ทักษะและลักษณะความสามารถในการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม: การนำมาปรับใช้ในชั้นเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษในประเทศไทย

Skills and Dispositions of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC): An Implication for the EFL classes in Thailand

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาในครั้งนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อค้นหาทักษะและลักษณะของความสามารถในการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมที่จำเป็นต่อผู้เรียนในระดับปริญญาตรีจากมุมมองของนักศึกษา อาจารย์ผู้สอน ผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านความสามารถในการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม ผู้ประกอบการในอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยว และมัคคุเทศก์ โดยได้ศึกษาทักษะและลักษณะของความสามารถในการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรมจาก 3 ด้านคือ ด้านทัศนคติ ด้านความรู้ และด้านทักษะความสามารถ โดยเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์ ผลจากการศึกษาพบว่าทักษะและลักษณะของความสามารถในด้านทัศนคติมีความสำคัญที่สุดต่อการสื่อสารข้ามวัฒนธรรม ในบทความนี้จึงได้นำเสนอกิจกรรมการเรียนการสอนที่ส่งเสริมทักษะและลักษณะของความสามารถในด้านทัศนคติเพื่อเป็นแนวทางให้แก่ชั้นเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศในประเทศไทย

Abstract

The aim of this study is to find out the required ICC skills and dispositions for undergraduate students from students', lecturers', ICC academics', tourism industry employers', and tour guides' perspectives. ICC skills and dispositions in three dimensions; attitude, knowledge, and skills were investigated. Questionnaires and interviews were employed in data collection procedures. The results show that ICC skills and dispositions in attitudinal dimension was the most important in intercultural communication. Teaching practices which promote ICC skills and dispositions in attitudinal dimension are proposed for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in Thailand.

Keywords: Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a rapid growth in the number of users and learners of English (Jenkins, 2015; Liu & Tsai, 2013; Braine, 2011). English is the most widely spoken language in worldwide and it was estimated that there are about 1.5 billion speakers of English (Myers, 2015). The group of English speakers can be divided into three main groups; native speakers of English, speakers of English as a second language, and speakers of English as a foreign or international language (Pennycook, 2017). In these three groups, only 375 million are native speakers (Myers, 2015) while the third group is the fastest growing of English world speakers. In the other words, English is used to communicate mostly between non-native speakers rather than between native speakers or between native and non-native speakers (Klimczak-Pawlak, 2014; Mete, 2011). Moreover, English is widely taught in more than 100 countries including China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt, Brazil, and Thailand and is important as an international language which is used by people in almost every parts of the world (Abdullah & Chaudhary, 2012).

To communicate in international setting, knowledge of the language alone is not a guarantee of success in communication (Mora, 2015). People who can use a foreign language correctly and fluently but do not have knowledge of the social and cultural values of the society, have the possibility of encountering humorous incidents or misunderstandings (Swatevacharkul, 2009, Chlopek, 2008) because communicative failure do not merely occur from the lack of language skills only, but many times they are initiated by cultural differences (Mora, 2015). In English language teaching, it is important to develop appropriate pedagogy which reflects the use of English as an international language both in local and global context (Mate,

2011). Teaching practices and materials used in classes should encourage the students to reflect on their own culture in relation to others. To get effective communication in intercultural settings, many studies (Mitchell, Pardinho, Agular, & Meshkov, 2015; Popescu& Iordachescu, 2015; Reid, 2015; Assanova, 2014; Liu& Zhang, 2014; Laopongharn& Sercombe, 2009; Juan & Flor, 2008; Liaw, 2006;) had put the focus on intercultural communicative competence (ICC) which is one particular and important aspect.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately when individuals interact with people from different cultural background. It is a crucial issue in the field of communicative language teaching. In the past ten years, there are many studies which investigated ICC in various field for example, the studies that used ICC as a criteria to evaluate English textbooks (Hamiloglu& Mendi, 2010; Ho, 2009; Zu, 2009;). Some studies proposed teaching process and activities in EFL / ESL classes to promote ICC (KriauciŪniene&Šiugždiniene, 2010; Laopongharn&Sercombe, 2009; Juan&Flor, 2008; and Liaw, 2006) and there are some studies investigated ICC in various occupations (Panggabean et al., 2013; Moussa, 2012; Huang, 2011; Tanaka, 2010; Gannon, 2008). However, there are not many ICC studies which try to make connection between education and tourism domain. This study aims to investigate the required ICC skills and dispositions for undergraduate students who have high potentiality to work in tourism domain after graduation. The result from this study was used to propose teaching practices which promote ICC for EFL classes.

