

ทัศนคติของอาจารย์และนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีที่มีต่อการเรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรม  
และเนื้อหาทางวัฒนธรรมของภาษาเป้าหมายในหนังสือประกอบการเรียน  
ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

Teachers' and Undergraduate Students' Attitudes toward Learning  
about the Target-Language Culture and Cultural Content  
Included in an EFL Textbook

Tiwaporn Kongsom<sup>1</sup>

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติของอาจารย์และนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีที่มีต่อการเรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับเนื้อหาทางวัฒนธรรมของภาษาเป้าหมายในหนังสือประกอบการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศที่ใช้ในวิชาภาษาอังกฤษพื้นฐาน กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในงานวิจัยคือ อาจารย์ชาวไทยที่สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ จำนวน 13 คน และนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี จำนวน 238 คน โดยเก็บข้อมูลจากการวิเคราะห์หนังสือประกอบการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ 1 ฉบับ แบบสอบถาม และแบบสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง ผลการวิเคราะห์หนังสือประกอบการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ พบว่า หนังสือประกอบการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศที่ใช้วิเคราะห์ในการวิจัยนี้ มีการนำเสนอกิจกรรมการเรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับเนื้อหาทางวัฒนธรรมของภาษาเป้าหมายมากที่สุด และมีการนำเสนอหัวข้อทางด้านวัฒนธรรมบิกซี (big “C”) หรือวัฒนธรรมที่มองเห็นได้ชัด และวัฒนธรรมลิตเติลซี (little “C”) หรือวัฒนธรรมที่มองเห็นได้ไม่ชัด รวมทั้งหมด 12 หัวข้อ โดยหัวข้อทางวัฒนธรรมที่มีการนำเสนอมากที่สุด 5 อันดับ เรียงจากมากไปน้อย ได้แก่ รูปแบบการดำเนินชีวิต ความรู้เฉพาะเรื่อง ค่านิยม การศึกษา และงานอดิเรก นอกจากนี้ผลการวิเคราะห์แบบสอบถามพบว่าทัศนคติของอาจารย์และนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีที่มีต่อการเรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับเนื้อหาทางวัฒนธรรมของภาษาเป้าหมายในหนังสือประกอบการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ ไม่แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ในส่วนผลการวิเคราะห์การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง พบว่า อาจารย์และนักศึกษาคิดว่าการเรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับวัฒนธรรมของภาษาเป้าหมายมีความสำคัญและจำเป็นต่อการเรียนรู้และการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษ

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<sup>1</sup> English language lecturer, Faculty of Applied Arts, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok

## Abstract

This study investigates Thai EFL teachers' and undergraduate students' attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in an EFL textbook used in a foundation English course. Thirteen Thai EFL teachers and 238 undergraduate students participated in the study. Data were collected using an EFL textbook, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The findings from the EFL textbook analysis showed that the tasks on the target-language cultural content were most frequently presented in the analyzed EFL textbook. With respect to the cultural themes included in the textbook, the findings revealed that 12 cultural themes under big "C" or "visible" culture and little "c" or "invisible" culture were discovered in most tasks of the textbook. The top-five themes found in the textbook were "lifestyles", followed by "certain knowledge", "values", "customs", "education", and "hobbies". In addition, the analysis of the questionnaires revealed that there was no significant difference between the teachers' and students' attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content in the EFL textbook used in the foundation English course. Regarding the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, it was found that both teachers and students indicated that learning about the target-language culture was important and necessary for their English learning and usage.

**Keywords** : big "C" culture, little "c" culture, target-language culture, intercultural communication competence (ICC), attitudes

## 1. Introduction

There have been attempts to integrate cultural content into English language teaching and learning. Being competent in a foreign language comprises not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural knowledge (Kramersch, 1993; Corbett, 2003). According to Kramersch (1993), raising foreign language learners' cultural awareness and integrating cultural components into language teaching can be beneficial to second language learning. In the field of English language teaching (ELT), textbooks are the primary teaching materials for classes and play an important role in the language learning and teaching process. They are sources not only of the linguistic elements of the language but also of cultural norms (Peterson and Coltrane, 2003). In Thailand, commercial EFL textbooks are commonly used as the main materials in English language classes and various textbooks of this kind are used in universities and colleges in Thailand. Such EFL textbooks generally appear in the form of a student's book and a teacher's manual. The choice of the EFL textbooks is basically based on the design of the curriculum, the syllabus and the course objectives. These EFL textbooks aim to promote the learners' various competences, such as linguistic competence and communicative competence. In particular, the focus of most textbooks is on linguistic knowledge and communicative purposes. However, the focus on raising cultural awareness for promoting the students' cultural competence is rare in most of today's EFL textbooks. This situation has resulted in the current study, which focused on the cultural content presented in EFL teaching materials in the Thai EFL classroom.

