understanding of the cultural background of words helps learners clarify the nuances of meaning and usage of vocabulary in the target language. Having an accurate understanding of vocabulary helps learners reading, listening, speaking and writing skills development because selection of appropriate vocabulary is necessary for correct interpretation. For example, vocabulary helps learners in listening to English because native speakers employ rapid articulation in quick spoken styles, non-native listeners experience difficulties in understanding. However, gaining familiarity with vocabulary and cultural topics helps students improve their listening ability. They can link their

background knowledge to what they are listening to so that they can interpret it correctly. Even though language learners may have to confront new vocabulary items in novel instances of connected speech, they can approximate meaning from the context more effectively if they possess sufficient background knowledge. It is easier for language learners to understand a conversation related to cultural conditions with which they are familiar. Moreover, language learners may understand not only literal meanings but also deeper meanings rooted in the speaker's culture.

In addition, a study was conducted by Thanasoulas, (2001) has shown that the lexical and grammatical structures used in each language are a factor that identifies the linguistic habits of its speakers. For example, sentences in English specify a relative time frame with respect to the time of speaking such as past, present, and future sentences. It may be assumed that English speakers are more acutely aware of time in general. For example, native English speakers, such as most Americans, care about being punctual, while being late is considered rude.

Overall, the results of this study confirm research hypothesis one and are consistent with previous studies indicating a positive relationship between cultural knowledge and language proficiency. Students who earned higher scores on American cultural knowledge also earned higher scores on the English Proficiency Test. Therefore, cultural knowledge of the target language could be a good predictor of language proficiency.

Discussion for Research Hypothesis Two

Students in the central area of Thailand were anticipated to earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than students in the north, but this has been proven to be incorrect in the present study. Mean scores of participants in the central area were not significantly higher than in the northern area. Chiang Mai University (CMU) represented the northern area. It is one of the larger cities in Thailand and features many tourist attractions. Therefore, many tourists visit Chiang Mai every year. As a result, Chiang Mai's economy is well-developed with the presence of many foreign businesses, embassies, and consulates, so students who live there have a greater chance to practice English and experience American culture. In addition, 33 % of CMU students have been studying English for 17 to 20 years which is nearly the same length of time as students in the central area.

No difference was found between the cultural knowledge of participants in the central and northern areas. The explanation for this may be that participants in both areas were from large cities with similar cultural environments. Living in a big city provides access to cultural resources such as films, cultural centers, and visiting native speakers.

Discussion for Research Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis predicted that students in the central area of Thailand would earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than students in the northeast. In fact, the mean score of students in the northeast was significantly higher than in the central area. There are several possible reasons to explanations for this outcome. One is the annual joint military exercises in the northeastern area with the American army. There is an annual exercise between Thai and American soldiers called the Cobra Gold Exercise which takes place in the northeastern area of Thailand (Embassy of the United States., 2009). During the exercise, American soldiers need translators to help them

communicate with Thai soldiers. It is possible that English major students at KCU have a better chance of being hired to work with Americans as they are the local people. This can be deduced from results that show the percentage of KCU students working with Americans was 60%, while only 30% of Srinakharinwirot University (SWU) students had the same opportunity. Therefore, KCU students can learn about American culture while they are working with Americans. Moreover, the results of the survey showed that more than half of the participants in the northeast had American friends while only 40% of SWU students stated that they had American friends. Besides these two reasons, another reason to explain this apparent anomaly is most professors and instructors at KCU are Americans and American University graduates. This suggests that KCU students will have more opportunities to practice and experience American culture from American native speakers of English or professors who have graduated from American universities. Therefore, KCU students have learned about, experienced, and absorbed American culture both in their classes, workplaces, and through interaction with American friends. It is apparent, therefore, that due to the higher ratio of native speakers of English, participants in the northeast had greater opportunity to absorb American culture while interacting with American professors, American colleagues, and friends than participants in the central area, so students in the northeastern area earned a higher score on American culture test than students in the central area.

