No Non-Local English Teachers' Contextualization of Intercultural Education in an EFL Setting

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With globalization, intercultural education has become an integral component of English language education. Nonetheless, to ensure the relevance to the local setting, intercultural education may need to be more contextualized. With the aim of better understanding the contextualization of intercultural education, our study examined the discourse of 15 non-local English teachers working in private secondary schools in Bangkok, Thailand. The analysis of the participants' discourse yielded four broad categories, with each category containing two or more themes. These categories showed different ways in which the participants contextualized intercultural education. The categories were 1) treatment of cultural lessons, addressing the issue of whether culture is treated as a body of knowledge, or if it aims for an intercultural and transformative experience; 2) cultural focus, which dealt with the integration of local and/or foreign cultures; 3) sources for cultural lessons, which looked at where intercultural lessons came from; and 4) reasons for integrating culture, which examined whether lessons were done for curriculum compliance, or if teachers had other personal motivations. Because the manner in which intercultural education was contextualized lied mostly with the parameters from which the participants operated, this study calls for further examination on non-local English teachers' professionalism, especially those working in international schools within the region.

Keywords: *non-local English teachers, intercultural education, EFL, discourse analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, which has enabled cross cultural mobility, has brought about a paradigm shift in English language education. Instead of merely focusing on linguistic knowledge, English language pedagogy now calls for the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which is the knowledge and ability that one possesses for building and maintaining cross cultural relations (Byram, 1997; Liddicoat, 2011). When ICC is integrated with language learning, it

may not appear in a linear process. This is because contextualization may occur, that is, the modification or pedagogical content or approach to suit the context or social entities of a particular environment. In terms of the contextualization of ICC, studies indicated that teachers contextualize intercultural pedagogical materials (including popular culture) and pedagogical approaches to reflect and recognize norms of the non-English speaking cultures (e.g. Bayyurt, 2006; Chik, 2011; Luk, 2012). As Alptekin (2002) points out, "real communicative behaviour ought to be redefined in relation to the reality of English as an International Language, entailing not only the uses of English that are real for its native speakers in English-speaking countries, but also the uses of English that are real for its nonnative speakers in communities served by languages other than English." (p. 61). This contextualization process is driven by agentic choices and actions, and may be compared to what Hayes (2009) terms as having a 'nativeness', in that while a teacher may not be a native English speaking teacher, s/he may possess "understandings of teaching and learning as a foreign language in context" (p. 9). This renders the pedagogical materials and approaches more meaningful and relevant to students learning English as a foreign language.

Considering all these, this study aims to examine how intercultural education is contextualized in a context where English is spoken as a foreign language. This will be done through the examination of discourse data from 15 non-local English language teachers working in private secondary schools in Bangkok, Thailand. From this study, we may reveal potential tensions that exist between beliefs and practices (Phipps & Borg, 2009), especially when taking into account the possible variance in teaching epistemology of non-local English teachers, as well as the level of English language proficiency of the students. On a broader scale, this study will further inform us of the complexities of English language teaching (ELT) in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Intercultural education in the English classroom

The notion of ICC is not a recent extension to the practice of ELT. In a seminal paper on communicative language teaching (CLT), Canale and Swain (1980) regarded the development of intercultural skills as a significant theoretical underpinning of the communicative approach. This stems from the belief that effective communication encompasses not only linguistic skills, but also pragmatic skills. Moreover, having an intercultural approach in language learning portrays the realities of communication, wherein meaning from different cultural systems affect the interaction between users of English (Hismanoglu, 2011). As such, people who are interculturally competent are

> [...] better able to see the common humanity among different cultures and ethnicities, and locate the points of consent and complementarity beyond the points of difference and contention. They are on the way to being better able to overcome parochialism and form a vital outlook that is not locked in a provincial interest of one's own group membership, but one in which the individual [...] includes other groups as well.   (Kim, 2008, p. 364)

Hence, when a language learner develops interculturally, s/he is capable of decentring personal cultural principles in recognition of others', and subsequently form an attitude of 'otherness' (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002), as well as a notion of cultural relativism (Coulby, 2006).
Intercultural learning is a process of development, or 'being', and a language learner may take time before attaining necessary intercultural competencies (Najar, 2014). This involves several different milestones, or levels (Dervin & Hahl, 2015). This is seen through different dimensions of cultural awareness, which begins with the development of an (1) aesthetic sense, where learning content focuses on cultural elements such as the media, cinema, music, and literature; followed by a (2) sociological sense, where learning focuses on organization of families and societies, interpersonal relations, customs and institutions; leading to a (3) semantic sense, where language is positioned as being culturally distinctive as they relate to a way of life; and finally, (4) the pragmatic or sociolinguistic sense, where background knowledge and social skills (as well as language skills) are combined to enhance one's ability to communicate meaningfully and successfully in cross cultural situations (Adaskou, Britten, & Fahsi, 1990, p. 3-4). All these different cultural dimensions build on one another in a progressive manner, with one acting as a prerequisite for a subsequent sense.

