
CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SECOND
LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: AN INVESTIGATION OF
THAI LEARNERS

Will Baker

Silpakorn University

Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify connections between culture, in particular cultural awareness, and second language acquisition (SLA). A number of socio-cultural models of SLA were utilized in the design of the research. Most significantly was the Socio-Education Model (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993a), which emphasizes the crucial, although indirect, role context and culturally influenced factors play in SLA. A questionnaire was administered to 100 undergraduate English students at a Thai university. The subjects were asked to report on their attitudes and behavior regarding cultural awareness, orientation/motivation, attitudes towards English and Thai culture, people and language, and culturally significant learning strategies. The results provided support for the hypothesis that cultural awareness is a significant aspect of SLA; however no relationship was established between cultural awareness and final learning outcomes. This may be due to the indirect nature of the relationship and the measure of English language proficiency used.

Introduction

Recently the importance of culture as an integral part of foreign language teaching has become apparent. This paper will take the position that culture and language are inexorably connected; hence language learning and culture learning are also inevitably interrelated. Although culture has often been a part of language teaching, in traditional approaches its role has been confined to a narrow definition of culture which focused on observable behavior and customs associated with a particular culture. In contrast the wider view of culture taken by this paper involves the unobservable beliefs, values, assumptions and perceptions related to particular cultures which show themselves in observable behavior. Indeed, in keeping with the theories and research presented in the literature review, the learning of a language and of a culture will be seen, not as two linked but separate process, but as part of the same process. The research reported here sought to investigate how this process is manifested in a Thai learning environment. This was undertaken through a survey administered to undergraduate students of English at a Thai university. The survey attempted to explore learners' levels of cultural awareness, learning strategy use, motivation and attitudes toward native English language speakers and English language culture. The results of this survey were used to test the hypothesis that different levels of cultural awareness will influence SLA processes and outcomes.

Literature review

Language and culture

This research draws on a socio-semiotic view of language (Halliday, 1979; Halliday and Hasan, 1984) in which language is regarded as both a means of representing a social system *and* as an influence in shaping that social system. "The social structure is not just an ornamental background to linguistic interaction...It is an essential element in the evolution of semantic systems and semantic processes." (Halliday, 1979: 114) conversely we must interpret "language within a sociocultural context, in which culture itself is interpreted in semiotic terms" (Halliday, 1979: 2).

Therefore every language will reflect both at conscious and unconscious levels the values, beliefs, and assumptions of the culture in which it is based.

Intercultural communicative competence

Hymes' (1972) definition of communicative competence, which has become so familiar in language teaching, also incorporates this view of communication as involving understanding of socio-cultural aspects of language. In recent years communicative competence has been expanded to include *intercultural communicative competence* (see Byram (1991) and Kramsch (1993)). While communicative competence involves an understanding of the norms of social interaction of one socio-cultural community; in contrast intercultural communicative competence entails an understanding of the differences in interactional norms between different speech communities and an ability to "reconcile or mediate between different modes present" (Byram and Fleming, 1998: 12).

Cultural awareness

Central to the notion of intercultural communicative competence is '*cultural awareness*.' Cultural awareness is an intrinsic part of language learning and without it successful communication may be impossible across cultures. Cultural awareness involves an understanding not only of the culture of the language being studied but also of the learners' own culture. An understanding of both cultures is necessary to be able to compare and attempt to understand the differences between the two cultures. It is the comparison between the differences in cultures that is essential to cultural awareness. In order to achieve this Byram argues for '*critical cultural awareness*' (1997, cited in Byram and Fleming, 1998: 6) where learners are able to take a critical view of both their own culture and the target language (TL) culture.

Language teaching and culture

With a view of language that places culture at the center of communication it is inevitable that language teaching will need to incorporate culture. Paige et al. (2003) ask whether there has been a paradigm shift in language teaching with the focus now on socio-cultural aspects of teaching a language. Furthermore, Bax (2003) proposes that language teaching should focus on the context in which it takes place rather than teaching methodologies such as CLT. Many writers, in particular Valdes (1986, 1990), Byram (1991), Byram and Esarte-Sarries (1991), Byram and Fleming (1998) and Kramsch (1993), have outlined approaches to language teaching which situate culture and context at the core of the teaching/learning process. These have taken a number of different forms. Dunnett et al. (1986) compare micro features of cultures such as individual word meaning, intonation, gestures, terms of address and taboo topics, and suggest that learners and teachers should be made aware of how these differ between cultures. Kramsch (1993), Byram (1991), and Byram and Fleming (1998) go a step further than just comparisons in suggesting that learners and teachers should be encouraged to take critical views of culture; both foreign and their own. Kramsch introduces the concept of 'third places' in which learners are encouraged to adopt a perspective of their own culture and the TL culture from a 'third place' in-between the two cultures.