Discussion for Research Hypothesis Four

Students in the central area of Thailand were predicted to earn higher scores on the American Culture Test than students in the south. The results of this study proved this hypothesis to be correct, as students from SWU earned higher scores than participants from Prince of Songkla University (PSU) in the south. This can be explained in several ways. First, the demographic survey showed that most students in the south had less

experience studying English; this group in particular averaged 7 to 12 years of English study. In contrast, students in the central area had between 17 and 20 years experience with English, far more than those in the south.

Furthermore, less than 1% of students in the south had experience with an authentic native speaker environment in the United States. Only 6.7% of southern students had experience working with Americans. These reasons explain why students from PSU earned lower scores on the American Culture Test than students from SWU. In order to help them, students at PSU should be provided with authentic teaching assistance tools. For example, computers with the Internet access can help southern students experience American culture by providing access to websites in English such as news, entertainment and chat rooms. Students can also watch movies to observe American culture from both audio and visual perspectives. Moreover, the government should provide special funding for students in the south to go on field trips to the USA to gain exposure to American culture in its home environment.

In conclusion, the survey revealed that participants in the south had less experience studying English, working with American people and had fewer American friends, so they lacked opportunities to develop their knowledge of the culture. The results of this study suggest that more funding should be provided to universities in the south to develop supplementary cultural learning materials for students to better understand and use English.

Implications of the Study

A positive relationship between American culture background knowledge and students' English proficiency was revealed in this research. Some implications for the field of the target culture and language learning can be drawn:

1. Learning about American culture in the English-language classroom is one factor that will help learners improve their English-language skills. This has been born out by the positive relationship shown between knowledge of American culture and students' demonstration of proficiency in vocabulary, listening and grammar on the ELLIS test.
2. Introducing cultural awareness in language classrooms can develop students' background knowledge of the cultural contexts of the target language. Familiarity with specific topics helps students connect text and speech to their background experience, leading to a clearer overall understanding. Thus, instruction including American culture should be integrated into language classrooms.

Recommendations for Further Studies

It would be useful to conduct further research into other aspects of language and culture to discover their relevance to English language learners. The following topics are suggested:

1. It would be useful to investigate the influence of Thai learners' knowledge of other English-speaking cultures on their subsequent English language proficiency. For example, it would be useful to understand the relationship between the cultures of the United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand and the English language proficiency of students with experience in those countries. Such an investigation may confirm or challenge the findings of the present study. It could

also confirm the strength of the relationship between target languages and background knowledge of their cultures.

2. As the variables of this study were vocabulary, listening, and grammar skills, further studies could focus on other skills such as reading, writing, and speaking. This would expand the scope of investigation to discover the correlation between those skills in addition to the ones already analyzed in the present research project.
3. Further studies could be conducted concerning the distinction between high culture and low culture or objective and subjective culture. A comparison of those aspects of culture may indicate that participants have greater sensitivity to one aspect of culture than another on the culture test. The results could help instructors know which aspects of culture students lack knowledge of and support them with their target culture learning in the EFL classroom.
4. Further studies could employ different instruments. For example, the cultural knowledge test could be changed from a paper-based test to a computer-based test in order to evaluate students' knowledge of culture in non-verbal communication in both audio and visual formats. Both pictures and sounds may help participants form clearer ideas. Thus, changing to an audiovisual format could lead to different test results. Some participants may perform better on a cultural knowledge test if it is presented via audiovisual formats than on an exclusively paper-based test.

Conclusion

This study showed a positive relationship between participants' scores on the American Culture Test and the ELLIS Placement Test. It revealed no significantly higher mean scores for participants from the central area than in the north. However, significantly lower mean scores were earned by participants in the central area than in the

northeast. Namely, the mean score of participants in the central area was significantly higher than that of those in the south. On the other hand, the mean score of participants in the central area was significantly lower than for those in the northeast. Thus, American cultural knowledge could be a good predictor of English language proficiency.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**American Culture Test
and Answer Key**

American Culture Test

My name is Tuntiga Pollap. I am currently studying in a Master's program in English in the Department of Western Languages, Faculty of Humanities at Srinakharinwirot University. I am also conducting a research study to investigate if there is any relationship between the knowledge of American culture and English language proficiency, and you have been asked to participate in this study. All participants in the study will take the American Culture Test to measure cultural knowledge and will also take the English Language Instruction System (ELLIS) Placement test to measure English Proficiency.