A review of the available literature and previous studies revealed that few studies have addressed the effects of language and cultural learning on both EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes toward the cultural content of the EFL teaching sources. Regardless of the teachers' and

students' attitudes toward their learning of the cultural content, most studies aim to investigate only the cultural content included in the EFL textbook (Lee, 2009; Dehbozorgi et al., 2014; Rodriguez, 2015; Matic, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to explore Thai EFL teachers' and undergraduate students' attitudes toward learning the target-language cultural content included in an EFL textbook used in a foundation English course. The study also aims to discover whether there are any differences between the students' and teachers' attitudes toward learning the English cultural content presented in the EFL textbook used in this course.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

2.1 To explore the types and themes of the cultural content presented in an EFL textbook used in a foundation English course at King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok in Bangkok, Thailand

2.2 To survey the Thai EFL teachers' and undergraduate students' attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content presented in the EFL textbook

2.3 To discover whether there are any differences between the teachers' and undergraduate students' attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content presented in the EFL textbook

## 3. Research Questions

3.1 What types and themes of cultural content are presented in the EFL textbook used in the foundation English course at King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok?

3.2 What are Thai EFL teachers' and undergraduate students' attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content presented in the EFL textbook?

3.3 Are there any differences between the teachers' and undergraduate students' attitudes

toward learning about the target-language cultural content presented in the EFL textbook?

#### 4. Review of Related Literature

##### 4.1 Definitions of culture

Many definitions of culture are based on attempts to inquire into human societies, groups, behaviors and activities (Hinkel, 1999). Liddicoat et al. (2003: 45), for example, defined culture as a complex system. According to them, culture is described as “a complex system of concepts, attitudes, values, beliefs, conventions, behaviours, practices, rituals, and lifestyle of the people who make up a cultural group, as well as the artefacts they produce and the institutions they create”. In addition, Samovar, Porter and Stefani (1998: 36) defined culture as “the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, actions, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and artifacts acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving”. By this definition, culture is acquired, learned and passed down from generation to generation.

##### 4.2 Teaching culture in an EFL classroom

Teaching culture to language learners has been suggested by many scholars in order to develop the learners’ language ability (Halliday, 1975; Tseng, 2002; Alptekin, 2002; McKay, 2002; Peterson and Coltrane, 2003; Nault, 2006). Halliday (1975) supported the idea that language learners should know how to use language appropriately in socio-cultural contexts. Tseng (2002) also stated that the acquisition of cultural knowledge is important to language learners’ success in language learning since cultural knowledge enables the learners to communicate and understand the target language. The importance of teaching culture in a language classroom was also emphasized by McKay (2002) when she maintained that cultural content be used in the language classroom in order

to increase learners’ motivation in learning languages. In support of Halliday (1975) and other scholars, Peterson and Coltrane (2003:1) suggested that language learners be aware of “the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone”. They further suggested that in order to raise language learners’ awareness of the cultural features of the language, teachers may discuss cultural topics explicitly and use authentic materials or role play in the language classroom.

##### 4.3 The role of textbooks in language teaching and learning

Textbooks are generally used as the main materials for teaching and learning in EFL classrooms. Hutchinson and Torres (1994 : 315) suggested that “the textbook is an almost universal element of (English language) teaching”. According to Cunningsworth (1995), a course book or textbook is important because it is used as a resource or reference source in language classrooms. Language learners can use textbooks as a source for practicing and expanding their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc., whereas teachers can use textbooks as a source for motivating language learners to engage in classroom activities (Cunningsworth, 1995). In support of Cunningsworth (1995), Grave (2000) provided some advantages of using textbooks. For example, textbooks help language learners know what to expect from the course and provide teachers with supporting materials e.g., teachers’ guides, audios, videos or exercise worksheets (Grave, 2000). In addition, McGrath (2006:171) suggested that a course book or textbook is “a central element in teaching-learning encounters, not only in school settings but frequently also in tertiary-level service English contexts”. He further explained that a course book or textbook provides “what is taught, in what order and, to some extent, how as well as what learners learn” (McGrath, 2006:171).