An important component of cultural instruction is that it should take place within the normal language lesson since, as Valdes (1990) notes, culture will always be a part of the language lesson; and should therefore be consciously and systematically incorporated into the classroom. Consequently, language teachers should be familiar with both the culture of the learners and the target language culture, and be able to take cross-cultural perspectives. Moreover, materials should encourage learners to reflect on comparisons between cultures and enable learners to form their own perspective on them; through materials drawn from the target language culture, cross-cultural materials involving outsiders' observations on the target language culture, and locally produced materials.

The Thai context

Within Thailand English is the second language for most Thais and is taught in schools, often from the first years of schooling in formal English foreign language (EFL) contexts (O'Sullivan and Tajaroensuk, 1997). Furthermore, some ability in English is a requisite of higher education. A national survey of English use revealed English was used as an international language to communicate with native speakers (NS) and non-NS from countries such as, Japan and Germany (Wongsatorn et al., 1996). At school and in higher education English is generally taught by Thai teachers with a small number of native English speaking teachers (NEST), however, there is also a large commercial language school sector that employs almost exclusively NESTs (Kershaw, 1994). This provides a mixed picture of English use, as it is used both to communicate with NS and with non-NS, who may not share the cultural assumptions of NS. Moreover, it is taught mainly by non-NESTs who again may have different cultural beliefs from NESTs. This would suggest the need to use English in multi-cultural contexts rather than with reference to any one speech community. Furthermore, teaching methodology needs to mediate between Thai and Western educational values (see for example Williams (1992), Kajornboon (2000)). Indeed, there is growing awareness of the importance of culture and context within English teaching in Thailand, and the need for teachers and learners to be aware of the relationship between language and culture (Damnet, 2003; Wongbiasaj, 2003).

Culture and SLA

A number of socio-cultural models of SLA have been put forward, most notably Schumann's 'acculturation model,' Svanes' 'cultural distance' and Gardener and MacIntyre's 'socio-education model.' Schumann (1986) proposes a model of SLA in which learners' proficiency in the target language (TL) depends on "the degree to which they acculturate to the target language group" (1986: 379). Acculturation is the extent to which the learner achieves social and psychological integration with the TL group. However, Schumann's model is designed to describe SLA in

immigrant communities and is not concerned with language teaching or EFL contexts and so is not directly relevant to this study. Another difficulty is the limited evidence supporting the model (Ellis, 1994: 232; Schumann, 1986).

Related to Schumann's model of acculturation and his notion of social distance is '*cultural distance*.' Svanes (1987 and 1988), in a study on motivation, attitudes and cultural distance in SLA, proposed that cultural distance formed the decisive factor in TL proficiency (Svanes, 1987: 357). Cultural distance refers to the learner's knowledge of/familiarity with Western culture and the distance between the learners' L1 and English or other European languages, plus the learners' proficiency in other European languages (Svanes, 1987: 344). Svanes found that learners from more culturally distant countries, such as Asian countries, had lower levels of proficiency in Norwegian than learners from less culturally distant countries, such as the USA or other European countries. Further support for the cultural distance hypothesis comes from an examination of more 'distant' Asian countries TOEFL scores, which are consistently lower than the scores from European countries (ETS, 2002). While Svanes' study, unlike Schumann's model, examines formal contexts of SLA, it is limited to ESL rather than EFL contexts and only examines groups of learners rather than individual learners.

A model of SLA that is specifically designed to explain language acquisition in formal contexts and within EFL environments both at the group and individual level is Gardner and MacIntyre's (1993a) socio-educational model. When focusing on the individual characteristics that influence learning outcomes Gardner and MacIntyre (1992) distinguish three main sets of variables. The first are cognitive variables: intelligence, language aptitude and language learning strategies. The second are affective variables: attitudes, motivation and language anxiety/self-confidence. The third category includes miscellaneous factors such as age, and socio-cultural experiences which may affect cognitive or affective variables. The overarching concept to this model is the socio-cultural milieu in which language learning takes place, which is viewed as "playing an important role in determining those factors that influence language acquisition."