With the English language classroom as a platform for intercultural exchange, English can be a conduit for critical analysis and discussion about hegemonic notions associated with the culture of the English language, or other cultural systems made accessible through the English language. This enables awareness raising towards meaning in communication and language use, and supports the development of global citizenship (Fettes, 2003; Llurda, 2004; Nault, 2006; Erickson, 2009). This may also potentially guide people to be collaboratively committed towards social justice - being able to work together as peoples from different cultures, races, religions, and nations in alleviating issues affecting global societies (Banks, 2004).

Contextualization of intercultural education

Various studies have examined how English teachers implement intercultural lessons, or how culture is viewed in the English classroom. What these studies found was a persistent emphasis on linguistic knowledge in isolated communicative situations and a focus on attaining native speaker competencies, especially when preparing for high-stakes assessments that prioritize accuracy

(e.g. Alpetkin, 2002). In some cases, students were found to be uninterested in learning about other cultures (e.g. Bayyurt, 2006). Cultural lessons were also reported to be treated as an incidental part of English lessons, typically used to whet students' appetite (e.g. a starter activity) to learn English (e.g. Luk, 2012). There are also teachers who believe that intercultural education poses the risk of reinforcing cultural stereotypes, instead of forming a broader worldview that accepts cultural differences (Sercu, 2005a; Sercu, 2005b). These challenges led teachers to make adjustments by minimizing the role of culture, or by completely eliminating cultural lessons. Aside from factors found in the actual classroom setting, teacher training programs may also be inept in equipping future English teachers with necessary knowledge and skills to integrate culture into their lessons. For example, Larzén-Östermark (2009) reported that teacher trainer courses focus mainly on language studies, pedagogical as well as didactic studies without any cultural dimensions. Even when the issue of culture surfaces, it is treated as a transmittable body of knowledge, which typically consists of literature, history, geography, and political aspects of the target culture.

From these studies, and as discussed earlier, we can see how teachers contextualized their pedagogy or teaching materials to be more suitable to their setting. Contextualization is seen as a teacher's responsibility in "bringing the outside in" (Baynham, 2006, p. 25). This entails drawing into the classroom external discourses which represent the localized usage of the target language. Being able to contextualize is an integral part of teacher education and professionalism. It reflects teacher competencies to address a myriad of language proficiency issues in a holistic manner (Alsagoff, 2015). Specifically, it indicates a teacher's agency in forwarding language pedagogy that is culturally appropriate, or in intercultural terms, integrating lessons which can develop intercultural awareness and skills (e.g. Lopez, 2011). Examining contextualization may also reflect the structure of teachers' work parameters and the nature of the classroom (Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, Eteläpelto, Rasku-Puttonen, & Littleton, 2008). For instance, if students' contributions could steer a classroom's direction, the class is said to have weaker social suggestion (as opposed to stronger social suggestion, which is more rigid, with limited teacher and student agency). This also signifies teacher contingency, which is a teacher's positive response to unscripted incidents, or 'interruptive moments' leading to a dialogic exchange among teacher and students (Baynham, 2006). Such dialogic exchange between teacher and student, or student and student, is an essential aspect of ICC, wherein students are deemed valuable resources for cultural experiences (Liddicoat, 2011). Consequently, the implementation of relevant intercultural lessons, and its contextualization, would also compel English teachers to renegotiate their professional identity – from one who perceives that her/his main task is to teach English, to one that aims to bring awareness to how English is used globally (Sercu, 2006; Ortaçtepe, 2015; Dervin & Hahl, 2015). Needless to say, contextualization is expected to occur, especially in the

study's setting where local and foreign worldviews come in contact. With these in mind, our study aims to answer this main research question, "How is ICC contextualized by English teachers in an EFL setting?"

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Context

Our study is based in Bangkok. Bangkok is an interesting study site because first, though the capital city is the nation's international hub, it still retains its distinct Thai identity (Jory, 1999). This identity emphasizes the importance of 'Thainess', which acts as a bond that ensures the stability and hierarchy of the society. Nonetheless, from the perspective of education, scholars argue that 'Thainess' poses an unnecessary challenge to alternative ways of learning (Baker, 2008). Second, from an economic perspective, there has been an increase in public spending on private education and the westernization of educational institutions (Lavankura, 2013; Cuesta & Madrigal, 2014; Rhein, 2016); yet very minimal studies have explored the international school context. Typically found in major metropolitan cities in Thailand, such as Bangkok and Chiang Mai (Hayes, 2010), these private schools operate with an international curriculum, such as the International Baccalaureate, and are accredited by both local and international quality assurance bodies. Aside from full-fledged English international schools, there are also those which are bilingual. These bilingual schools have two programs: the English Program (EP) which offers several subjects in English (e.g. science, mathematics, English, and physical education) and the English Intensive Program (EIP) which only offers one subject in English, that is, the English language. In international schools and EPs, it is common to find teaching staff comprised of, all, if not most, non-local teachers (Kaur, Young, & Kirkpatrick, 2016). It was also observed, while conducting the study, that most of the EP students are local Thais, while international school students were expatriates.