To better interpret the result of this study, it will be useful to know your previous experience in learning English and learning about American culture. You will be asked to complete a survey concerning about your background information, English language learning and teaching, and how you lean the American culture. The information you provide will be used only for the purposes of this study and no information about individuals will be given to anyone. All personal information will be destroyed after the completion of this study. Your assistance in providing the needed information is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Tuntiga Pollap

ID Number _____

Name of the University _____

Description: This test aims to measure background knowledge of American culture. There are 50 items in this test. The test contains culture-specific questions. Please mark an (x) in the appropriate choices on the separate answer sheet. If you do not know the answer, please leave it blank.

American Culture Test

1. What do children do on Easter day?
 - a. Search for eggs.
 - b. Play trick or treat.
 - c. Hunt for rabbits.
 - d. Shop for new clothing.
2. Which of the following is not an official government holiday in America?
 - a. Labor Day.
 - b. Halloween.
 - c. Memorial Day.
 - d. Martin Luther King Day.
3. What kind of dessert is traditionally served on Thanksgiving?
 - a. Candy cane.
 - b. Pumpkin pie.
 - c. Chocolate brownies.
 - d. Blueberry cheesecake.
4. What are you most likely to see on Independence Day?
 - a. Fireworks.
 - b. A football game.
 - c. Lanterns floating.
 - d. A military parade.
5. When do Americans put up their Christmas tree?
 - a. On Christmas eve.
 - b. A week after Halloween.
 - c. A few days before Christmas.
 - d. Two or three weeks after Thanksgiving.
6. Which of the following is true about the first Thanksgiving celebrations?
 - a. Giving thanks to Native American for giving them property.
 - b. Giving thanks to God for European explorers safely arriving in the New World.
 - c. Giving thanks to Native Americans for teaching the English colonists to cook healthy food.
 - d. Giving thanks for successful bounty of crops between English colonists and Native Americans.

7. Which of the following actions is considered impolite?
 - a. Going to class five minutes early.
 - b. Eating chicken or a sandwich with your hands at the park.
 - c. Asking for a glass of water when you visit someone's house.
 - d. Asking your host about the cost of the meal at a restaurant.
8. What is an acceptable behavior in America?
 - a. Wearing shoes in the house.
 - b. Asking about someone's salary.
 - c. Expressing your anger in public.
 - d. Asking about someone's marital status.
9. When you are invited for dinner, which behavior is considered unacceptable?
 - a. Wearing casual clothes.
 - b. Bringing a bottle of wine for the host.
 - c. Bringing other friends to add to the fun.
 - d. Finishing the meal about the same time or after the host.
10. What should you do after you are given a present?
 - a. Shake hands while saying, "thank you."
 - b. Guess what it is; then, say "thank you."
 - c. Say "thank you" and ask the giver if you can open it up.
 - d. Say "thank you" and place it in your bag until you get home.
11. What does "keeping your fingers crossed" mean?
 - a. Giving symbol of love.
 - b. Maintaining a friendship.
 - c. Wishing people good luck.
 - d. Showing honesty to your lover.
12. What does "knocking on wood" mean?
 - a. Getting attention.
 - b. Getting rid of fear.
 - c. Providing success in the future.
 - d. Preventing bad luck from happening.
13. Where do children put their baby teeth for the "Tooth Fairy" to find?
 - a. On the table.
 - b. Under a tree.
 - c. Under a pillow.
 - d. In the wardrobe.