(Gardner and MacIntyre, 1992: 212). In other words, the cultural beliefs of the community toward language learning and the TL community will influence the role of cognitive and affective variables in SLA. The different variables will have different influences in different socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, the socio-cultural context will also determine learners' exposure to and contact with TL speakers.

In viewing the socio-cultural milieu as the basis of language acquisition this model is strongly related to the conceptions of culture and language teaching outlined earlier. The examination of language attitudes and their relationship with motivation is of particular interest. Gardner and MacIntyre's model clearly demonstrates the causal chain between attitudes, motivation, language acquisition and learning outcomes. Moreover, the model presents a detailed description of motivation and how it is influenced by socio-cultural factors, and how it in turn influences acquisition. Another advantage of this model is that it relates the socio-cultural context to individual learner differences through affective and cognitive variables.

Culture acquisition

A number of recent studies have examined the effect a second cultural acquisition (SCA) may have on SLA. Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) investigated how teaching ethnographic interview techniques to university level Spanish learners enhanced an understanding of their own culture and Spanish culture. Barro, et al. (1998) also report on the use of ethnographic techniques to give students the necessary tools to make sense of inter-cultural communication. Sercu (1998) reports on an in-service teacher-training programme designed to aid the acquisition of intercultural competence through an increased awareness of the affective and behavioral aspects of learning a language. Two studies by Lantolf (1999) and Bouton (1999) have explored explicit links between cultural acquisition and language acquisition. Lantolf's (1999) study revealed that in some cases it is possible for learners to acquire new cognitive networks associated with a second culture. However, he cautions that "the

evidence is not overwhelming” (1999: 45). Bouton’s (1999) research into the effects of explicit instruction on the difficult area of conversational implicature in cross-cultural communication revealed that instruction could help. Bouton is similarly cautious in his conclusions, with instruction only being effective in less context dependent cases of implicature. In relation to the Thai context Damnet (2003) has investigated how an increased awareness of the non-verbal features of discourse may assist Thai learners in intercultural communication. Furthermore, Wongbiasaj (2003) has discussed how explicit cultural instruction can aid intercultural communication; through enabling Thai learners to overcome the stereotypes they may have of foreign cultures, based on media distortions and superficial contact with foreign tourists.

Although different aspects of the relationship between cultural acquisition and language acquisition have been investigated, there is, as yet, no single theory of this process. This is due to both the obvious complexity of the relationship and perhaps the relatively recent focus on this aspect of SLA. As there has been such little investigation into how acquisition and understanding of other cultures influences SLA, especially in the Thai context, and given the importance of context and culture to the teaching/learning of a second language, this would seem a productive point of investigation for further studies.

Research Methodology

Aims

The purpose of this study was to investigate possible connections between learners’ levels of cultural awareness, second language acquisition (SLA) processes and final learning outcomes. It was the hypothesis of this study that there is a relationship between cultural awareness, and learning behavior and attitudes, and furthermore that higher levels of cultural awareness are positively related to final learning outcomes.

Subjects and context

The subjects of the study were Thai undergraduate university students at Silpakorn University, Sanam chandra Palace Campus. One hundred subjects were selected using purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2001) from second, third and fourth year students studying English as a foreign language. Subjects with a range of grades were chosen. Furthermore, students who were studying both English as a minor subject and as a major subject were selected. In this way it was hoped that the subjects would provide a representative group of the English undergraduate students at the university. The students reported having studied English for a mean of 14 years. The students had all studied with both Thai English teachers and NESTs, although the majority of instruction had been with Thai English teachers. Furthermore, the students had also studied at least one non-linguistic subject related to English speaking countries, such as literature, history or culture, although only one explicit culture course is offered at the university. The large majority of the students had never lived or studied in an English speaking country. Whilst the students' level of English varies, all of the students are reasonably proficient in English, at intermediate level or above.