#### 4.4 Types and themes of culture

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) classified two main types of culture: big “C” culture or “achievement” culture and little “c” culture or “behavior” culture. According to them, big “C” culture comprises the cultural themes of history, geography, institutions, literature, art, music and the way of life. With regard to little “c” culture, they suggested that little “c” culture or “behavior” culture includes “culturally-influenced beliefs and perceptions, especially as expressed through language, but also through cultural behaviors that affect acceptability in the host community”. In line with Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), Peterson (2004) also divided the themes of culture into two types: (1) big “C” or “visible” culture and (2) little “c” or “invisible” culture. According to him, big “C” culture is the “major, classic or grand themes of culture” whereas little “c” culture is viewed as the “minor or common themes of culture” (Peterson, 2004: 24-25). Likewise, Xiao (2010) classified the categories of culture into big “C” culture and little “c” culture. Regarding big “C” culture, nine cultural themes, which include “politics, economy, history, geography, literature/art, social norms, education, architecture and music”, can be found in her study (Xiao, 2010). In terms of the cultural themes under little “c” culture, seven cultural themes, which include “food, holiday, lifestyles, customs, values, hobbies and gestures/body language”, can be found in her study (Xiao, 2010). In the current study, the nine cultural themes under big “C” culture and the seven cultural themes of little “c” culture proposed by Xiao (2010) were used as a framework for analyzing the cultural content included in the analyzed EFL textbook because the cultural themes used in her study were clearly explained.

#### 4.5 Studies on the attitudes toward the cultural content included in EFL textbooks and intercultural competence

Chen (2004) conducted a study on the attitudes of teachers and students towards cultural teaching and learning in an EFL classroom in China. Questionnaires were used with 40 English teachers, 273 Chinese university students from three universities, and 48 Chinese exchange students studying in the UK. The findings showed that both students and teachers thought that cultural learning was important to very important.

Lee (2009) studied how 11 high school EFL conversation textbooks were used to teach culture in Korea. Twenty-two themes of big “C” culture and 26 themes of little “c” culture were used to categorize the cultural themes found in the textbooks. The findings revealed that the textbooks mainly included big “C” target culture such as information about arts, history, or customs. However, the content of the textbooks rarely presented little “c” target culture, which can help to develop language learners’ intercultural communication competence and little “c” competence.

Xiao (2010) conducted a study by analyzing the cultural contents in a listening textbook, “Contemporary College English for Listening 3”. Ninety-six second-year students studying in that university completed the questionnaires regarding attitudes and perceptions concerning cultural content and learning. The results showed that the cultural contents included in the analyzed textbook were aimed at providing cultural knowledge about countries where English is the native language. The study also found that the respondents preferred big “C” culture learning issues such as literature and the arts, economy, politics, and history.

Dehbozorgi et al. (2014) investigated the cultural content of three EFL textbooks used in Iran-American English Files, Top Notch, and Four

Corners. The study also attempted to discover cultural categories, namely the target culture, the source culture, and international culture. The findings revealed that all three EFL textbooks included both big “C” and little “c” cultural aspects. In terms of cultural categories, the findings indicated that the target culture was presented much more than other cultural categories in Four Corners and Top Notch. The findings, therefore, suggested that to some extent the cultural content included in these three EFL textbooks can be used to enhance the EFL learners’ intercultural competence.

Further, Rodriguez (2015) attempted to discover whether there were elements of surface or deep culture present in three EFL textbooks. The findings revealed that most of the cultural topics presented in the analyzed textbooks were topics of surface or visible culture such as holidays, tourist places, traditions, celebrities, food or historical facts. The elements or content of deep culture were rarely found in these three EFL textbooks. The study further suggested that teachers should include the cultural topics of deep culture in order to enhance and develop the language learners’ awareness of intercultural communicative competence.