Culture in ESL / EFL Classrooms

Zhu (2011) stated that foreign language learning is foreign culture learning and to cul-

tivate students' competence for intercultural communication, lecturers need to arouse students' intercultural awareness and develop their ICC. ICC becomes crucial when people communicate with people from different background. It is because people see, interpret, and evaluate documents and events in different way. Some social etiquette which may be appropriate in one culture might be inappropriate for others. For example, Thai may not understand why giving a clock to Chinese as a gift is thought as wishing a short life to the receiver while to a Malay, getting the same gift is a symbol of thoughtfulness and good relationship (Salleh, 2005). In this way, misunderstandings may occur when communicating. A person who does not have cultural awareness tends to ignore the differences between their own culture and another person's and as a result, this ignorance might affect their relationships and the way they communicate with each other.

In EFL classes, teaching culture seems to have been neglected (Omaggio, 2001).The reasons for the neglect are; firstly, teachers have overcrowded curriculum that make them lack time to add teaching cultures in classes. Secondly, many teachers do not have enough knowledge to teach culture of the target language and therefore lack the confidence to teach. Finally, teachers do not have a clear concept about what culture is. Language textbooks seem to be the primary source of cultural knowledge for the EFL teachers who may have few cross-cultural experiences. However, some textbooks focus on behavioral practices (pattern of social interactions) but most neglect cultural perspectives related to meaning, attitudes, values, and ideas. In other words, students learn more about the "what" and "how" of culture and less about the "why" which is more important for language learners and is an essential part of the

definition of culture as it is a product of behavioral practices.

Culture can be taught both directly and indirectly such as using materials derived from the native environment including web sites, films, television shows, news, magazines, photographs, newspaper, restaurant menus, advertising and other media, or by discussing of common colloquialism, proverbs, and idioms, in the target language, doing role plays, inviting exchange students or students who speak the target language at home to the class as expert sources.

In the past, teaching culture was rarely fully integrated in systematic way into language learning. It was treated as a small part of the main study on grammar and vocabulary (Young, 1996). At present, teaching culture and developing ICC is increasingly crucial in the globalized world. However, teaching practices of foreign language which integrated cultural knowledge still need guidelines for the teachers to follow.

Concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)

Many scholars have defined the term ICC. Gertsen (1990, p.346) defined this term as *the ability to function effectively in another culture.* This wide concept of ICC was later defined in relation to sociolinguistics as Sercu (2002) claimed ICC is a concept typical of postmodernist views of society and relates to the interest in the relationship between one's own culture and other culture regardless of the differences in ethnic, social, notional, professional, and institutional points of view. Later, Clandfield (2008) described ICC as the ability to communicate and operate effectively with people from another culture while Bennett (2011) explained ICC as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that

supports effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts. This definition of ICC shows dimensions of ICC which help to clarify the concept and its relationship with communication. This concept of ICC identified the relationship of three dimensions which are important in developing ICC including the ICC characteristics which can be used as a source of knowledge for successful communication.

From previous studies which defined ICC in various aspects, it can be concluded that ICC refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately when individuals interact with people from other cultures.

ICC consists of components which were variously identified by many scholars. Byram (1997) proposed a model of ICC which consists of 5 components; they are skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, know ledge, attitude, and critical cultural awareness. This model shows the interconnected between 5 components which are necessary in developing ICC. In skills dimension of this model, the detail about the objectives were described clearly and they can be used as a first step in the design of an appropriate curriculum for specific situations.Fantini (2006) also mentioned the construct of ICC which consists of 5 components; they are awareness, attitude, skills, knowledge, and frequency in the target language. However, these components do not show the integration or coherence across them. Moreover, awareness and attitude can be group in the same category and frequency in the target language can be grouped in skills. On the other hand, Deardorff (2006) proposed 5 components of ICC which includes attitude, knowledge, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. Some aspects of this model are similar to Byram's ICC model and Fantini's 5 components of ICC. From these 3 ICC models, the components of ICC which are found in all 3 models are attitude, knowledge, and skills.