Construction of the questionnaire

A questionnaire was chosen as the method for data collection due to the ease of administration in large quantities, the opportunity it provides for subjects to self-report and reflect, and the relative anonymity of questionnaires (Brown, 2001). The culture and language learning questionnaire used in this survey was divided into six sections (see Appendix 1). These were: personal details, language learning information, learning strategies, beliefs, reasons for studying English and attitudes. For analysis of the questionnaire the sections 'beliefs' and 'reasons for studying English' were examined under the titles 'cultural awareness' and 'orientation/motivation' as these more accurately reflect what they were constructed to measure. These titles were not used in the questionnaire as it was felt that such titles might

bias the subjects' responses. In learning strategies respondents were asked to rate each strategy on a scale of 1-8 depending on how often they used them. Specific frequencies were given as it was felt that more general categories such as 'often' or 'sometimes' were too open to differing interpretations. In all other sections respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. Although the majority of questions required closed responses, the open ended questions in the 'Reasons for studying English' and 'Attitudes' sections gave learners the opportunity to add any other information they felt was necessary or to explain their choices.

Validity/Reliability of the questionnaire

The questionnaire can be said to gain internal validity from the theories and research related to each of the statements in the different sections and constructs. The purposive sampling method used aims to gain a representative section of undergraduate English students at the university and hence gain internal validity. Furthermore, the relative homogeneity of the subjects should help to strengthen claims that any differences noted between the subjects are based on the factors measured in the survey and not other external factors, thus again strengthening internal validity. However, there is the possibility of unreliable self-reporting in the responses given. Furthermore, the sample cannot be claimed to be representative of the wider population of English students. The external validity of the survey is therefore more limited. Nevertheless, although the questionnaire has been tailored to a specific context, it could be administered in other contexts in Thailand and with modification outside of Thailand.

Return rate

Of the 100 questionnaires sent out 77 were returned. Two of those questionnaires were incomplete and hence disregarded, leaving a final number of questionnaires for analysis at 75. Seventy-seven percent represents a relatively high return rate from one mailing (see Cohen et al., 2001: 263).

Analysis of data and statistical procedures

To establish if there were significant differences between the respondents' scores, a one-sided *t*-test for independent samples was generally used. The alpha level was set at $\alpha < .05$ for the majority of the analysis.

Results and discussion

Overall survey results

	LS	CA	Orientation/Motivation			Attitudes			Grade
			Int	Ins	Gen	Eng	Thai	Comp	
MEAN case									
1-75	40.76	44.75	73.83	81.37	79	15.33	16.48	21.07	5.71
SD	8.59	4.82	10.25	9.95	12.16	3.77	3.94	3.73	1.34

LS = Learning strategies, CA = Cultural awareness, Int = Integrative orientation, Ins = Instrumental orientation, Gen = other orientations, Eng = Attitudes towards English culture, people and language, Thai = Attitudes towards Thai culture, people and language, Comp = Comparisons between Thai and English/Western culture, SD = Standard deviation.

Table 1: Mean of overall survey results

Firstly, throughout most sections of the questionnaire the students gave relatively high scores to each section. In the first section, learning strategies, the overall mean score of 40.76 represents undertaking activities that would bring students into contact with English culture around 2 or 3 times a month. For cultural awareness the mean score of 44.75 represents agreement with the statements and thus indicates a relatively high level of overall cultural awareness amongst the respondents. Turning to orientation/motivation, the results of the three categories: integrative orientation, instrumental orientation and general orientations have mean scores well above the median. Furthermore, between the categories there are differences in scores. A two-tailed *t*-test for dependent samples showed a significant difference, at $p < .001$, between the levels of integrative orientation, and the other two categories; instrumental orientation and general orientations; with instrumental and general orientations significantly more important than integrative

orientations in motivation among this group of students. This contradicts the research by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993b) which purposed integrative orientation as the major factor in establishing motivation. However, other forms of orientation may be more relevant in different contexts. Indeed the results match those reported by Cook (2001: 115) and Thananart (1996) in the Thai context; finding instrumental and general orientation more relevant than integrative.