Matic (2015) investigated the EFL materials used in integrated skills classes in the Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy. The study aimed at discovering cultural topics under the big “C” culture and little “c” culture included in the EFL materials. The findings showed that more little “c” cultural topics were found in the analyzed EFL materials than big “C” topics. The topic of literature was found most, followed by education, and institutions in the big “C” topics. However, the topics of values, beliefs, and attitudes in the little “c” topics were ranked higher than the topics of everyday living and interpersonal relations, and the topic of the economy was not found in the analyzed materials.

## 5. Research Methodology

### 5.1 Participants

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants of this study. Thirteen Thai EFL teachers that taught the English 2 course and 238 first-year undergraduate students that enrolled in the English 2 course at King Mongkut’s University of Technology North Bangkok participated in the study. These two groups were chosen because they used the analyzed EFL textbook for teaching and learning in the English 2 course at the time of data collection. All teachers had either Master’s degree or Doctorate degree in various fields such as Applied linguistics and English language teaching. Their teaching experiences ranged from 5 to 15 years. Regarding the students, their age ranged from 17 to 26 years and they were studying in various fields such as architecture and design, business and industry management, applied science, and engineering. Both groups were asked to respond to the questionnaires. Then 6 out of the 13 teachers and 10 out of the 238 students were asked to attend the semi-structured interviews with the researcher.

### 5.2 Research Design and Procedure

The main objective of this study was to discover Thai EFL teachers’ and undergraduate students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the EFL textbook used in a foundation English course as mentioned. Therefore, the study was designed as descriptive statistics research-survey and analysis using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. In this study, two sets of questionnaires were used to obtain the quantitative data on the teachers’ and undergraduate students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the textbook. In order to triangulate the quantitative data collection, semi-structured interviews were also used to obtain more in-depth data regarding the teachers’ and undergraduate students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content.

### 5.3 Research Instruments

#### 5.3.1 An EFL textbook

In this study, an EFL textbook, entitled “Straightforward Second Edition, Pre-intermediate Student’s Book”, which was designed for adult and young adult learners, was analysed in order to discover the types and themes of the cultural content presented in the textbook. The content of this textbook covers topics ranging from family life to schools, food, work, and the world. The textbook was used as the material in the English 2 course, which was taught in academic year 2015. This textbook was chosen because it is one of the most popular textbooks used in both private and state universities in Thailand. In addition, the participants in the current study used this textbook as the material in their English 2 class so they could provide their opinion regarding the cultural content they had learned from the textbook. In order to identify and code the types and themes of cultural content presented in the textbook, inter-coder reliability was used to increase the reliability of the coding procedure. The researcher and one Thai EFL instructor with a PhD in Applied Linguistics independently identified and coded the types and themes of all the cultural content presented in the textbook. Then the researcher compared her coding with that of the instructor. The inter-coder reliability coefficient for the types and themes of the cultural content was .97, which indicated high coding agreement.

#### 5.3.2 Questionnaires

In order to obtain data on the teachers’ and undergraduate students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the textbook and their cultural learning, questionnaires were constructed, which were divided in two sub-sections. First, twenty-nine statement items were designed using five-point Likert scale statements. The participants reported their attitudes from “strongly disagree” (1) to

“strongly agree” (5). Second, one statement item concerning the learners’ expectations on the cultural topics was included. All of the statements in the questionnaires were developed using data from various scholars in the field (Byram, 1997; Chen, 2004; Xiao, 2010; Fantini, 2012). In order to evaluate the validity of the questionnaires, three experts in the field of English language teaching were asked to rate the Item Objective Congruence (IOC), to correct the unclear statements and to provide comments on the English and Thai translation. The internal reliability of the returned questionnaires from all the teachers and students, estimated using Cronbach’s alpha, was .99 and .96 respectively, which indicated that all of the items in the questionnaire could measure the teachers’ and students’ reports of their attitudes with enough consistency. Some statements included in the questionnaires were “Learning about the culture of English-speaking countries is as important as learning the linguistic knowledge of English”; “Knowing about the culture of English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada is necessary for using English”; and “Knowing about the English-speaking countries’ cultural products and facts, such as geography, history, science, architecture, classical music, literature, political issues, and social norms is necessary for using English”.