Thailand considers intercultural education an integral aspect in English language education. National educational policies such as the National Educational Act (NEA) and the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) introduced by the Thai government mandated English as a compulsory subject, and prescribed communicative teaching pedagogy and content that include intercultural matters. At the regional level, the ASEAN Economic Community also acknowledged intercultural exchange, through its official medium, English (Kirkpatrick 2012). In international schools or EPs, students may need to take compulsory ASEAN courses, on top of participating in various cultural activities. Intercultural objectives are also seen in schools' international curricula, which include developing students' sense of belonging to an international community, and having international perspectives. This promotion of internationalism is

cited as a commonality among international schools in the Asia-Pacific region (Tamatea, Hardy & Ninnes, 2008).

Participants

The recruitment of participants was done via referral sampling. The primary researcher initially invited teachers who were his personal contacts, and these teachers then referred him to other teachers. After about three months of correspondence, the referrals were exhausted when no participants could be recruited. Initially, there were 18 non-local English teachers who had agreed (non-local as an encompassing term for both native and non-native English speakers). Three of the 18 were primary school English teachers while the rest were from secondary schools. To ensure a more comparable analysis, only the secondary school teachers' discourse data were used in this study. Among them (*n*=15), five came from two international schools while the remaining ten came from three EPs located around Bangkok. Of these teachers, two had Thai connections. One was a Thai-American participant who had come from the US to work. The other, a Thai, had grown up in different parts of the world (Russia, France, Belgium, and South Africa) as his father was a diplomat. He returned to Thailand only after completing his university studies in the US and due to extensive time spent abroad, this participant, MM, does not see himself as a local. Details regarding the participants' professional background, and their pseudonyms, are provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Professional and personal information of participants

Participant	School Type	Current Courses Taught	Professional Background
LN British	International (UK Curriculum)	English as an additional language	BEd in Primary Education; 23 yrs of teaching in the UK, Greece, Egypt & Thailand
CT South African	EP	Speaking & listening	BEd in Education; 3 yrs of teaching in South Africa & Thailand
JN British	International (UK Curriculum)	English as an additional language	BSc & MSc in Agriculture & Nutrition; TEFL Cert.; 13 yrs in Thailand
CL Thai-American	EP	Speaking & listening	BA & MA in International Business; MEd; 9-10 mths in Thailand

PH British	EP	Speaking & listening	Dip. in Hospitality; TEFL Cert.; 2.5 yrs in Thailand
HN British	International (UK Curriculum)	Language & literature; creative writing	BA & MA in English language teaching; 11 yrs in Thailand & UK
MQ Dutch	International (US Curriculum)	Language & literature	BA in English Education; 11 yrs in Holland, UK &Thailand
TR American	International (US Curriculum)	Language & literature; Spanish	BA in Language Education; 10 yrs in the US & Thailand
RT South African	EP	Reading & writing	BA in Gen. Ed.; Dip. in Higher Ed.; 16 yrs in South Africa &Thailand
TJ Belgium	EP	Speaking & listening; English media & communications	BA in Management; TEFL Cert.; 3 yrs in Thailand
BW Belgium	EP	Speaking & listening; reading & writing; conversation	PGCE; TEFL Cert.; 5 yrs in Thailand
MM Thai	EP	English & social studies	BA in Philosophy; 3 mths in Thailand
ST British	EP	English	Cert in Physical Education; TEFL Cert.; 5 yrs in Thailand
RM South African	EP	Speaking & listening; conversation	BBA in Acct. & Finance; TEFL Cert.; 7 yrs in Thailand
ND Canadian	EP	Speaking & listening	BA & MA in Graphics Design; TEFL Cert.; 1 yr in Thailand

Data collection and analysis

While most studies on the integration of intercultural education have been survey-based and quantitative (e.g. Sercu, 2005a, 2005b, 2006), this study opted for a qualitative approach through the examination of discourse data. Taking

discourse data as a representative of a person's perspective, or subjectivity, stems from the sociocultural approach to analyse personhood (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010). In this approach, language is *la parole*, or image-text, where a discourse interlocutor uses language to reflect real world experiences indicative of social relations and positioning within social or institutional parameters (Gee, 2000). For teachers, the analysis of subjectivities would open avenues for understanding how pedagogical roles are appropriated, along with the professional relationship between those involved, and thus giving a sense of who and what social entities are within a teaching context (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2014).