14. Which of the following is considered good luck in America?
 - a. Walking under a ladder.
 - b. A bat flying into a house.
 - c. Opening an umbrella indoors.
 - d. A bride crying during her wedding ceremony.
15. Which is considered the most serious fault if you are studying in America?
 - a. Cheating or plagiarism.
 - b. Chatting in a classroom.
 - c. Chewing gum and spitting.
 - d. Piercing some part of the body.
16. Which type of class at high school is not allowed in America?
 - a. Meditation.
 - b. Christianity.
 - c. Sex education.
 - d. Driving education.
17. In which year do high school students go to the traditional Prom ceremony?
 - a. Freshmen.
 - b. Sophomore.
 - c. Junior.
 - d. Senior.
18. What sport is played during the traditional Homecoming Game in American High Schools?
 - a. Soccer.
 - b. Football.
 - c. Baseball.
 - d. Basketball.
19. What should you do after you have attended your boss's party?
 - a. Do nothing at all.
 - b. Give the host a big hug.
 - c. Send a small gift to the host.
 - d. Send a thank you note to the host.
20. Which is normal American behavior after eating at a restaurant?
 - a. Leaving a tip for good service.
 - b. Giving a compliment about the food and restaurant.
 - c. Telling the waiters or waitress you will come back again.
 - d. Saying "thank you" to the waiter/ waitress for their good service.

21. Which of the following is true in America?
 - a. Christianity is the official religion.
 - b. Most people go to church on Sunday.
 - c. Women must take their husband's family name in marriage.
 - d. A person from any religion can become president of the country.
22. What should you do when you are invited to someone's house and they introduce their dog to you?
 - a. Say hello to it.
 - b. Give it a compliment.
 - c. Tell it to be a good dog.
 - d. Tell the host that you do not like it.
23. What are you expected to do if you are invited to a "baby shower?"
 - a. Chanting for the baby.
 - b. Bringing a gift for the baby.
 - c. Giving the baby a gentle bath.
 - d. Bringing some food for the baby.
24. What should you do if you are invited to a party at someone's house?
 - a. Bring gifts for the host.
 - b. Go there early to help prepare food.
 - c. Help the host clean the table after eating.
 - b. Ask the host what they would like you to bring.
25. What is a suitable topic for small talk?
 - a. Your religion.
 - b. The Iraq War.
 - c. Political parties.
 - d. The latest movies you have seen.
26. Which of the following topics is considered impolite to discuss in conversations with Americans?
 - a. Salary.
 - b. Health.
 - c. Children.
 - d. Education.
27. What would you say if someone gave you a compliment on the way you were dressed?
 - a. Oh, thank you.
 - b. No, yours is better.
 - c. Yes, everyone said so.
 - d. No, it is not that beautiful.

28. What does it mean when Americans say they feel “blue?”
 - a. Purity.
 - b. Sadness.
 - c. Loveliness.
 - d. Cheerfulness.
29. What feeling does “green” represent to Americans?
 - a. Envy.
 - b. Love.
 - c. Anger.
 - d. Calmness.
30. What does “gold” represent in American culture?
 - a. Pride.
 - b. Wealth.
 - c. Royalty.
 - d. Spirituality.
31. Which of the following is considered poor manners?
 - a. Arguing an idea with your professor.
 - b. Rolling your eyes while others are talking.
 - c. A boy and a girl walking arm-in-arm at a shopping mall.
 - d. Wearing jeans and a T-shirt to see your teacher in her office.
32. Which of the following is considered poor manners?
 - a. Nodding your head while eating.
 - b. Using a napkin to wipe off your mouth.
 - c. Using a fork and knife to eat a hamburger.
 - d. Using a knife to put food into your mouth.
33. Which sport is considered the “American Past-time?”
 - a. Football.
 - b. Baseball.
 - c. Basketball.
 - d. Beach volleyball.
34. Which sport is played during the “Super Bowl?”
 - a. Football.
 - b. Baseball.
 - c. Basketball.
 - d. Ice hockey.

35. Which food or drink was first created in America?
 - a. Beer.
 - b. Pizza.
 - c. Taco.
 - d. Coca-Cola.
36. What kind of drink do Americans prefer when eating beefsteak?
 - a. Beer.
 - b. Whisky.
 - c. Red wine.
 - d. White wine.
37. Where is the napkin placed for a formal table setting?
 - a. On the plate.
 - b. Below the plate.
 - c. On the left side of the plate.
 - d. On the right side of the plate.
38. Who is seated at the head of the table?
 - a. The host.
 - b. The richest man.
 - c. The oldest person.
 - d. Anybody can sit there.
39. Which is not normal behavior for Americans?
 - a. Eating pizza for supper.
 - b. Eating pancakes as a snack.
 - c. Eating donuts for breakfast.
 - d. Eating a hamburger for lunch in the park.
40. A "wishbone" is part of which American tradition?
 - a. Slicing a Christmas ham.
 - b. Eating Thanksgiving turkey.
 - c. Symbolizing a memorial day.
 - d. Cooking chicken on New Year.
41. What should you do when you are invited to dinner in America?
 - a. Arrive any time during dinner.
 - b. Arrive at the exact time of the invitation.
 - c. Arrive 30 minutes after the appointed time.
 - d. Arrive 30 minutes before the appointed time.