#### 5.3.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Sixteen questions were used to ask 6 teachers and 10 students in order to gain insight into their attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the textbook. In order to validate the questions in the semi-structured interviews, again the same three experts were asked to rate the Item Objective Congruence (IOC), to correct any unclear statements and to provide comments on the English and Thai translation. The questions in the semi-structured interviews were designed in accordance with the

constructed questionnaires. Some questions asked in the semi-structured interviews were “Is learning about the culture of the countries where English is the native language important for learning English? Why?”; and “Is knowing the culture of the countries where English is the native language such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Canada necessary for using English? Why?” In order to analyze the semi-structured interviews, the responses were transcribed and analyzed using the thematic analysis stages suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013).

## 6. Data Analysis and Findings

### 6.1 Findings of the analysis of cultural content included in an EFL textbook

In order to answer research question 1, the cultural content and themes from the tasks in the textbook were categorized based on Xiao’s (2010) themes of the big “C” and little “c” aspects of cultural learning. The criteria of the textbook analysis were divided into two main groups: the first group consisted of the source culture, the target culture, international culture and culture free, and the second group included two types of culture, namely big “C” and little “c” cultures.

As shown in Table 1, the tasks on the target language culture (43.75%) occurred most frequently in the textbook, followed by the tasks on the source language culture (42.71%), the tasks on international culture (9.37%) and the culture free tasks (4.17%).

**Table 1** The frequency and percentage of cultural types that were presented in the EFL textbook

	No. of tasks	Source language culture		Target language culture		International culture		Culture free
		Big C	Little c	Big C	Little c	Big C	Little c	
Total (frequency)	96	5	36	8	34	1	8	4
		41		42		9		4
Total (percentage)		5.21%	37.50%	8.33%	35.42%	1.04%	8.33%	4.17%
		42.71%		43.75%		9.37%		4.17%

In order to further investigate the cultural themes under big “C” and little “c” cultures in greater detail, Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of the occurrence of the cultural themes presented in each task. The findings showed that 78 out of 96 tasks presented the content of little “c” culture (81.25%), 14 tasks included the content of big “C” culture (14.59%), and 4 tasks were “culture free” (4.17%). In order to further examine the distribution of the cultural themes under big “C” and little “c” cultures, the frequency and percentage of the occurrence of the 12 cultural themes were calculated. As displayed in the Table,

one theme of big “C” culture and five themes of little “c” culture were ranked as the top five themes found in the textbook. The theme of “lifestyles” (32.29%) under little “c” culture was mostly presented in the textbook, followed by “certain knowledge” (16.67%), “values” (9.38%), and “customs” (8.33%). The fifth ranked cultural theme was “education” (6.25%) under big “C” culture and “hobbies” (6.25%) under little “c” culture. However, 4 out of 96 tasks were placed in the “culture free” category because they did not match any cultural themes identified in this study.



**Table 2** The frequency and percentage of the occurrence of the cultural themes presented in each task

Ranking	Types of culture	Lessons												Total	%
		1A-1D	2A-2D	3A-3D	4A-4D	5A-5D	6A-6D	7A-7D	8A-8D	9A-9D	10A-10D	11A-11D	12A-12D		
	Big C (5 themes)														
5=	Education		4						1				1	6	6.25
7=	History			2		1								3	3.13
7=	Social norms											3		3	3.13
8=	Literature		1											1	1.04
8=	Economy											1		1	1.04
	Total		5	2		1			1			4	1	14	14.59
	Little c (7 themes)														
1	Lifestyles	4		7	2	2		2		8	3	2	1	31	32.29
2	Certain knowledge		2	1		1	2	1	2	1	1		5	16	16.67
3	Values	1	1	1	1			5						9	9.38
4	Customs		1		3								4	8	8.33
6=	Holidays					4								4	4.17
6=	Food						4							4	4.17
5=	Hobbies		1						1	2	2			6	6.25
	Total	5	5	9	6	7	6	8	3	11	6	2	10	78	81.25
	Culture free	3							1					4	4.17

**6.2 Findings from the questionnaires regarding the teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the EFL textbook**

