



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background and Statement of the Problem**

English is recognized as a world language (Alptekin, 2002; McKay, 2003). It is mainly used in international business, media sectors such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines; as a result, the number of people who use English as a non-native language may exceed the number of its native speakers. Consequently, at the turn of the 21st century, English prevails as the most widely used language internationally. Then, the emphasis on teaching English has become a significant part of education all over the world.

English teaching and learning plays an important role for many years in Thailand but Thai students still encounter problems in learning English. Kleesuntorn (2003) indicated that most Thai students spend very long time learning English but they cannot use English skills efficiently, especially the oral communication skill. Thai students hardly practice the oral communication skill. This is because accurate grammatical rules are strictly focused in language classrooms. If one wants to communicate with other people in everyday life, the oral communication is the key. It is also a valuable tool of learning about different world cultures (Harumi, 2002).

Apart from the lack of English oral communication skill, Tseng (2002) stated that the teaching of culture is often neglected in ESL and EFL classroom. Due to teachers' limited foreign experiences and knowledge of the target culture and the concentration of linguistic forms, culture is introduced as no more than a supplementary diversion to language instruction (Stern, 1990; Arries, 1994; Tsou, 2005). Therefore, teachers ignore cultural contents or tell students only target cultural knowledge that they know.

American culture and British culture are often the focus of cultural teaching. However, cultural contents should consist of different types of culture. According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999), English teaching materials should include (1) the source culture which is the learners' own culture; (2) a target culture where the target language is used as the first language; and (3) international target cultures which are neither a source culture nor a target culture, but a variety of cultures around the world. Various aspects of cultural knowledge help students to understand the value of different cultures and by contrasting and comparing their own culture and other cultures, students learn to appreciate their home culture (Kramsch and Sullivan, 1996; Woodward, 2001). Thus, Thai students should be given an opportunity to explore and understand Thai culture as well as other cultures (Baker, 2008).

When learners learn a language, they also learn culture. Without cultural insight and skills, even fluent speakers can seriously misinterpret the messages they hear or read, and the messages they intend to communicate can be misunderstood (Pesola, 1991). The Basic Education Curriculum B.E.2544 (A.D. 2001), in the objectives in Substance 2: Language and Culture, stated that students should understand the relationship between language and Thai culture, and utilize language and culture appropriate according to the context. What's more, students should understand the similarities and differences between target culture and Thai culture.

Consequently, it is actually impossible not to teach culture in the language class. Linguistic skills or the correctness of grammar combined with cross-cultural knowledge should be taught in EFL classroom. If one can speak English well but still thinks and feels like a Thai, one will have some problems in getting along with or living with foreigners (Kim, 2002; Wright, 2006).

It can be obviously seen that there is a significant relationship between language and culture in English teaching. As a result, Moran (2001) designed Cultural

Experiential Instruction to promote language teaching, together with cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding through experience. In this model, through the participation, description, interpretation, and reflection, students can develop effective and appropriate interaction with other people through Cultural Experiential Instruction. Moran (2001) stated that the heart of the culture learning experience is the encounter with difference. Without encountering differences between cultures, students often react negatively, characterizing the target culture as 'strange' or 'weird'. Learners tend to view this difference through the lens of their own cultures. Learners describe, explain, act, and interact by using their own culture and language as the frame of references (Mantle-Bromley, 1992).

To date, little research about Cultural Experiential Instruction has been done in Thailand and no one uses Moran's Cultural Experience Model in teaching English at lower secondary school level in Thailand. That is why the researcher is interested in the implementation and effects of Cultural Experiential Instruction on students' English oral communication ability in an EFL classroom in Thailand.

### **Research Question**

One research question was explored in this study.

To what extent does Cultural Experiential Instruction improve English oral communication ability of lower secondary school students?

### **Objective of the Study**

This study aimed:

To examine the effects of Cultural Experiential Instruction on English oral communication ability of lower secondary school students.

### **Statement of Hypothesis**

According to Tsou (2005), she indicates that Cultural Instruction had effects on students' language ability. That is, they gained higher scores on language proficiency test and their cultural knowledge had increased. Furthermore, the students became more interested in English and utilized more English words and sentences. Apart from the improvement of English language ability and cultural knowledge, students stated that English classes were interesting. They tend to have positive opinions toward cultural and language learning.

Consequently, from those positive results of the Cultural Instruction, the hypothesis in this study is:

The posttest mean scores on English oral communication of lower secondary school students are higher than the pretest mean scores at the significance level of 0.05.

### **Scope of the Study**

1. The population for this study was lower secondary school students.
2. The variables in this study were as followed:

Independent variable was Cultural Experiential Instruction.

Dependent variable was English oral communication ability.

### **Definitions of Terms**

**1. Cultural Experiential Instruction** refers to teaching culture and language through Cultural Experience Model (Moran, 2001) which help learners acquire and

gain knowledge from experiences. There are four steps of Cultural Knowings in the model: Knowing How, Knowing About, Knowing Why, and Knowing Oneself.

**2. Cross-Cultural Teaching** refers to the teaching that emphasizes the similarities and differences between world culture and Thai culture.

**3. English Oral Communication Ability** refers to the oral ability to use English in order to communicate the differences between World culture and Thai culture. It is measured by English Oral Communication Test constructed by the researcher.

**4. Lower secondary school students** refer Thai students who are studying in Grade 8 in Thai public schools. They are equivalent to grade 8 students.

### **Outline of the Study**

This thesis consists of five chapters.

**Chapter I** is the introduction section that provides background of the present study. It includes the statement of the problem, the research question, the objective, and the hypothesis. Also, scope of the study and definitions of terms are included.

**Chapter II** reviews the underlying theoretical frameworks and previous research studies that are considered relevant to the study. The concepts discussed are categorized into 4 sections. First, Experiential Learning Approach and Cultural Experience are discussed. Second, focus questions for Cultural Experience, contents, learning outcomes, learning activities, and teacher roles in the Four Cultural Knowings are described. Third, guidelines for teaching culture and the benefits of culture teaching to language learning are explained. Fourth, definition of oral communication ability, components of oral communication ability, the teaching methods of oral communication, classroom activities for oral communication ability



development, the assessment of oral communication ability, the criteria of oral communication ability assessment are reviewed. The importance of teaching English oral communication and world culture as well as studies on culture teaching in language classroom is also presented.

**Chapter III** deals with the research methodology of the study. This includes the research design, context, population and samples, research procedures, research instruments, and the methods of data collection and data analysis.

**Chapter IV** presents the results of the study in accordance with the research question.

**Chapter V** summarizes the study, discusses the findings and suggests implications and recommendations for teachers and further research.