The discourse data was collected through a semi-structured interview (Appendix I), which was developed based on the perception of and knowledge about self and others. The perception of self and others is crucial in education as teaching is a process that is shaped by one's relations with other social entities and the context from where s/he works. Hence, semi-structured interview questions that touched upon relations between the teacher's self with students, colleagues, work environment, and teaching materials were formulated. During the interview, a deliberate dialogue approach was employed to allow the iterative cycle of data analysis by engaging the participant to interpret what s/he had divulged. This approach does not aim for data saturation, but for a comprehensiveness of issues pertinent to the research aim (Plamondon, Bottorff, & Cole, 2015). The interview sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The analytical process was two-fold. First, participants' interviews were read and emergent themes were noted in memos. These memos were induced based on the semantic content of the participants' discourse and on the impressions and ideas in light of the whole interview discourse, and understood through the subjectivity of each participant (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). After all transcripts were analysed, the second analytical step involved the latent thematic analysis. At this stage, the researchers identified and examined the "*underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84, italics in original). This stage also took a constructionist approach, which "seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 85). Based on this analysis, initial themes were grouped into broader categories. This was done based on the relatedness of themes. Aside from the relatedness of themes, we also took into account the sequence of themes. Since intercultural education, which is considered a critical conceptualization of cultural knowledge, is the highest attainment one may have in cultural studies, it was assumed that not all teachers treated cultural studies in the same manner. The treatment of culture depends on a teacher's personal beliefs along with the parameters from where s/he operates (e.g. Luk, 2012). As such, the themes

were also examined in terms of progress through different levels. At both stages, deliberation was done among the three researchers in order to achieve consensus through resonance (Heigham & Croker, 2009).

FINDINGS

Table 2 presents the categories and themes gleaned from the discourse data of the 15 participants (detailed version in Appendix II). There are four categories, each having two or more themes. Themes are presented in a progressive manner, with the first mentioned theme in each category being a generic notion held by all the participants, and the subsequent ones being an 'add-on' or explication (+, ++) of the generic theme held by specific individuals. This is to reflect the idea that intercultural development involves a process of 'being', where there is a progressive move from 'space' to 'place', that is, meaning-making begins in a physical environment before moving on to more complex abstractions of other conditions for intercultural exploration (Najar, 2014). So, for example, in the first category, the spatial theme was the delivery of culture as a body of knowledge, and it progresses on to the manipulation of culture as a basis for language learning, and finally the abstraction of culture for reasoning about other cultural systems which may not necessarily be immediately present in the classroom 'space'.

Table 2
Categories and themes of findings

Categories	Themes	Total (*n*=15 teachers)
1. Treatment of Cultural Lessons	Body of knowledge	5 (CT, CL, RM, ND, RT)
	+Platform for English language learning	5 (BW, MM, PH, TJ, ST)
	++Platform for reasoning of cultural systems (intercultural)	5 (HN, TR, JN, LN, MQ)
2. Cultural Focus	Foreign	5 (CT, RM, ND, RT, ST)
	+Local (Thai)	10 (BW, CL, MM, PH, TJ, HN, TR, JN, LN, MQ)
3. Source(s) for Cultural Lessons	Course materials	3 (CT, RM, ND)
	+Outside materials or personal experiences (both teacher and student)	12 (BW, CL, MM, PH, TJ, HN, TR, JN, LN, MQ, RT, ST)
4. Reasons for	Being knowledgeable	9 (BW, CT, CL, RM, ND, PH,

Integrating Culture		MM, TJ, RT)
	+Being transformed	6 (ST, HN, TR, JN, LN, MQ)

In the following section we will further elaborate on the categories and themes. The discussion will be supported by several excerpts with items which provided semantic insights for analysis highlighted in bold.

1. *Treatment of cultural lessons*

The first theme of this category were perspectives of some teachers who saw culture as a body of knowledge transmittable to students. Culture is also a framework that dictates how a person thinks or acts, and gives a person her/his identity. At this level, there is minimal contextualization of cultural information. In other words, culture was presented only as a set of behaviours without any further elaboration. For example, CL said,

> I would say culture is, it's just **a set of behaviours**, that I guess is **standardized** by, through time, er, through perhaps even the **powers** that, you know, this is **correct** cultural practice, you know that you must do, not really that you must do, but you know adhere to, to, uhm, to **maintain** your **identity**, something along those lines

Another example is seen in RM's response,

> sometimes it came up that, when you go to another country you have you to **realize** that they have a **different culture**, and they have, they are as **serious** about their **rules** and **regulations** as you are about yours, and so it's always **good** to **respect**