There are a number of possible explanations for the generally positive or high rating given by respondents in all sections. Firstly, in terms of background, the students are reasonably homogeneous and so the scores should be relatively similar. The high scoring may reflect the success that most of these students have had with their English language studies. Furthermore, many of the students in this survey, and all of the third and fourth year subjects, have chosen to continue with their English studies as either a major or minor subject for their degree. Therefore, it would seem reasonable to expect a relatively high degree of motivation, and positive attitudes towards English and other foreign cultures. Additionally, in the study by Svanes (1987; 1988) into motivation, attitudes and cultural distance, Asian students generally gave high ratings or higher ratings than other respondents, and it is possible that this has occurred here too. Moreover, given that disagreement and 'no' like answers are less acceptable in Thai culture than in many English cultures (see O'Sullivan and Tajaroensuk, 1997), more positive responses would be expected.

Other explanations of the high scores may come from the questionnaire itself. The respondents may be self-flattering as in the case of frequency of learning strategy use, or giving socially desirable answers in the cultural awareness and attitudes sections. This is particularly the case in regard to the cultural awareness section, which contains a list of statements which are not especially controversial or difficult to agree with, but may be difficult to actually implement. For example, it is easier to accept that learning another language entails learning new kinds of behavior, beliefs and values than it is to actually learn new behavior, beliefs and values. The only way to fully test the

subjects' responses would be to actually observe and discuss their language learning in context, perhaps through qualitative studies.

Learning strategies

The results from the responses for learning strategies were split into two groups based on the top 38 scores and the bottom 37 scores, as shown in table 2.

	Number of cases		LS	CA	Orientation/Motivation			Attitudes			Grade
					Int	Ins	Gen	Eng	Thai	Comp	
High LS Score	38	MEAN	47.61	45.37	75.59	81.34	81.84	15.63	16.68	21.34	5.88
		SD	4.96	5.33	10.39	10.04	10.55	3.72	4.16	3.66	1.44
Low LS Score	37	MEAN	33.73	44.11	72.03	81.41	76.08	15.03	16.27	20.78	5.53
		SD	5.11	4.21	9.93	9.99	13.13	3.85	3.74	3.83	1.22

Table 2: High and low mean scores for learning strategies

An analysis of the results led to few significant differences between the results of the higher use of learning strategies and lower use of learning strategies identified in the questionnaire. The only significant difference was between general orientations as a source of motivation, which was significantly higher for students who made more frequent use of the learning strategies in the questionnaire. One other notable difference, although not quite at the $p < .05$ level, was between the levels of integrative orientation which again were higher for students with higher learning strategies scores. It may be that with more responses this would become a statistically significant difference. Although the analysis of learning strategies did not produce many significant results alone, the overall survey does indicate a relationship between the use of learning strategies that bring students into contact with the foreign culture and factors such as integrative orientation, which would agree with Schumann's acculturation model (1986).

Cultural awareness

	Number of cases		LS	CA	Orientation/Motivation			Attitudes			Grade
					Int	Ins	Gen	Eng	Thai	Comp	
High CA score	37	Mean	42.49	48.65	76.62	81.30	81.89	15.22	16.41	21.95	5.78
		SD	8.12	2.36	11.51	10.50	11.51	3.64	4.02	3.84	1.28
Low CA score	38	Mean	39.08	40.95	71.12	81.45	76.18	15.45	16.55	20.21	5.63
		SD	8.81	3.31	8.13	9.52	12.27	3.94	3.90	3.45	1.41

Table 3: High and low mean scores for cultural awareness

The results of the high and low mean scores for cultural awareness, illustrated in table 3, lead to a number of differences which are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Firstly, the group with higher cultural awareness scores reported making more use of learning strategies that brought them into the contact with English culture or English used in international contexts. Secondly, this group also has significantly higher levels of integrative orientation and general orientation, although instrumental orientation was about the same. Finally, the group with higher cultural awareness scores also had a statistically significant higher score for ratings of attitudes towards aspects of English or Western culture compared to Thai culture. Although both the high and low cultural awareness scores are reasonably close in representing weak agreement with the statements, there are no significant differences between the other factors. One final point that must be noted is that the cultural awareness mean score for both groups represents agreement with the statements; the difference is between how strongly the two groups agree.