42. Which American is famous for helping free the black slaves?
- John F. Kennedy.
 - Abraham Lincoln.
 - George Washington.
 - Martin Luther King, Jr.
43. How do you address professors at universities in America?
- By their first or last name.
 - By their first and last name.
 - By their title and first name.
 - By their title and last name.
44. After English, what is the second most common language used in America?
- French.
 - Spanish.
 - German.
 - Sign Language.
45. Which is considered improper to say to someone you have just met?
- Hello, how are you?
 - Hello, how do you do?
 - Hello, how are you doing?
 - Hello, where are you going to?
46. What is the appropriate distance you should stand while talking to an American?
- About 2 feet.
 - About 3 feet.
 - About 4 feet.
 - About 5 feet.
47. Which is the most polite way to refuse an invitation?
- Making up a good excuse.
 - Just saying "No" and smiling.
 - Just not going, and apologizing later.
 - Expressing regret and suggesting another time.
48. How much is a nickel in American money?
- 1 cent.
 - 5 cents.
 - 10 cents.
 - 25 cents.

49. Which city is known as the “Big Apple?”
- a. Chicago.
 - b. Los Angeles.
 - c. New York City.
 - d. Washington, D.C.
50. Who created jazz music?
- a. Black musicians.
 - b. White women singers.
 - c. American spiritual groups.
 - d. White musicians from Europe.

Answer Key

1. A
2. B
3. B
4. A
5. D
6. D
7. D
8. A
9. C
10. C
11. C
12. D
13. C
14. D
15. A
16. B
17. D
18. B
19. D
20. A
21. B
22. A

- 23. B
- 24. D
- 25. D
- 26. A
- 27. A
- 28. B
- 29. A
- 30. A
- 31. B
- 32. C
- 33. B
- 34. A
- 35. D
- 36. A
- 37. A
- 38. A
- 39. B
- 40. B
- 41. B
- 42. D
- 43. D
- 44. B
- 45. D

- 46. A
- 47. D
- 48. B
- 49. C
- 50. A

APPENDIX B

Attitudes towards Culture Learning Survey

Attitudes towards Culture Learning Survey

Part I: Demographic Information Survey of the Participants.

Directions: Please fill out the information in the blanks or mark (/) in the appropriate brackets.

Name_____

Age_____ Gender () Male () Female

Hometown_____

1. I have been studying English for _____ years.
2. I spend my free time on: (you can choose more than one)

() reading	() surfing the Internet
() seeing movies	() listening to music
() traveling	() shopping
() others_____	
3. Have you ever been to a native English speaking country?

() Yes, I have been to _____ (name(s) of the countries).
() No, I have not.
5. Have you ever worked with a native English speaker?

() Yes, I have worked with _____ (nationality).
() No, I have not.
6. Do you have native English speaking friend(s)?

() Yes, they come from _____.
() No, I do not.

Part II: Attitudes towards American Culture Learning Survey.

Directions: Please rank each statement showing your opinion concerning learning culture and language. The ranking scale is:

Ranking	Level of agreement
5	Strongly agree
4	Agree
3	Undecided
2	Disagree
1	Strongly disagree

Items	5	4	3	2	1
Learning culture in the language classroom is interesting					
Learning culture helps improve my listening and speaking skills					
Learning culture helps improve my reading and writing skills					
English newspapers and magazines help me learn the target culture					
Learning culture should be integrated into language classrooms					
Practicing culture with role plays help me understand the target culture					
I am motivated to learn language by learning culture					
It is helpful to practice using English and culture in language classrooms					
I am curious about the culture of the target language					
I would like to go to the United States of America					

VITAE

VITAE

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