While some saw culture as a body of knowledge and as guidance for acceptable behaviour, there were those who saw culture as the basis for English language use and practice. At this level, there may be a degree of contextualization of cultural information as authenticity and relevance come into play. This involves replacing materials with those that are familiar to the students. In such a setting, teachers are taking agentic actions to ensure that what is delivered is of practical use for their students (Lopez, 2011). BW said,

> just try to get them, give them something that's **authentic**, and as, as something they can **relate** to, and something for them, because it's, at the end of the day I want to teach them the **language**, **not** the **culture**, but if everything that helps them to **relate**, or get into the role play, or get into the **frame** of the thing that I want to teach, I guess, their **setting**, their **own food** and everything is **familiar**, only the language is different, then that's only one thing that they have to make a switch in their heads,

Or in what MM experienced in his classroom,

> that's actually, that actually just happened, twenty minutes ago, so the section we're teaching about, it's more or less present continuous, **describing** photo, looking at clothes in such colours and the main heading was about music festivals [...] in the UK, and from that, oh I thought to myself, that will be a great starting point for **discussion** for the students to **improve** how they **talk** about certain events or festivals and that's exactly what we did for the last fifteen minutes in class where I just **asked** each individual student, have you ever been to any festivals, have you been to concerts, what can you tell me about those concerts, and, I also **ask** them questions about how or I didn't directly **ask** it, but I **implied** that there were **differences** between concerts in Thailand possibly and concerts in the UK

What we can see from the responses of BW and MM is how culture is treated as a topic that paved a way for language use and thinking. We could also see an extension of foreign to familiar grounds. For instance, BW tried to provide something that is 'authentic' while MM extended their discussion about concerts in the UK to those in Thailand (the notion of comparison of cultures will be addressed again in the second category). Nonetheless, though some discussion about culture may ensue, it may have led only to gaining cultural knowledge and potentially communicative competence, rather than contributing to intercultural outcomes, such as that expected in the third dimension of Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi's (1990) levels of cultural meanings, which is to have a sociological sense of words and their corresponding cultural representation. The third theme, on the other hand, was probably the closest to an intercultural objective, where culture was treated as grounds for being transformed. Let us begin with what LN said,

> I've just done a lesson on holidays and sort of, you know, like what people in the UK do, but then, I had a Japanese guy and a Venezuelan girl so we were talking about what people in Japan do for the holidays and, I try and bring in, like all the different, kinds of kids, I try to get them to **say** what their **experiences** are in their country; Yeah, yeah, I always try and get them, they **need to talk** about their own **experiences**, yeah, because otherwise they, you know, that's why they're here, you know; Yea, of course, it makes them so much more **open minded**, uhm, I just think it helps them **accept people**, rather than you know saying you know like oh I, oh Americans, they are like this and uhm, yeah, I think they **learn** a lot from different cultures

It was also apparent in JN's response,

> education is **preparing** them for **life outside**, and because I feel quite **strongly** about how the **world** is going at the moment with different **wars**, you know **lack of understanding**, anything I can do to **help** kids

have a **broader understanding** of other countries and what is **important** for the **country**, I think that's almost my **duty** to do that

Both LN and JN value the integration of cultural lessons because they hope that their students may become more 'open' or 'broad' minded. Introducing issues which may be foreign to these students may help them 'prepare' for what lies beyond the classroom experience, and also encourage them to 'accept' different peoples. LN aspires that her students can do more than just have simplistic knowledge about different cultures (e.g., 'Americans, they are like this'), while JN feels that education is a critical point for her students' development, as well as for the condition of the society at large. These reflect recommendations of intercultural scholars, where discussions about culture may allow students to deliberate cultural information through their own cultural lens (Liddicoat, 2011), serve as a catalyst for language interaction in class (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008), or even prepare students for high-stakes evaluation (Luk, 2012).

2. Cultural focus, sources for culture

The second category dealt with the type of culture (foreign only, or foreign and local) brought into the classroom, and the third dealt with the sources for culture (pedagogical materials). These two categories are discussed together because even though they reflect different entities, they are closely related, in that cultural focus was found to be driven by the sources used. It was discovered that all of the teachers actually integrated lessons about foreign cultures in their classes. This is expected because of the use of materials from the UK. ND mentioned,

> well, the **textbook** is very, pretty much, it's a very **broad wide information**, for example they have a unit for movies, so I would link it up with **Western culture**, **Western movies**, but I'm **not allowed** to show them anything in **Thai**, and if the, if the unit says hanging out, that's a word that most of the **Westerners** use when they hang out with their friends

RT reiterated similar sentiments,

> they're, they're being taught the **English national curriculum**, so, a lot of the stuff that they're being taught is based on things that they should, really, you know like the, it's all, it's very **English-based**, **culturally**, **English-based**

