

*Uncovering A Cultural Black Box: A Case Study of a Classroom Discourse of a  
Regional Award-Winning Thai Social Sciences Teacher in a Topic Of Culture*

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Abstract

Cultural understanding and its knowledge is an integral facet in education. Nevertheless, the transmission of cultural related issues and knowledge in educational contexts, as with other subject knowledge or skills, is influenced by the cultural perspectives held by a teacher. To understand a teacher's perspectivization of culture, an understanding of beliefs and practices need to be accounted for. This study examined a Thai social sciences teacher's epistemological beliefs about culture through the teacher's teaching practices and linguistic behavior. The data was collected from a regional award-winning social sciences teacher teaching at a school in central Thailand (outside of Bangkok). The data included a one-hour social sciences class focusing on culture, followed by an interview about the background of the participant. The data was prepared and analyzed in two folds, aiming for in-depth information of (1) classroom practices and (2) linguistic behaviors. The theoretical framework used is classroom discourse analysis, which includes descriptions of types of questions used by teachers and the questions' stance markers in Thai such as certainty adverbs, adjectives, and modals. Classroom practices and stance markers were also analyzed and interpreted to profile epistemological beliefs relating to feelings, attitudes, and judgments of the participant about culture. An in-depth examination of practices and beliefs, which provides teachers' psychological insights and their classroom practices, could serve as a benchmark to better inform educational policy-makers regarding current cultural issues prevalent in this nation. This is vital in improving cultural pedagogy, promoting intercultural dialogue, as well as in achieving the nation's aspirations to be an active member of the globalized world.

### **Culture and epistemology in the context of education**

Education has been a topic of interest among a broad spectrum of people: policy-makers, scholars, teachers and even students themselves. Their concern primarily revolves around the concrete aspects of education such as textbooks, electronic tools, testing and assessment systems. Less attention has been paid to what actually happens in classrooms, or what is said to students. Yet, the learning process occurs primarily through the transaction of knowledge or information, which is then internalized. To investigate the state of classroom learning environment, one may need to examine how knowledge is dealt with or how teachers and students interact with the knowledge. This could later on reflect the structure of knowledge being constructed or transmitted in classrooms.

Knowledge is abstract, and to be able to systematically investigate it, epistemology -- how an individual “construes” the nature and the origin of knowledge (Perry, 1970) -- may “decode” this complex notion. Principally when educational researchers focus on epistemology, they view it as a system of beliefs one person holds which includes origin, nature, sources and justification of knowledge (Belanky et al., 1986; Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; and Schommer-Aikins, 2002). Beliefs or the epistemology of knowledge have been emphasized in many educational studies, but less on how epistemology of knowledge is constructed, which could be vital to students. Its effect mentioned by Hammer and Elby (2002) is that epistemology could influence students’ knowledge, reasoning and learning strategies while it could affect teachers’ behavior of instruction in classrooms.

Culture has been a fuzzy concept which could be simplistic yet extremely complex. It could range from tangible artifacts to social interaction, thoughts or systems of beliefs and values. Focuses of culture vary. For instance, Parson (1949) and Useem and Useem (1963) emphasized that culture is patterns of behavior and products human inherited within one community. However, others have more integrative picture of culture as its both tangible and intangible elements are interconnected. Also, culture can be examined specifically as a value system (Hofstede, 1984; and House et al., 2004), or knowledge of language and communication (Grice, 1975; Leech 1983; and Brown & Levinson, 1987). In linguistics, culture has been perceived in multiple facets. For example, studying social interaction could explain the cultural phenomena at both macro and micro levels (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Goffman, 1967; and Gumperz, 1982). Moreover, to understand culture, one also needs to consider about approaches of studying culture. Etic approaches view culture from an outsider's perspective. This approach allows one to formulate universal categories and dimensions whilst comparing them, with the aim to understand culture better. On the other hand, emic approaches take the perspectives of people in the society under investigation. Thus, the patterns found in each culture in emic approaches do not tend to be comparable (Berry, 1969). This study leans towards culture as a product of social interaction, particularly along the continuum of the notion of high culture and daily-life cultural behaviors. Consequently, this culture could reflect embedded beliefs and values within a particular given culture in a community with the emic viewpoint as it does not aim at making a comparison nor creating a universal pattern. In this study, the researchers are also participants in the macro context of culture.