These results confirm the first part of the hypothesis stated earlier, that cultural awareness would have an effect on SLA processes. Higher levels of cultural awareness appear to lead to higher levels of integrative orientation, and also general orientation, both of which have been identified as aiding SLA outcomes; in particular Gardner and MacIntyre (1993b) regard integrative orientation as an important factor in higher levels of language proficiency. Furthermore, more culturally aware students also report spending more time in contact with the target

culture, which has also been recognized as an important component of SLA (especially Schumann, 1986). Not surprisingly, given the high levels of integrative orientation reported, students with higher levels of cultural awareness also have more positive attitudes towards English culture, people and language. Nevertheless, they still maintain a balanced view with their own culture, people and language. Such a balanced view of learners' own culture and the second language culture formed an essential part of the notion of cultural awareness and language learning discussed earlier (Byram, 1991; Kramsch, 1993). A note of caution is needed in interpreting these results though, as the differences in levels of cultural awareness although significant was not especially large, and additional studies would be needed to confirm these conclusions.

The second part of the initial hypothesis, that cultural awareness would have an influence on final learning outcomes, has not been confirmed by these results. This is most probably because the relationship between cultural awareness and learning outcomes is likely to be an indirect one and hence not observable in a one-to-one relationship. As Gardner and MacIntyre's (1993a) model illustrates there are a number of mediating stages between affective variables such as cultural awareness and final outcomes. In particular, the socio-education model (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993a) regards factors such as cultural awareness as influencing motivation rather than final outcomes. Additionally, the grades on which the respondents' levels of English proficiency were gauged may also not be representative of learners' true ability. The largest weighting for most of these grades is on academic reading and writing skills. This may discriminate against students with more general English skills or those who are stronger at listening and speaking. Further studies may benefit from a more balanced means of assessing English proficiency.

Orientation/motivation

	Number of cases		LS	CA	Orientation/Motivation			Attitudes			Grade
					Int	Ins	Gen	Eng	Thai	Comp	
High Int score	40	Mean	43.78	45.55	81.50	82.90	81.75	15.98	17.05	21.68	5.88
		SD	8.53	4.58	5.33	9.28	10.95	3.52	3.87	3.48	1.40
Low Int score	35	Mean	37.31	43.83	65.07	79.63	75.86	14.60	15.83	20.37	5.51
		SD	7.36	4.99	6.93	10.52	12.86	3.96	3.97	3.93	1.26

Table 4: High and low mean scores for integrative orientation

	Number of cases		LS	CA	Orientation/Motivation			Attitudes			Grade
					Int	Ins	Gen	Eng	Thai	Comp	
High Ins score	40	Mean	39.58	44.58	75.56	89.20	78.00	16.48	17.33	21.55	5.54
		SD	8.94	4.75	9.62	3.86	11.37	3.46	3.93	3.45	1.28
Low Ins score	35	Mean	42.11	44.94	71.86	72.43	80.14	14.03	15.51	20.51	5.90
		SD	8.09	4.95	10.73	6.62	13.09	3.74	3.77	4.00	1.40

Table 5: High and low mean scores for instrumental orientation

	Number of cases		LS	CA	Orientation/Motivation			Attitudes			Grade
					Int	Ins	Gen	Eng	Thai	Comp	
High Gen score	36	Mean	43.36	44.89	77.78	80.89	89.31	15.19	16.14	20.83	5.96
		SD	7.97	5.58	8.38	10.30	4.65	4.08	4.17	3.66	1.40
Low Gen score	39	Mean	38.36	44.62	70.19	81.82	69.49	15.46	16.79	21.28	5.47
		SD	8.54	4.06	10.57	9.72	8.64	3.52	3.74	3.82	1.26

Table 6: High and low mean scores for general orientations

Beginning with an analysis of integrative orientation, illustrated in table 4, the group was divided between the top 40 scores, 75 % and above and the bottom 35 scores below 75 %. There are a number of statistically significant differences between the scores. As noted in the learning strategies section, higher levels of integrative orientation are also positively correlated with higher frequency uses of learning strategies that bring students

into contact with English culture. Furthermore, higher scores for integrative orientation are also related to higher scores for other kinds of general motivation. Although not at $p < 0.05$, there is an indication of a possible positive relationship between integrative orientation and higher levels of cultural awareness. Further data would be needed to confirm this relationship.

The scores for instrumental orientation yielded no statistically significant results. The results from general orientations repeated the results reported in integrative motivation showing a positive correlation between the two. Furthermore, as also previously noted, other kinds of orientation are positively linked to higher levels of cultural awareness.