This was also seen in ST's response,

> I've taught culture, cause in a lot of the **books**, there's always the **subject** of **culture** and it's usually in **greetings**, so hey how do people in the UK greet each other, how do people in Japan greet each other

In the three teachers' discourse, we can see how curriculum materials are important in defining pedagogical content. At least in the case of ND, an adherence to the material is obligatory, and deviating from the prescribed material, such as introducing Thai culture, is not allowed. In settings like this, contextualization may be frowned upon as it is viewed as unprofessional for teachers to veer off the assigned syllabus, or uncouth to introduce matters pertaining to Thai society, even if students are familiar with these matters. Another point worth mentioning, as seen in the responses of ND and ST, is how lessons of culture are often fixated on behaviours - the concept of 'hanging out', or how people in Japan or the UK greet each other. The lack of elements from the local culture may stem from the heavy-handedness of inner circle (e.g. USA, UK, Australia) cultural content in popular English language learning materials. Furthermore, these materials have generally focused on transmitting these cultural elements as a body of knowledge (Shin, Eslami, & Chen, 2011).

Nonetheless, there are also those who contextualized by bringing in the local culture, aside from the foreign ones found in their teaching materials. This may be what we saw earlier when BW referred to 'authentic' materials that students could 'relate to'. For instance, TR mentioned,

> I have students from **all over**, I have Korean students, I have Taiwanese, I have Chinese, I have Thai, I have Indian, I have uhm, some kids from Singapore, so when we when we are in class, you know, we're always **comparing ourselves** to the **characters** (in the literary works they were studying) and, I also will share my comparisons to my culture too

MQ also shared a similar sentiment,

> I asked them to, well how am **I** going to learn if **you** see **me** do anything that is **not according** to **your tradition** or **culture** then **you** need to **tell me** because otherwise **I won't know**

> but when **we** try and **discuss** different Asian cultures I seem to **learn** a lot from them, **they** really **give** me a lot and one says this but the other says that but it turns into a **discussion**, so I don't, so I just sit and **listen** and **learn**

From the responses of TR and MQ, we could see how the local culture (Thai, or what was 'local' to a student), as well as the cultures of the teachers, were drawn into the learning environment through comparison and contrast, and as a means to gain more cultural capital. The introduction of local culture may support the Thai educational policy, which states that "[s]tudents of English must learn not only the language as a system but also the culture that comes with the language, and they must be able to compare their own language and culture with that which comes with English. They must be able to use the language competently, both receptively and productively, in different contexts."

(Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2002, p. 111). This also supports the idea that communicative competence can be achieved when there is a reasonable representation of both local and foreign cultures as a platform for the communication of ideas and beliefs (Shin et al., 2011). Integrating local aspects not only recalibrates the focus on the west, but it also helps the students be at ease by involving familiar topics (Nault, 2006). The teachers' readiness to outsource cultural elements from students' personal backgrounds also indicate contingency. This does not only support critical literacy through boundary-crossing between cultures (Lopez, 2011), but it also reflects teacher contingency (and student agency) in renegotiation of what is considered 'knowledge', which provides impromptu opportunities for learning, leading to a richer classroom experience (Baynham, 2006).

3. *Reasons for integrating culture*

The last category was the participants' pedagogical intentions, with themes concerning the reasons for the integration of cultural lessons. There were two main reasons, which were learning culture to expand knowledge, and learning culture as a means to be transformed. The first reason addressed the educative notion that culture was supposed to highlight similarities and/or differences, or to broaden the minds of students. For instance, PH pointed out the following that learning about the world should entail an awareness of other cultural options,

> I think, they just need to be **world wise** if you like, I think Thailand is very **insular**, and they think this is the **centre of the world**, I think once they **realize** there's **more cultures**, **more options**, they'll do better

TJ also conveyed a similar stance,

> I mean, so I think it's important **to know** that uhm at the **other side** of the world it's **different**, people **think different**, people **behave different**, people **are different**, people **believe different** and I think that's **important**, you don't have to do to push it too hard, but just, you know, make them **understand** that it's not like in Thailand

This was also seen in BW's response,

> yeah, make them a little bit **aware** of the **world**, sort of **different** here and there; Make them **aware** a little bit about what's going on in the world, **outside** of Thailand could be **different**, or, or things that are, they think is true, or is not, stuff like this

What is interesting here was many of the teachers who had this belief shared the same perception about the mindset of their Thai students (and potentially locals with whom they interact), in that a sense of narrow mindedness was common. This perhaps instigated for a call for an 'awareness', a 'realization', or

an 'understanding', so as to not appear 'insular'. However, though they wanted an 'awareness' among their students, most of these teachers maintained that their role is to help their students become more proficient in the English language, since it is, after all, an English class. For instance, TJ said,

> Yep **language**, **language**, **language**, and I think all the cultural things are more for the **Thai teachers**, of course, **we** are **better place** to teach **foreign culture**, of course because we are foreign teachers but uhm

BW also thought the same,

> Yeah, the **emphasis** is on **language**, [...] Maybe they have, er, more like **social studies** to do that, or **rather** than doing it in an **English classroom**

The first theme perhaps reflects the first dimension of Adaskou, Britten, and Fahsi's (1990) cultural objectives, which is a focus only on the aesthetics of culture. As such, there is an emphasis on language proficiency only, without the consideration that English could be a platform for the deliberation of culture. This reflects the studies by Foley (2005), as well as de Segovia and Hardison (2009), whereby English classrooms were found to focus more on English language accuracy (i.e. form and structure) instead of the communicative uses of English.