Within the parameters of this research, Thailand, along with other Southeast Asian nations, are actively preparing its citizens to usher in ASEAN 2015. With the

objectives of constructing ASEAN-ness among Southeast Asian member countries, and a critical awareness of cultural differences prevalent in other ASEAN nation members, the issues of culture have been brought up countless times. For Thailand, Thai social sciences teachers, who mainly play the role of constructing or transmitting knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about Thailand and other countries' cultures, reported to employ constructivist approaches (Chongdarakul, 2003) mandated by The National Education Act (Office of the National Education Commission, 1999) to appreciate Thai culture while embracing other cultures. Hence, social sciences teachers are the ones who can provide realistic and reliable insights of information to investigate the notion of culture. Moreover, these teachers will shed light on whether the Thai education about culture promotes openness, acceptance of diversity and differences or tolerance towards others which are vital to modern days' real world contexts.

Social sciences teachers' classroom discourse, as well as their classes, can reveal epistemic information about the local culture. Specifically, linguistic practices in the classroom may be scrutinized to study abstract notions like knowledge, culture, or beliefs of the teachers. Through discourse, teachers and students would negotiate or discuss ideas, pose questions and react. How vital these talks can be in learning is supported by Vykotsy in 1978, where he states, "All the higher mental functions originate as actual relation between people (p.57)." In other words, the thought processes of an individual begins through social interactions before it is individually internalized. As a result, the thinking can be manifested differently through the same process. However, the impact of discourse could correlate with students' learning (Mercer, 2010).

### **Ethnography of communication**

A smaller discourse community like a classroom could reflect its own systems of values, beliefs and social practices. The way each classroom discourse represent itself involves ideologies associated with its the subject, micro community and macro socio-cultural contexts. In each community, language as socialization is used to negotiate, construct and transform knowledge, identity(ies) and difference(s). Ethnographers of communication are interested in micro and macro levels of analyses to examine patterns and functions of linguistic events partaken and defined by the members of a community. Macro analyses focus on the overall structure of the communities such as the social structure, the economy, or relevant ideologies whereas the micro studies would seek to make sense of small linguistic and non-verbal units such as speech acts (turn-taking, questioning and repair), code-switching, pronoun usage, silence and grammatical particles (Duff, 2002).

Through language use, we intend to examine epistemological beliefs of teachers in action. Since a classroom involves many practices of both teachers and students, conducting a study on every aspect of it seems impossible. Therefore, language use or classroom discourse of teachers become central to this research. In Saussurian terms, language could reflect collective worldviews of human beings which result from social interactions and how they "articulate" their world (Harris, 1988). This will provide insights on how teachers construct or transmit beliefs and worldviews through their socialization. Thus, this epistemological construction of beliefs of teachers may also reveal social meaning of "culture" in the Thai context.

### The role of questions and questioning in classroom discourse

It is not always the case that questions posed in classroom discourse perform as questions per se. There seems to be various views on the functions of teachers' questions in classrooms. Teachers may employ questions for several aims such as to check students' pre-existing knowledge, to elicit information from students or even to exert power in classroom discourse (Creider, 2009). However, Chaudron (1988) pointed out that teachers may ask questions to engage students, promote more interaction or evaluate students' progress.

To further elaborate this, Mehan (1979) clearly pointed out a significant difference between questions that teachers use to ask students inside and outside classrooms. The ones inside the classroom are typically followed by evaluations rather than acknowledgement made by teachers. The questions in classrooms tend to correspond with the role of teachers to test whether the knowledge held by the students match predetermined or pre-established domains. In this case, those questions would fall into the category of "known information questions" or "elicitations" In his study, there were two main functions of know information questions: to display students' knowledge and to search for correct answer. This also puts teachers in the expert role in classroom and seems to take change of interaction occurred (Hall & Walsh, 2002). According to Long and Sato (1983) the kinds of questions in a second language classroom were differentiated by whether teachers already know the answers or not: referential questions which are more open-ended, and not the known information questions, and display questions which are similar to known information questions.