In relation to the differences between the high and low scores for each of the categories of orientation the results are more ambiguous. As might be expected higher levels of integrative orientation led to higher use of learning strategies bringing learners into contact with the target culture. Higher scores also lead to higher levels of cultural awareness and more positive attitudes towards English culture, people and language, although these two relationships were not statistically significant and would need further reports for confirmation.

As with cultural awareness there were no significant relationships between levels of orientation and students' grades. Again due to the indirect nature of the relationship between orientation and learning outcomes this is to be expected. It is important to note that the survey did not attempt to measure the actual levels of students' motivation but rather the different orientations or elements that led to their motivation in studying English. As Gardner and MacIntyre report orientations have a direct effect on motivation but not achievement (1993b: 164).

Suggestions for further research

This research suggests a number of avenues for further research. Firstly, a more detailed study of the construct of cultural awareness and measurement of it is needed to guard against criticisms of inaccurate self-reporting. Secondly, an investigation into the causal mechanisms that may underlie the

correlations between cultural awareness, integrative orientation/motivation, attitudes and learning strategy use reported in this study; in particular the links between orientations and overall motivation and in turn final learning outcomes. This may be achieved through qualitative research that combines outside observations of learners with learners' own self-reporting. Additionally, similar studies in diverse contexts and using a different or wider range of subjects would be necessary to establish the role of cultural awareness as part of the SLA process. Moreover, longitudinal studies which measure the development of learners' attitudes and orientations over time may also add further information to the role they play in SLA. Furthermore, care needs to be exercised in the measurement of final outcomes of the learning process to ensure a fair representation of learners' TL proficiency. Finally, if cultural awareness is recognized as an important aspect of SLA processes then further research would be needed to establish whether explicit teaching of cultural awareness can aid learners' levels of L2 achievement.

Conclusion

The results of the survey indicate a relationship between cultural awareness and SLA processes, thus satisfying the first half of the initial hypothesis. Most significantly the results of this study appear to indicate a positive correlation between higher levels of cultural awareness, integrative orientation, contact with English culture, and more positive attitudes towards English culture, language, and peoples. All of these have been highlighted as important factors in SLA according to the socio-cultural models discussed in this paper (Schumann, 1986; Svanes, 1987; 1988; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993a). Conversely, integrative orientation and positive attitudes towards English culture do not imply corresponding negative appraisals of Thai culture among the subjects of this study. This as reported by Svanes (1987; 1988) is a necessary component of successful SLA, as overly positive attitudes towards a TL and TL culture in comparison with learners' own culture and language has a negative impact on SLA. Moreover, following the frameworks of language and culture teaching examined earlier (Byram, 1991; Kramsch, 1993) a

balanced view of cultures is an essential part of critical cultural awareness and the process of meditation between cultures necessary for successful L2 communication.

Unfortunately, the study found no connections between cultural awareness and final learning outcomes as measured by the students' grades; hence the second part of the initial hypothesis was not confirmed. Nor were there any connections between some of the other aspects of SLA measured, including learning strategies and orientations, and final outcomes. As previously discussed, this may be due to the indirect nature of the relationship. In particular, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993a; 1993b) emphasize the important role that factors such as attitudes and orientations play in influencing motivation rather than final SLA outcomes. Furthermore, the assessment of learning outcomes based on students' university English grades is restricted to narrow grading criteria that may discriminate against or ignore a variety of less academic abilities in English.

Despite these limitations, the results of this study have a range of possible applications to pedagogic practice. Most importantly, the survey results indicating a correlation between levels of cultural awareness and other affective variables adds further support to the view of SLA as a social process. This would suggest the need for teachers and teaching practice to take account of these features of the language learning process. Frameworks of teaching culture and language are needed in which components of culture can be incorporated into, and form an essential part of the language learning process (Byram, 1991; Kramsch, 1993). This involves a conception of culture and language learning as part of the same process, returning to the view of language set out at the beginning of the paper and underlying the theories of SLA utilized in the research -- language as a representation of and an inseparable part of culture.

The Author

Will Baker is presently working as an EFL instructor at the Department of English, Silpakorn University, Thailand. He mainly teaches academic reading and writing to EFL students. He holds an MA in Applied

Linguistics, TESOL, and Advanced Certificate in TESOL from Leicester University, UK. His research interests are cultural awareness and second language acquisition.

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Appendix 1
Culture and language learning questionnaire

Instructions

Thank you for your help in this questionnaire.