The second theme, on the other hand, was grounded in call-for-action, where teachers hoped for cultural lessons to have a transformative effect. For instance, HN said,

> I know, as a teacher I feel very uhm aware that uhm, children and teenagers especially are able to be **persuaded** by what their teachers tell them, so I don't ever want to **force** them to **believe** something uhm, but if I have the **power** to **prevent racists** and **homophobes** and uhm **bigots** and **sexists** from entering this world then I do that, and uhm, er probably quite heavy handedly, but er, my students are quite **happy** to **argue** back with me, so I don't feel too bad about that

TR also shared a similar sentiment, as seen in her response,

> I think it will give the students a **bigger vision** of maybe who they wanna be, maybe it'll help them see themselves more **clearly** and know that, you know, I don't I don't think that people should be **put into a box**, and maybe I think often times, especially kids, they're in this whole **transitional age** and they have this feeling that they have to **be a certain way**, and have **to act a certain way**, and look **a certain way**, and maybe talking about other cultures, they can understand that people do have **different** ways of **thinking**, and there are **different** ways to **be** and, nothing is you know, neither, **neither**, is one is **more correct**, or is **better**, and I think that that

something really important that when students are involved in other cultures they know that it's okay for them to be maybe a little bit **different** than what's, you know, convention, **conventionally the norm**

HN and TR both had hopes that what they teach would go beyond their classroom walls. They aspired that their students would learn, from their cultural lessons, values which are morally just and accepting, and not 'racist', 'bigots' or 'homophobes'; and to be comfortable being different, by not being 'put in a box' to be 'a certain way', and not having to abide by what is 'conventionally' accepted as the 'norm'. This second theme reflects a more transformative intention held by the teachers, reflecting the pragmatic sense of culture (Adaskou, Britten, & Fahsi, 1990), which also reflects the tenets of intercultural competence (Kim, 2008; Liddicoat, 2011). This also indicates an interest in social justice. As stated by Einfeld and Collins (2008), "[l]ack of multicultural knowledge and skill are a driving force behind social inequality. Therefore a multicultural education is a necessary component for understanding structural inequalities and how to produce change toward equality and justice." (p. 106; see also Banks, 2004). More than having a transformative intention for their students, the teachers' openness towards diverse cultural issues is also indicative of their contingency (as seen in HN stating that she is more than happy to argue with students disagreeing with her), in that teachers view the learning process as dynamic and unpredictable, and are perceptive towards external and unplanned learning materials which may enrich the learning experience (Baynham, 2006).

DISCUSSION

In this study, we elaborated on categories and themes gleaned from non-local teachers' discourse regarding their contextualization of intercultural education. From a methodological point of view, the issue of truth may be questioned since data was in the form of discourse, collected through semi-structured interviews. In the study of discourse, which includes narratives or instantaneous discourse, truth is a dynamic concept as it is mediated and constructed socially. Though we relied only on teachers' discourse data, we believe that we were able to glean representatives of the truths. What is revealed through discourse analysis are deeper insights of the self, which may not be accessible through other research means (see Canagarajah, 2012). This echoes what Goodson (1991) posits, whereby studies on teachers have generally focused only on teaching practices, but ignored the teachers' voice. This results in the lack of understanding of elements internal to the teachers, and the misguided assumption that external behaviours (e.g. teachers' actual teaching) are valid representations of teacher epistemology.