The aim of this study is to investigate the ICC skills and dispositions in attitude, knowledge, and skills dimension. In order to find out the required skills and dispositions for undergraduate students who have high potentiality to work in tourism domain after graduation from the students', lecturers', ICC academics', employers', and tour guides' perspectives. The skills and dispositions in attitude, knowledge, and skills dimension which included in this study were derived from previous studies (Kriauciūniene & Šiugždiniene, 2010; Ho, 2009; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009; Williams, 2009; Fantini, 2006; Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006; Mc Donald, 2005). The results getting from the perspectives of both academics and non- academics can be used as a guideline for teaching practices which integrate ICC in a particular career field.

Teaching ICC in Thailand

Teaching English in Thailand has been categorized as English as a Foreign Language (EFL). English is a compulsory second language in schools and in tertiary education. It is the most popular foreign language learned in schools and in private tuition classes (Wongsothorn, Chinthammit, Ratanothayanonth, & Noparumpa, 1996). Moreover, English is the first mostly used language in the media and the most often used as a second or as a foreign language in business dealing s with both native and non-native of English speakers. English plays an essential role in Thailand's development and as a lingua franca to connect culturally, intellectually, and commercially with the rest of the world (Baker, 2009).

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Thailand has the general goal of enabling Thai learners to be able to interact with people from different cultural

background. English teaching in Thailand has mostly emphasized communicative language teaching. Laopongharn and Sercombe (2009) stated that ICC can be included in communicative competence. Therefore, language teachers are expected to teach not only the key culture but should also develop the learners' awareness of intercultural interaction as well as the skills and competences which can help them to interact effectively in intercultural settings.

Thailand is a country that has a unique cultural background which teachers and learners can use as a background for learning other cultures and styles of communication. Laopongharn and Sercombe (2009) suggested ways for people to increase their awareness of ICC as followings.

1) The more Thai people understand their own culture the more they have higher potentiality to see similarities and differences between Thai culture and other cultures.

2) Thai learners have many opportunities to be exposed to the target language culture for example through; a) English textbooks which are imported from native speaking countries of English. b) Media and arts from both local and international resources such as TV programmes, magazines, newspaper. c) Electronic media such as e-mail, social media, and the internet that can provide direct communication between learners and people from other culture. This can provide intercultural experiences for Thai learners. d) Thai or native language teachers-learners have many opportunities to get experiences with native speakers in class about information related to other cultures. Moreover, learners can learn English with Thai teachers who might have had intercultural experiences and can inform the learners through their acquired intercultural perspectives.

These factors play an important role for Thai learners to become familiar with intercultural setting and to enable them to develop their ICC. However, teachers need to emphasize teaching practices which incorporate ICC systematically.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study consisted of several stages. Firstly, quantitative procedures were used in order to investigate the required ICC skills and dispositions for undergraduate students from the students', lecturers', ICC academics', tourism industry employers', and tour guides' perspectives. Questionnaires were completed by the participants which were composed of 191 students, 5 lecturers, and 3 ICC academics from 5 universities in Songkhla and Phuket province (universities A, B, C, D, and E), 312 tourism industry employers, and 346 tour guides. The study focused on ICC in the tourism domain to find out the unique needs of ICC skills and dispositions. The students and lecturers who were the participants of this study were groups of students who take English for Tourism courses and lecturers who take responsibility for these courses in the second semester of academic year 2015. Tourism industry employers refer to owners of travel agencies in Songkhla and Phuket province. Tour guides were also from these two provinces. The questionnaires were 1-4 likert scales asking about the level of importance of each ICC skills and dispositions in the attitude, knowledge, and skills dimension.

The ICC skills and dispositions in the attitude dimension consisted of flexibility, ability to adapt to new situations, curiosity, tolerance of ambiguity, and empathy. In the knowledge dimension, they were self-confident, knowledge about cultural norms, values, behavior, and issues, acknowledgement of the identity of others, knowledge about another country and culture, and knowledge about intercultural

communication. Finally, in the skills dimension, ability to interpret, knowledge discovery, problem solving skills, ability to evaluate, and ability to negotiate. Secondly, data from the questionnaires were analyzed and 10 representatives of the participants from each group were interviewed in order to explain the phenomena. Finally, the teaching procedures which help to promote the required skills and dispositions of ICC are proposed.