In order to answer research questions 2 and 3, the responses from the questionnaires were analyzed to discover the teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the EFL textbook. As shown in Table 3 below, the overall mean scores for all four aspects that the teachers responded to in the questionnaires were between 4.37 and 3.67,

ranging from “strongly agree” to “agree” levels. They strongly agreed that learning about the target-language culture was important and necessary for them (M=4.37, SD=.71). They also agreed that learning about the non-target language culture (M=3.62, SD=.93) was necessary for them. In addition, they showed their agreement that the EFL textbook they used to teach mainly emphasized the culture of the target language (M=3.55, SD=.85) and that it promoted their intercultural communication competence (M=3.67, SD=.96). Meanwhile, the overall mean scores for all four

aspects that the students responded to in the questionnaires were between 3.65 and 3.24, ranging from “agree” to “moderately agree” levels. They agreed that learning about the target-language culture was important and necessary for them (M=3.65, SD=.96) and that the EFL textbook they studied promoted their intercultural communication

competence (M=3.56, SD=.91). They also agreed that the textbook they studied mainly emphasized the culture of the target language (M=3.48, SD=.91). However, they moderately agreed that learning about the culture of the non- target-language countries was important and necessary for them (M=3.24, SD=1.00)

**Table 3** Overall mean scores of each aspect of the teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the EFL textbook

Aspects	Teachers				Students			
	N	Mean (M)	SD	Level of Agreement	N	Mean (M)	SD	Level of Agreement
Attitudes toward learning about the target-language culture	13	4.37	.71	Strongly agree	238	3.65	.96	Agree
Attitudes toward intercultural communication competence promoted in the EFL textbook	13	3.67	.96	Agree	238	3.56	.91	Agree
Attitudes toward learning about the non-target-language culture	13	3.62	.93	Agree	238	3.24	1.00	Moderately agree
Attitudes toward learning about the cultural content presented the EFL textbook	13	3.55	.85	Agree	238	3.48	.91	Agree

\* 1.00-1.80 = Strongly disagree, 1.81-2.60 = Disagree, 2.61-3.40 = Moderately agree, 3.41-4.20 = Agree, 4.21-5.00 = Strongly agree

In order to analyze whether there was a significant difference in the mean scores between the teachers’and students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the EFL textbook, an independent-samples t-test was calculated. The findings showed

that there was no significant difference between the attitudes of the teachers and those of the students regarding learning about the target-language cultural content in the EFL textbook (t = 1.557, p = .121), as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4** Overall mean scores and standard deviations of the teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the EFL textbook

	No. of respondents (N)	Overall Mean Score (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	df	t	Sig. (2 –tailed)
Teachers	13	3.77	.63	249	1.557	.121
Students	238	3.5130	.58152			

\* Significance at  $p < .05$

Regarding the findings of the teachers’ and students’ expectations concerning the cultural aspects to be included in the EFL textbook, the teachers responded that the cultural aspects that they most wanted to be included in the EFL textbook were “greetings or social norms” (53.85%), followed by “lifestyles” (46.15%). Meanwhile the students responded that the top-five themes they wanted to be included in the EFL textbook were “greetings or social norms” (32.35%), followed by

“lifestyles” (20.59%), “education” (16.39%), “history” (8.82%), and “customs” (7.98%). Other themes responded to by the students were “music” (4.62%), followed by “food” (2.94%), “politics” (1.68%), economy (1.68%), “belief /values” (1.68%), and “holidays” (1.26%). Table 5 shows the ranking of the teachers’ and students’ expectations regarding the cultural aspects to be included in the EFL textbook.

**Table 5** Ranking of the teachers’ and students’ expectations regarding the cultural aspects to be included in the EFL textbook

Ranking	Cultural aspect	Big C	Little c	No. of respondents (N=13)	%
Teachers					
1	Greetings/Social norms	✓		7	53.85
2	Lifestyles		✓	6	46.15
Students					
Ranking	Cultural aspect	Big C	Little c	No. of respondents (N=238)	%
1	Greetings/Social norms	✓		77	32.35
2	Lifestyles		✓	49	20.59
3	Education	✓		39	16.39
4	History	✓		21	8.82
5	Customs		✓	19	7.98
6	Music	✓		11	4.62
7	Food		✓	7	2.94
8=	Politics	✓		4	1.68
8=	Economy	✓		4	1.68
8=	Belief/Values		✓	4	1.68
9	Holidays		✓	3	1.26

### 6.3 Findings from the semi-structured interviews regarding the teachers' and students' attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the EFL textbook

The semi-structured interviews were designed in accordance with the questionnaires in order to gain insight into the teachers' and students' attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the textbook. In order to analyze the data from the semi-structured interview questions, the teachers' and students' responses to these questions were translated into English. The responses of all 6 teachers and 10 students were coded and grouped in each category in order to understand their attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in the textbook. The following section presents the findings from their responses.