Please make sure you have completed all of the following questions. There are four pages. Please note that English-speaking countries refers to the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland.

Personal Details

Name _____

Student number _____ Year _____

Sex _____ Age _____

Language learning information

How long have you been learning English? _____

Rate your performance in English: fluent/excellent/good/fair/poor

Have you ever studied any other subject related to English speaking countries such as English culture, literature, history, politics, arts. If yes please give the subject name (for example, *Culture of English speaking people*).

Have you ever studied or lived in an English speaking country? If yes, which countries?

Have you ever studied or lived abroad in any other countries? If yes, which countries?

Learning strategies

When answering the following questions consider your English language studies over the last year. How often do you do the following activities? Use the numbers below to show how often you do them.

Everyday	8	Once a month	4
2 or 3 times a week	7	Once every 2 or 3 months	3
Once a week	6	2 or 3 times a year	2
2 or 3 times a month	5	Never	1

- Do you listen to English language music? _____
 - Do you watch English language movies? _____
 - Do you read English language books? _____
 - Do you read English language newspapers? _____
 - Do you watch English language TV? _____
 - Do you use English (speaking, listening, reading or writing) outside of the classroom? _____
 - Do you spend time with native English speakers? _____
 - Do you spend time with people with whom you use English to communicate? _____
-

Beliefs

How much do you agree with the following statements? Rate them 1,2,3,4, or 5, 5 = maximum score(strong agreement) to 1 = the lowest score (strong disagreement).

- Culture and language are strongly linked. _____
 - Languages cannot be translated word-for-word. _____
 - The tone of a speaker's voice (the intonation pattern) carries meaning and is different in different languages. _____
 - Each language-culture use gestures and body movements (body language), which convey meaning. _____
 - Languages use different grammatical structures to describe the world. _____
 - All cultures have taboo (subjects which should not be discussed) topics. _____
 - The terms for addressing people vary considerably among languages. Learning culture is part of learning a foreign language. _____
 - It is important to understand my own culture when learning a foreign language. _____
 - Learning a language means learning new kinds of behavior. _____
 - Learning a language means learning new beliefs and values. _____
-

Reasons for studying English

Rate the importance of the following 1,2,3,4 or 5,
5 = maximum (very important) to 1 = minimum (not important).

- Interest in the English language. _____
 - Interest in the English-speaking world's culture. _____
 - To live in an English speaking country. _____
 - To work in an English speaking environment in Thailand, for example, a foreign company. _____
 - To communicate with people from English speaking countries, for example, the UK, the USA, Australia. _____
 - To communicate with people from non-English speaking countries, for example, Japan, Indonesia, Italy. _____
 - To speak like a native English speaker. _____
 - To speak English clearly but not like a native English speaker. _____
 - To have a new experience. _____
 - To share ideas with English speaking people. _____
 - To get new ideas and knowledge from English speaking people. _____
 - To learn to think and behave as English speakers do. _____
 - To get new ideas and knowledge from other people. _____
 - To meet different kinds of people. _____
 - To get a qualification/degree. _____
 - To help my career or job. _____
 - For enjoyment/fun. _____
 - No reason. _____
 - Others (please explain). _____
-

Attitudes

*Rate the following statements from 1,2,3,4, to 5,
5 = maximum score to 1 = the lowest score.*

- English speaking people are intelligent. _____
- English speaking people are kind. _____
- English culture is a great culture. _____
- The English language is a great language. _____
- It is very important for Thais to learn English. _____
- Thai people are intelligent. _____
- Thai people are kind. _____
- Thai culture is a great culture. _____
- The Thai language is a great language. _____
- It is very important for Thais to learn Thai. _____

*How much do you agree with the following statements? Rate them
1,2,3,4, or 5,
5 = maximum score(strong agreement) to 1 = the lowest score (strong
disagreement).*

- Hollywood films are better than Thai films. _____
- English language music is better than Thai language music. _____
- Western literature is better than Thai literature. _____
- Western education is better than Thai education. _____
- Western technology is better than Thai technology. _____
- Western businesses are better than Thai businesses. _____

How important do you think it is to understand the culture of **English speaking countries** when communicating with people from those countries?

How important do you think it is to understand the culture of **other foreign countries** when communicating with people from those countries?