To investigate the most required ICC skills and dispositions for undergraduate students, the questionnaires were given to the students, lecturers, ICC academics, tourism industry employers, and tour guides. Data was analyzed and the most important ICC dimensions and most required skills and dispositions in each dimension are presented in the table below.

Findings

Table 1 The Importance of each ICC Dimensions

Participants	Attitudinal Dimension		Knowledge Dimension		Skills Dimension	
(N)	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Students (190)	3.54	.34	3.51	.36	3.45	.45
Lecturers (5)	3.84	.21	3.80	.28	3.52	.57
ICC Academics (3)	3.80	.20	3.73	.30	3.66	.41
Employers (312)	3.49	.47	3.40	.46	3.36	.54
Tour Guides (346)	3.45	.54	3.38	.52	3.39	.54

The data from the table 1 shows that from the perspective of the students, lecturers, ICC academics, tourism industry employers, and tour guides, the attitudinal dimension showed the highest mean score of 3.54 for the students, 3.84 for the lecturers, 3.80 for the ICC academics, 3.49 for the tourism industry employers and 3.45 for the tour guides respectively.

Table 2 Quantitative Data Related to Three Dimensions of ICC

Population	Attitudinal Dimension	Knowledge Dimension	Skills Dimension
Students	Tolerance of ambiguity (3.64)	An understanding of others' world views, values, norms, and way of life (3.58)	Knowledge discovery (3.51)
Lecturers	Empathy (4.00)	Self-confidence (4.00) Identity of others (4.00)	Ability to interpret (3.80)
ICC academics	Flexibility (4.00) Ability to adapt to new situations (4.00)	Self-confidence (3.67) Acknowledgement of identity of others (3.67) An understanding of Others' world views, values, norms, and way of life (3.67) Knowledge about another country and culture (3.67) Knowledge about Intercultural communication (3.67)	Problem solving skills (4.00) Ability to negotiate (4.00)

Table 2 (2) Quantitative Data Related to Three Dimensions of ICC

Population	Attitudinal Dimension	Knowledge Dimension	Skills Dimension
Employers	Tolerance of Ambiguity (3.58)	Others' world views, values, norms, and way of life (3.48)	Problem solving skills (4.00) Ability to negotiate (4.00)
Tour Guides	Tolerance of ambiguity (3.55)	Self-confidence (3.44)	Problem solving skillsm(3.49) Ability to Negotiate (3.49)

The data from table 2 shows that the students, tourism industry employers, and tour guides agreed that most required skills and dispositions was tolerance of ambiguity (M=3.64, 3.58, and 3.55 respectively). The lecturers agreed that empathy is the most required skills and dispositions (M=4.00). On the other hand, the ICC academics agreed that flexibility (M=4.00) and ability to adapt to new situations (M=4.00) are the most required skills and dispositions.

It is clear that most of the population in this study agreed that the attitude dimension was the most important dimension of ICC. From the result of qualitative data, in-depth interview were employed in order to investigate the reasons behind this phenomenon. 20 students and 5 lecturers from university A, B, C, D, and E, 3 ICC academics, 10 tour guides, and 10 employers were interview about why they think that the attitudinal dimension is the most important and more important than the knowledge dimension and skills dimension.

The results from interviews were quite similar in all groups and the data below show some of the results from the interviews.

"Attitude occurs inside our mind and it plays an important role in the way we act to others. Good attitude about something can let us learn effectively"

(The 3rd student)

"It's easier for me to teach the students to be skillful but it's harder to teach them to have a good attitude about something"

(The 1st lecturer)

"Good attitude is very essential for working because good attitude makes good feeling and to work. In the tourism domain good attitude is very important. It can lead to good service and make the tourists be impressed"

(The 2nd lecturer)

"Good attitude can help people to work effectively and can work with others happily. Attitude is more important than skills because skills can be practiced but attitude is hard to be changed"

(The 3rd lecturer)

"Attitude is very important because attitude is a factor effecting determination and eagerness to learn and communicate with people from different cultures"

(The 5th lecturer)

"It's important for people who work in tourism domain to have good attitude. It will promote effective work. Flexibility is very essential when serving customers especially the people from different cultures"

(the 1st ICC academic)