A large number of classroom discourse analysis have been focused on IRF (Initial-Response-Feedback or Follow-Up) structures of interaction between teachers and students in classroom which was presented by Sinclair and Coulthard in 1975. Later in 1979, Mehan suggested similar patterns of Initial-Response-Evaluation in classrooms. These two sequence patterns are different as Sinclair and Coulthard viewed teachers' responses to students as feedback whereas Mehan thought of it as an evaluation to the response. Therefore, the role of teachers in the IRE cycles seemed to be the experts with more control of the classroom (Hall & Walsh, 2002).

The cycles of IRE (Mehan 1979) include the initiation of teachers which can be asking closed or open questions to test or evaluate students' pre-existing knowledge or previously transmitted information (I). Then students would provide brief answers (R), and afterwards teachers would evaluate them by giving compliments in the case of correct answers or identifying errors or even reproaches (E). Nevertheless, the IRF (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) cycles allow more functions for the third move such as accepting, acknowledging, answering or evaluating students' responses. According to the IRF model, the exchanges initiated by teachers can be formed to elicit and inform some information from students or to direct what is ongoing in classrooms. Thus, in this research, the IRF model was selected as the primary tool to analyze the data to provide overall description of classroom interaction, and later on to portray how questions are used in classrooms.

### Stance and epistemology

Epistemology in education is mainly studied in two main streams (Fujiwara & Phillips, 2006). First, the studies of epistemology as a means to describe a person's epistemological progress. These studies are often longitudinal and concerned with

individuals' developmental model (Magolda; 1992, King & Kitchener, 1994; and Kuhn, 1999; Pintrich, 2002). Also, Schommer (1990) and Schommer-Aikins (2002) are concerned more about the structure of the beliefs themselves in order to unveil its characteristics and nature. According to Schomer (1990), there are five factors construing epistemic beliefs of a person which are (1) structure of knowledge, (2) certainty of knowledge, (3) sources of knowledge, (4) control of knowledge acquisition, and (5) the speed of acquisition.

How teachers construct their questions could also help unveil their epistemological beliefs about culture. Linguistically, stance could refer to attitudes, evaluations and positionings people use in their interaction with the regard of context and whom they are talking to. Kiesling (2009) differentiated between epistemic stance which concerns how a person expresses their relationship to their talk or how certain he/she is of a claim or an assertion, and attitudinal stance which relates to how a person expresses their relation to their interlocutors. According to Patpong (2006), to negotiate attitudes in Thai language, one can use several linguistic devices such as attitudinal particles to make a confirmation, an assertion, an inquiry or even a request. These particles are similar to what Iwasaki and Horie (2005) categorize as information oriented-particles such as (*lâ, rěr, sì, máng, etc.*). Also, there are epistemic modal auxiliaries which could convey certainty such as *dtông (must), nâa (should or could), kuan (should), or àat (probably)*.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine how a selected teacher constructs knowledge and beliefs or worldviews about culture in classroom through questions and its linguistic devices. The questions guiding this study are:

1. How does the teacher employ questions in classroom to construct or transmit knowledge?
2. What is the nature of epistemology embedded in linguistic behavior of the classroom discourse?

### **Data Collection**

The primary data of this study is a single case study of one session of classroom observation and a series of informal interviews with the teacher before and after the class. The researchers and the participant negotiated the date for the observation in advance. The participant was informed about the purpose of the research. All permission to do research in this school was granted prior to the actual observation day. The access to the class was authorized by the educational supervisor of the school, the principal and the selected teacher. The students and the teacher were aware of the observation in advance.

The observation was semi-structured where the researchers designed a guideline for the observation including classroom layout, lesson structure, material used (including what the participant wrote on the board), in-class activities and homework assignments. The class was audio-recorded.