Regarding the importance of learning about the culture of the countries where English is the native language, most teachers and students agreed that learning and knowing about the cultural products, facts and everyday living of the countries where English is the native language, such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, or Canada were important for their English usage. The teachers, for example, responded that the knowledge of the cultural products, facts, and everyday living of the countries where English is the native language enabled them to communicate with people from different countries effectively, as one teacher stated: "If we know their cultural products, facts, and everyday living, we can communicate with people from different cultures effectively" (T2). Likewise, most of the students responded that it was necessary to know about the cultural products, facts and everyday living of the countries where English is the native language because "knowing the history as well as everyday living of the countries where English is the native language enables us to

communicate with people from different cultures effectively" (S8). With regard to the presentation of the cultural content and activities of the countries where English is the native language, all of the teachers and students responded that textbooks should contain content and activities that present the culture of the countries where English is the native language. For example, one teacher stated the following: "Learning about the culture of the countries where English is the native language helps to support our English learning by providing context of those cultures" (T4). Regarding the responses of the students, eight out of the ten students agreed that the textbook should contain content and activities that present the culture of the countries where English is the native language because "it helps us to understand their culture if we go to that country" (S3).

In terms of the importance of learning about the culture of the countries where English is not the native language, all of the teachers and five out of the ten students responded that knowledge about the cultural products and facts such as geography, history, or science, and their everyday living such as food, holidays, or clothing styles, of the countries where English is not the native language was also essential to their English usage. One teacher, for example, responded that knowing about the cultural products and facts of the countries where English is not the native language was beneficial to her English usage in the following: "If we want to communicate with people from that culture, we should know their culture" (T6). Regarding the responses of the students, five of the ten students agreed that the cultural products and facts of the countries where English is not the native language, were necessary to their English usage while the other five students disagreed with this idea. One student, for example, responded that knowledge of the cultural products and facts of the countries where English is not the native language

was necessary for her for the following reason: “It helps us to communicate with people from that culture” (S3). However, five of the ten students thought that knowing about the cultural products and facts of the countries where English is not the native language was unnecessary for their English usage. Three students, for example, responded that knowing about the cultural products and facts of the countries where English is not the native language was unnecessary for them because it was only additional information that they should have, as one student stated: “It is not necessary because it is only additional information that we should know” (S2).

With respect to the cultural themes that should be included in EFL textbooks, all six teachers responded that seven topics of culture, namely social norms, history, geography, holidays, food, values and customs, should be presented in EFL textbooks in order to help students communicate with people from other cultures effectively. They also responded that social norms, holidays, and food were the top-three cultural themes that should be presented in EFL textbooks. Regarding the responses of the students, they thought that seven cultural themes– social norms, history, architecture, geography, holidays, food, and values– should be presented in EFL textbooks. In line with the teachers’ responses, the students responded that food, holidays, and history were the top-three cultural themes that should be presented in EFL textbooks.

## 7. Discussion

The purposes of this study were to investigate Thai EFL teachers’ and undergraduate students’ attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content included in an EFL textbook used in a foundation English course in Thailand and to discover whether there were any differences between the teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward this learning. The following sections discuss

the current study’s findings in relation to the findings of other studies.

### 7.1 Types and themes of the cultural content presented in the EFL textbook used in the foundation English course for the present study

The analysis of the EFL textbook revealed that the tasks involving the target-language cultural content occurred most frequently in the analyzed textbook. Similar findings were found in the studies of Xiao (2010) and Dehbozorgi et al. (2014), which reported that the target-language cultural content was most frequently included in the EFL textbooks. This finding is also in line with the findings of the current study’s questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, which revealed that both teachers and students responded that the EFL textbook they used mainly presented the cultural content of the target language. It is possible that knowing about the culture of the countries where English is the native language can support English learning and teaching. This view was also supported by Alptekin (1993) when he maintained that target-language cultural information about the countries where English is the native language, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, has been emphasized in teaching and learning English. Regarding the cultural themes included in the textbook, the findings of this study revealed that 12 cultural themes under big “C” and little “c” cultures were discovered in most of the tasks of the analyzed textbook. The top-five themes found in the textbook were “lifestyles”, followed by “certain knowledge”, “values”, “customs”, “education”, and “hobbies”. It is interesting that five little “c” cultural themes were mostly presented in the analyzed textbook. In line with the findings of the current study’s questionnaires, the teachers and students responded that the topic of “lifestyles” was one of the most preferred cultural topics to be included in the EFL textbook. This finding is in agreement with Dehbozorgi et al.’s (2014) study,