"Personally, based on my experience living in and travel to other countries, the language issue

can be challenging when the guides have lower proficiency in English and/ or their pronunciations are difficult for me. However, for me, attitude is everything. As human beings we, by nature, want to communicate to get our needs met, whether they are emotional, physical or otherwise. If we feel the interlocutor is trying their best to successfully communicate. That's half the battle. Additionally, if the interlocutor doesn't get frustrated and demonstrates resourcefulness, all the better. The attitude of the other keeps us engaged or not. It's for me the most important component"

(The 2nd ICC academic)

"If a person has positive attitude. It will when interacting with people from different cultures and attitude is hard to be changed"

(The 2nd employer)

"Attitude can represent oneself about thinking, behaviors, etc. Positive attitude can promote successful communication and help people to live happily together. Good attitude can lead to eagerness to improve the skills"

(The 6th employer)

"Tourism personnel have to have good attitude which helps to work smoothly with others. However, skills can be practiced at work"

(The 2nd tour guide)

"When you're facing problems, attitude is the important thing for problem solving. On the other hand, some skills are not employed in all situations of work"

(The 5th tour guide)

The results from the interviews revealed that most of the population in this study agreed that attitude dimension was very important because attitude plays an important role in interacting with people from different cultures for example, flexibility is essential when serving customers. Attitude can help to promote successful communicating and working satisfactorily with others. In addition,

attitude is more important than skills because skills can be practiced but attitude is hard to change as one of the lecturers claimed that it is easier for her to teach the students to be skillful but it is harder to teach them have a good attitude about something.

The result can be supported by Byram (1997) who stated that the success of an intercultural interaction cannot be decided by the effectiveness of information exchange but the thing which is as important as the communication is the maintaining of human relationships, and this capacity depends on attitudinal factors.

The results from this study can be complemented by the previous study of Deardorff (2010) that the essential attitude such as openness and curiosity will push the individual to step out of his or her comfort zone. In intercultural interaction, to respect other values, it needs to be demonstrated that others are valued. These attitudes are the foundation of the further development of knowledge and skills which are needed for ICC while knowledge is also important because it makes the individual understand the world from the perspectives of others.

Attitude, knowledge, and skills together will lead to an internal outcome such as flexibility, adaptability, and empathy. These will help the individual to see the world from others' perspectives and respond to others as they would want to be treated. Each person can reach different level of internal outcomes. Internal outcomes are demonstrated through the individual's behaviors and level of communication and these become the visible results. Deardorf (2010) illustrated that ICC is a process which in there is no particular point that the individual can reach complete competency. Therefore, it is important to pay more attention to the process used to acquire the essential attitude, knowledge, and skills.

Intercultural Communicative Competence: Implications for EFL Classes

The implication for the result from this research can be integrated into teaching procedures which can promote ICC. The examples of activities which can promote attitudinal dimension are for example, doing role plays between tourists and tour guides. The use of role play in EFL classrooms can help students to overcome cultural fatigue and it promotes the process of cross-cultural dialogues while at the same time provides opportunities for oral communication (Ismail, 2006). Students can learn the cases of miscommunication based on cultural differences through such role plays.

Other activities which can develop attitudinal dimension are discussions about Thai culture compared to international cultures, showing movie clips about various cultures. The lecturers can let the students watch and listen to such clips that focus on the specific cultural conventions such as greetings. Moreover, discussing and sharing experiences about international interactions are very helpful because discussion can include nonverbal behaviors such as gestures, eye contact, body posture, and societal roles. Students could compare similarities and differences between their culture and the native culture and determine effective strategies to communicate in the target language.

Additionally, showing situations and problems which might occur when leading the tours can help the students to be aware of possible conflicts and how to handle problems. This will help them to understand others and empathize more with people from various cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

This study investigated the required ICC skills and dispositions for undergraduate students from the students', lecturers', ICC academics', tourism industry employers', and tour guides' perspectives. The result of the study revealed that all groups of the study participants agreed that the attitudinal dimension was the most important for intercultural interaction in Thai tourism domain because attitude plays a crucial role in interacting with people from different cultures and attitude is hard to change. Therefore, it is difficult to teach the students to have good attitude about something. However, there are various activities which can help to promote the attitudinal dimension of ICC such as role plays, discussions, showing movie clips, showing situations and problems which might occur in intercultural interactions.

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