### **The school**

The school site is located in one of the provinces in central Thailand which locates approximately 300 kilometers from Bangkok. It has been operating for 40 years under the Office of Basic Education Commission, Ministry of Education providing

education catering to pre-school, elementary, primary and secondary levels. Each grade has only one group of students with the number ranging from 9-22. The average number of students per class was 17. There were 175 students at the time of the research being conducted. The school won an award from the government for the best practice of integrating moral studies into classroom learning targeting the cooperation between schools, temples and households in their sub-district area in students' learning.

#### The participant

The selected teacher is a female with a background in education specializing in teaching social sciences. She has more than 30 years of experience and received excellent teaching and best practice awards at local and regional levels. Among these, her most recent award was the runner-up for the best educator (OBEC or Office of The Basic Education Commission Awards) of social sciences, religion and culture academic group for the secondary level. Many of her awards received were also about her attempt in promoting moral standards, ethics and sustainable economy among her students.

In her earlier days as a teacher, she began teaching all subjects for one class at primary levels. Later on she has been responsible for subjects such as social science and Thai language. In this school, she is responsible for 8<sup>th</sup> grade social science class and 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades Thai language classes.

#### The class

The class was an 8<sup>th</sup> grade class which was located on the first floor of the school building. There were 22 students in this class, and they were in their second semester. Most students have known each other for quite some time since they were in the same primary school. The bookshelves contained textbooks used for different subjects. While we arrived there, all textbooks were already distributed. We were seated at the back of the class.

The class consisted of 13 boys and 9 girls. All were Thai nationals. Since the students were not the principal focus of the data analysis, the description provided is only to portray the classroom setting. The students were seated in rectangular tables. There were 3-6 students per one table. Mostly each table would have students from the same gender.

#### The lesson

During the time of the visit, this province was about to organize a local celebration for a renown king of Thailand from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This local celebration is held every year and has been organized since 1979 in the middle of February. Therefore, some students and teachers were wearing traditional outfits in order to represent their participation in the tradition which is celebrated throughout the province. Also, wearing traditional Thai costumes seem to be the typical practice of many educational institutions in this province. The teacher was using this occasion as a thematic basis to construct the content of her class. Also, due to the absence of the Thai teacher who was responsible for Thai language class, she had to provide a Thai language lesson which was also planned in accordance with the theme mentioned. The class lasted 70 minutes.

Her lesson is outlined as follows:

- Greetings
- Revision of the previous lesson (regional Thai rituals)
- Introduction of the key content (the local event) of the current lesson (Excerpt 1)
- Importance of the event (Excerpt 2)
- Class activity: handouts for group study about the event
- Students' presentations about the event
- Suggestion for desired practices of students for the event
- (Thai language) Dictation about words used in the handouts
- Class conclusion and assignment details given

The two excerpts were selected to portray how questions were used to form beliefs about culture in this classroom. The first excerpt was taken at the beginning of her class where she began introducing the theme of the lesson to her students. The second excerpt was the episode when the teacher provided justification and how students should participate in this festival. These were the parts where questions were frequently and differently used.

### **Data analysis and discussion**

All data was translated into English for the purpose of data presentation only. The actual analysis was conducted as the basis of Thai which was the data's original language and the researchers' first language. The transcript's convention can be found in the appendix A.

To portray the overall interaction between the teacher and her students, exchanges were analyzed based on the IRF model. This will provide the future guideline for more in-depth analysis of the questions used by the teacher. The first number is the number of excerpt and the number after the colon suggests the turn. For example, 1:1 means the excerpt 1 and the first turn in this excerpt. The exchanges of the excerpt 1 are shown in the table below. Note that exchanges were not identified by turns because there were some turns (1:1, 1:2, 1:3, and 1:8) which were long and included both initiation and feedback.

This study includes qualitative analysis with discourse analysis methods relying on detailed and close analysis of linguistic elements in carefully-transcribed episodes of classroom talk. The data in each episode will be described and interpreted to portray each one in extensive details. Firstly, exchanges of turns or utterances in each episode will be identified by IRF method based on Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). Then overall sequencing of questions used would be described and followed by the linguistic construction of questions such as grammatical structure, modality and information-oriented particles used. Finally, all linguistic evidence would be means to interpret the beliefs being constructed within each episode.