From a pedagogical point of view, a general observation made is the differing levels of 'intercultural' implementation. The differences are due to tensions from different circumstantial constraints such as employers' expectations, syllabus used, cultural system of the local setting, and students' language proficiency. These are also reflected in other studies (e.g. Sercu, 2006; Bayyurt, 2006; Luk, 2012). Of these tensions, constraints which may be significant for the integration and subsequent contextualization of intercultural lessons in a foreign setting could be the local cultural system and students' English language proficiency. Language, according to ICC scholars, is supposed to be a conduit for critical cultural discussion. Nonetheless, the lack of proficiency may impede such efforts (see Alptekin, 2002; Luk, 2012). Moreover, as seen in our study, strong cultural identity may have also affected how certain social or cultural issues are viewed. For instance, the concept of 'Thainess' promotes the idea of respect. In this regard, there are certain social topics, which, if discussed, would be seen as disrespectful. An example may be ND who indicated that they are 'not allowed' to bring in aspects of the local culture. This may possibly lead some teachers to believe that they are not suitable to teach culture, subsequently diminishing the value of culture in the English classroom, as seen in the examples of TJ and BW. Another effect of 'Thainess' could be the scarce transformative experiences that can be introduced in the classrooms, as the normative view of teachers is as an authoritative figure (Baker, 2008). Having this view minimizes the space where teachers may enact agentic actions for both teachers and students, resulting in a lack in interactive-type activities, or those that are contingent in nature. Furthermore, the strong grounding in the local culture may call into question the meaning of international education. On one hand, an international school promotes itself as through its use of foreign curriculum and resources, but on the other hand, it also needs to negotiate with pressures from contextual circumstances. This conflict was more evident in the bilingual schools with the EPs, where the participants reported lower English language proficiency, and were accustomed to traditional language learning approaches.

Another tension worth noting lies within the participants themselves. While all of the participants saw the relevance of building cultural knowledge, only a few contextualized cultural lessons to entail some form of transformation. The creation of such a transformative space is unique to intercultural education, which is 'by nature wide-ranging, comparativist and international.' (Coulby, 2006, p. 255). What is interesting though, is that teachers who had shown an interest in 'transforming' were from international schools. Perhaps within such a setting, teacher agency is supported by the liberty granted to teachers to shape their pedagogical content and approaches based on classroom needs. There is also a more immediate necessity for intercultural competence due to its diverse student body. The agency enacted to ensure the relevance of the English classroom (regardless of whether it integrated culture for intercultural goals) demonstrated, to a certain extent, teacher professionalism. For some of the participants, their professionalism was shaped by their own personal agenda

(personal beliefs), while others relied on their teaching parameters (employers' expectations or curriculum content). Though having a personal agenda may be lauded as exercising agency, a completely liberal and personalized approach in reasoning the value of a pedagogical content exacerbates the lack of consensus for educational objectives. On the contrary, teaching only based on curriculum materials may result in a mismatch between learning objectives or approaches with the local circumstances. A way to address this issue may be for teachers, supervisors, and the school to deliberate. This was proposed by Deardorff (2006), who recommended that intercultural objectives be decided by school personnel themselves. This will perhaps clarify intercultural development expectations for different levels of education, especially since intercultural education may involve issues that are 'relativistic, contextualized, politically valorized and de-centred.' (Coulby, 2006, p. 255). To capture this, future studies should consider an ethnographic approach where teaching practices are observed and perspectives of pertinent social entities (e.g. students, school managers) are accounted for.

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APPENDIX 1

1. What is culture?
2. What is your definition of culture? What is in a 'culture'?
3. How do you teach culture (in response to the previous questions)?
4. How do you see yourself when you teach culture? Do you see yourself as having the same role when teaching English? Explain.
5. Who or what influences you to teach culture?
6. When teaching culture, whose culture would you teach?
7. Would you teach your own culture? Why?
8. Do you personalize the cultures that you teach? Why?
9. Do you include cultures of other native/non-native speaking countries? Why?
10. Do you think it's necessary to be inclusive of a variety of culture, or do you think otherwise? Why?
11. Do you see yourself as being a part of cultures you know of, even though you may not belong to them? Why?
12. Do you value the local culture in your teaching? Why?
13. Do you teach your students how to communicate between cultures? Why and how?
14. Do you ever discuss teaching approaches for culture with your colleagues? Why?
15. Do you share concerns or tips about your teaching of culture? Why?

No	Teacher	Treatment of Cultural Lessons			Cultural Focus		Source(s) for Cultural Lessons		Reasons for Integrating Culture	
		Body of Knowledge (Dress, food, customs, behaviors, ethics, etc)	+Platform for Learning Language	++Platform for reasoning of cultural systems (Transformative experiences)	Foreign	Foreign + Local (Thai)	Course materials (foreign; imported curriculum)	+Outside materials of personal experiences (both student and teacher)	Being Knowledgeable (similarities and differences, etc)	+Being transformed
1.	BW		✓			✓			✓	
2.	CT	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	
3.	CL	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	
4.	MM	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	
5.	RM	✓			✓		✓		✓	
6.	ND	✓			✓		✓		✓	
7.	RT	✓						✓	✓	
8.	PH		✓			✓		✓	✓	
9.	TJ		✓			✓		✓	✓	
10.	ST		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
11.	HN			✓		✓		✓		✓
12.	TR			✓		✓		✓		✓
13.	JN			✓		✓		✓		✓
14.	LN			✓		✓		✓		✓
15.	MQ			✓		✓		✓		✓