which revealed that the analyzed EFL textbooks mainly included the “lifestyles” theme of little “c” culture. In addition, similar findings were also found in Matic’s (2015) study, which revealed that more little “c” cultural topics were found in the analyzed EFL materials than those of big “C” culture. In terms of big “C” cultural topics, Matic’s study discovered that the EFL materials she analyzed frequently presented cultural information about literature, education, and institutions, whereas the little “c” cultural topics found in the materials included the topics of values, beliefs, attitudes, everyday living, and interpersonal relations. It is possible that knowledge of little “c” culture or “behavior culture” is necessary for communicating with people from different countries. This view was supported by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) and Dehbozorgi et al. (2014), who suggested that little “c” culture should be emphasized in the EFL classroom in order to enhance the EFL learners’ intercultural competence. Regarding the findings of the teachers’ and students’ expectations concerning the cultural aspects to be included in the EFL textbook, it was found that the cultural aspects that the teachers and students most wanted were “greetings or social norms”, which is under big “C” culture, followed by “lifestyle”, which is under little “c” culture. These findings are in line with Xiao’s (2010) and Matic’s (2015) studies, which revealed that the respondents preferred big “C” culture learning issues to be included in EFL textbooks. It is possible that big “C” culture is “visible” or easily seen and noticed by language learners. In addition, the knowledge of little “c” culture can help them understand how people in the target-language culture use their own language to function appropriately. Therefore, both teachers and students of the current study considered “greetings or social norms” and “lifestyle” to be the most preferred cultural topics to be included in the EFL textbook.

## 7.2 Attitudes toward learning about the target-language cultural content presented in the EFL textbook

The analysis of the questionnaires revealed that there was no significant difference between the attitudes of the teachers and students regarding learning about the target-language cultural content included in the EFL textbook. Both teachers and students thought that learning about the target-language culture was important and necessary for them. They also demonstrated their agreement that the EFL textbook they used mainly emphasized the culture of the target language and it also helped to promote their intercultural communication competence. These findings are consistent with the findings of the semi-structured interviews of the current study. Both teachers and students responded that it was important to learn about the cultural products, facts, and everyday living of the countries where English is the native language because such knowledge would enable them to communicate with people from those countries effectively. In addition, they agreed that the textbook should contain content and activities that present the culture of the countries where English is the native language because it would help them to understand those countries’ culture. These findings are in line with Chen’s (2004) and Xiao’s (2010) studies, which revealed that target-language-cultural learning was important and necessary for language learners. There are two possible reasons why both teachers and students thought that it was important and necessary to learn about the target-language cultural content in the EFL textbook. First, language and culture are closely linked and influence each other so when the language learners learn a language, they inevitably expose to “the facts and practices of a society or community where the target language is used.” (Hua, 2014: 4). Second, in order to learn a foreign language, language learners should possess not only linguistic knowledge but also

sociolinguistic competence that focuses on the cultural dimension of foreign language teaching and learning (Kramsch, 1993; Corbett, 2003). According to Tseng (2002:12), “success in language learning is conditional upon the acquisition of cultural knowledge: language learners acquire cultural background knowledge in order to communicate, and to increase their comprehension in the target language.” Therefore, learning about the target-language culture can help language learners know how to communicate successfully in the situated context.

### 8. Implications and Recommendations

This study provides insights into the cultural content of an EFL textbook used in a foundation English course at the university level with the aim of developing language learners’ target-language cultural awareness. With respect to pedagogical implications, the findings of this study can be beneficial to academic institutes and people that are interested in the field of English language teaching and learning. In particular, teachers can use the results contributed by this study as a guideline in choosing EFL textbooks. In addition, the findings can be used to raise both teachers’ and students’ awareness of the importance of cultural learning. Regarding theoretical implications, the current study provides additional evidence for the field of teaching and learning English language and culture. For further research, the analysis of a greater number of EFL textbooks could provide more information regarding the cultural content that should be taught to language learners. In addition, a larger sample of teachers and students for the questionnaires and interviews could increase the validity and reliability of future studies.

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