Excerpt 1: Introducing the King's Day

Initiation	Reply	Feedback
1:1 T: Alright, today I wanna know why <i>students</i> are dressed up differently. You wear colorful clothes like this, why?	Students <laughing>	
1:1 T: [pointing to a student] Wear the shirt properly please.	Students <laughing> [The student adjusted the shirt.]	1:2 T: I thought a gangster was sitting in my class. Embarrassing. It's ok to wear a torn out shirt. We can always fix.
1:2 T: Why are you, <i>young kids</i> dressed up in blue, green, pink?	S1: Thai kids. S2: (province name) kids must wear Thai traditional outfits.	1:3 T: (province name) kids must wear Thai traditional outfits.
1:3 T: How about those who do not wear this? It means...?	S1: Kids without...without	
1:4 T: Why are you, <i>young kids</i> wearing traditional outfits, why <i>kids</i> ?	S1: Because I...It's the day. It's...	
1:5 T: What is the day?	<Silence>	1:6 T: It's that day.
1:7 T: What is the day? What is it?	S1: Day Day Day... Our culture...	1:8 T: Ah you still can't answer this at all.
1:8 T: Why are you, <i>young kids</i> all dressing up in Thai local costumes? Why? Because of what reason, <i>kids</i> ?	Students: Because...	
1:9 T: Because it is what day?	S1: It's (The King's name)'s day	
1:10 T: Who can answer what day is it?	Students: (The King's name)'s day	1:11 T: Ah the majority got the right answer.

Note: young kids = nŏo and kids = lôok

Sequencing of questions

In excerpt 1, the exchanges were repetitive as seen in elicitation sequences used by teachers. These sequences followed the basic elicitation sequences identified in both Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and Mehan (1979). The majority of the questions used were wh-questions: “why” and “what” suggested the open-ended nature of questions which functioned more like display questions as seen in turns 1:8 and 1:11, but the teacher finally evaluated the students' responses (Turn 1:8 was the bipolarized negative evaluation, and turn 1:11 was the positive evaluation).

According to Long and Sato (1983), closed or display questions tend to be a prompt for short or one specific answer already known to teachers, while open or referential questions are more geared towards open discussion where teachers genuinely look for the answers. There are two issues here: forms and functions of questions. The participant employed linguistic forms “why” which reflected openness in her questions, yet when analyzing her feedback these questions were formulated to gain a short and specific answer. “Why are you wearing colorful clothes?” seemed to be open for discussion, but in this particular context, where the teacher may have asked the students in advance to put these outfits on, there could be only one answer. Thus, these “why” questions are display questions with the purpose to introduce the theme of this lesson as a single correct response to the question.

Looking closely at the feedback given by the teacher, there were several occasions that there were none. The teacher simply moved on to make more elicitation questions. The absence of feedback could be because of the nature of Thai culture where negative comments were not normally provided directly as to not disrupt the harmony of the speech community. The context where the teacher insisted in asking similar questions repeatedly was sufficient to infer that the students' response was not yet correct. The teacher had not given any feedback until turn 1:8 where she delivered the negative feedback.

The lack of feedback at the beginning of the episode and the clear-cut negative or positive feedback revealed that the knowledge or information of this class was transmitted by the teacher. The students simply played a role of a passive participant in this classroom community. The teacher determined if the response was correct or incorrect. This phenomenon could imply that the teacher views knowledge as a fixated domain. The bipolar feedback reflected the nature of static viewpoint on knowledge as culture appeared in this classroom discourse could either be right or wrong.

The linguistic structure of questions gradually changed throughout the excerpt as the teacher attempted to provide hint and at the same time engaged students to respond. The evidence of engagement was in turn 1:1 where the teacher used “I wonder why...” This suggested an open nature of the actual question to follow, and also the gradient of this question. It seemed as if in practice, the participant welcomed the engagement of students, but the response had to be “correct”, as seen in other turns with why-question words later on.

Nevertheless, the questions which appeared in other turns later did not show lack of certainty. Another type of question found in this excerpt is the embedded question-word. The question-word would appear at the beginning or the end such as turn 1:10 “who can answer what day is it?” This was used when the teacher asked questions to target a specific single answer. Note that the sequence of questions was from seemingly open and less certain to more specific and certain (I wonder why questions to who can answer what day is it) The last question used in this excerpt (turn 1:10) targeted only one answer clearly, the festival.

#### The Why Effect

The teacher used why extensively in this episode to elicit the answer, which was the reason why the students wore traditional outfits and not their usual school uniforms.

Therefore, the majority of questions used by the teacher were display or known information questions. However, it can be inferred that the information about the school uniform was ellipited as it was mutually understood or it was the teacher's instruction to wear the traditional clothes.

Throughout this excerpt "why" was used repeatedly. "Why" or *tam-mai* can be considered an adverbial interrogative according to Iwasaki and Ingkapirom (2009). Why in Thai can appear either at the beginning or the end of a sentence; however, the final position tend to be common. For this particular episode, the teacher used far more "why" at sentence-initial positions (turns 1:2, 1:4 and 1:8) than final why ones (turn 1:1). The first two sentence-initial why questions were more general to more specific questions (turns 1:1 and 1:2). The teacher asked why the students wear colorful shirts, then she repeated the question again by adding the specific colors. By doing so, the teacher created a clearer scope of her target answer.

Once the students failed to provide the answer, she repeated the student's answer and adjusted her "why" question to start with the negative information targeting "those who do not wear this" in turn 1:3, and this was followed by the clause "which means..." Even though it could be answered in multiple ways, this unfinished-declarative-sentence question suggested limited answers especially when it was marked with the negative information about the students. This could also be interpreted as a borderline reproach to those students who failed to wear the shirts followed by a command to give one single specific answer.

Another variation of "why" questions used in this episode started with a negative feedback when the students could not answer, and when there was a series of initial-why questions followed by "because of what?" This appeared in turn 1:8. The change from why to what could suggest the tendency to move from open-ended nature of questions to more specific target answer type of questions. Nevertheless, this series of questions was still regarded as display or known information question because the teacher's negative and positive evaluations of the answer were explicit in turns 1:8 and 1:11.

### Excerpt 2: What should you be proud of?

Initiation	Response	Feedback
	S: Reminiscing	
		2:1 T: Ah it was well-answered, this group got a good answer.
2:1 T: We should reminisce about?	Students: (The King's name)	
		2:2 T: The greatest king who came to live in our province.
2:2 T: So we as a (the province's name), how should we feel about the festival that other people in other provinces don't have? How do you feel, <i>kids</i> that you have this festival (name of the festival)?	Students: Good.	
2:3 T: How do you feel, <i>kids</i> , to make it proper?	S: Impressed	
2:4 T: Impressed about what?	S1: His prestige, the dressing up in Thai outfits	2:5 T: The dressing up in Thai outfits, something other provinces don't have
	S2: Proud	
2:6 T: Proud that...?	S2: We have a place to enjoy and to dress up in Thai outfits.	2:7 T: To be able to wear Thai outfits.

In this excerpt, the participant asked the students about their feeling about the festival and its significance to the locals. She also provided guidelines of proper practices for students. There were mainly two types of questions focusing on the linguistic forms: the unfinished-declarative- sentence questions (turns 2:1, 2:4 and 2:6) and the how-questions (turns 2:2 and 2:3).

The incomplete sentence as question in turn 2:1 suggested a specific frame of answer. This can be another display question since the feedback of the teacher to the students' answer was a repetition of students' response with extra information provided. Turns 2:4 and 2:6 also showed the similar pattern which was a cognitive verb "to reminisce" and affective adjectives "impressed" and "proud." This combination is interesting as these verbs and adjectives relate to cognition process, yet the teacher chose to create a rather limited scope for questions since the actual question words (who and what) were omitted. The correct responses of these questions were repeated by the teacher implying that they were correct.

Then in the turn 2:2, how-questions appeared in sequences. First, the teacher began by assuming a role of a local of this particular province before asking the actual question. The first how-question in this turn was structured with a "we" pronoun followed by an

adjective clause providing a shell word of the festival in the question. Then the question was repeated again with the change in the pronoun from “we” to “kids” and followed by the specific name of the festival. It was obvious that the two how-questions were parallel in structure, but there was difference in both the pronoun and the content words. This could suggest that first, the teacher assigned a role for students to respond accordingly, and then the actual question came later with specific information given as a clear command for her target answer.

#### The lack of modality and summary

In summary, the teacher barely used linguistic devices to increase or decrease the level of certainty in her questions. The majority of verbs appeared in her questions were not equipped with any modality. There was a scarcity in any linguistic boosters for any questions in this episode as well, except for the use of the adverb “at all” in her negative feedback to evaluate students' response in turn 1:8. Nevertheless, the feedback seems to be a reproach as she used the modal “can” and verb “to answer” with the adverb “at all” to focus on the inability to answer her question of the students rather than a clear judgement of the right or wrong answer. This when compared to her positive evaluation “the majority got the right answer.” in turn 1:11 could still reflect her view on the “culture” she was representing as a static bipolarized notion with only possibilities of a right or wrong answer. Similarly, in Excerpt 2, there were neither modal auxiliaries nor any information-oriented or attitudinal particles which suggested any gradient of certainty visible. Even though the central issue in the second excerpt was feelings and emotions, the teacher was not expressing any clear gradient. This revealed another static view on the culture which was about the local festival and how one should feel about it.

Excerpt 1 reveals how the teacher used questions to structure the introduction of her key content. These questions were open-ended and display questions where the teacher knew or expected certain specific answer from students. Even though the students were occasionally encouraged by the teacher to respond, there seemed to be limitation in terms of the scope of answers that students should give, as seen in the teacher's feedbacks. In Excerpt 2, students were asked with display questions and open-ended question words like how, yet again there was a clear limitation in students' answer when analyzing the feedback she gave to students. Evidently, with this limitation and the lack of any gradient of stance in both excerpts, the teacher appears to have inflexible beliefs on the issue she was about to present to her class. Hence, since her beliefs about the cultural topic discussed in class was fixed, she assumed the role of a knowledge transmitter in these episodes.

#### **Conclusion**

It is crucial that teachers should be aware of how they deliver or construct knowledge in their classroom. Through extensive analyses, the short excerpts selected suggest that the teacher uses questions to structure and transmit cultural information, and the students' response was considered by teacher as being right or wrong. The linguistic evidence also reflects the beliefs that the teacher hold about the local culture she was discussing in her class. This phenomenon reveals a rigid view on the culture, as suggested in the questions' structure and linguistic devices.

The understanding of what a teacher constitutes, based on the recommendation put

forward by Thailand's National Act, is that they are positivist pedagogic agents responsible for transmitting a body of cultural knowledge which is factual and restricted, instead of pluralistic or flexible. Another valuable issue to point out is that this case study was conducted in an awards-winning teacher. This inevitably reveals the values and expectation held by the educational policy-makers with regards to what makes a “good” social sciences teacher. Considering all these together, it appears that the teaching of culture takes a very conservative and traditional approach. This may be a result of cultural values pertinent to the immediate context, but a critical question to raise is whether or not this approach will complement Thailand's efforts to prepare for the ASEAN community. More of research of this nature will reveal that a comprehensive reform may be due for social sciences pedagogy. Furthermore, the findings could suggest teachers, teachers' trainers, educational institutions and policy-makers to pause and ponder about the significance of what really goes on in classrooms, and whether the impact of this kind of teaching yield an efficient outcome on the behalf of students, especially when they face the outside world on their own.

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## Appendix A

### Transcription Symbols

<i>T</i>	Teacher
<i>S(number)</i>	One student
<i>Students</i>	The whole class
<i>italics</i>	The translated words in Thai without any equivalence words in English
( )	The information intentionally omitted to ensure the anonymity of the source of data
< >	Non-verbal cues
[ ]	Gestures in classroom added by the researcher according to the observation note
...	pause

