Perception and Intercultural Communication between Thai Students and ASEAN People

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Abstract

The research is aimed to explore Thai students' communication pattern with ASEAN people, media and channel used, and their communication context, to study Thai students' perception, ethnic attitude towards other ASEAN people, and factors affecting their perception and ethnic attitude, to investigate their intercultural communication problems with other ASEAN people, and to search for guidelines towards effective intercultural communication. Survey questionnaires were collected from 1,200 Thai students, together with interviews with 4 sample groups: Thai students, Thai teachers responsible for ASEAN studies or center, ASEAN teachers, scholars and professionals in communication, media, and culture. The results show 33.8% of Thai students have ASEAN friends, but mostly communicate with them 1-2 times/year through online the most. While Thai students are found to have more "positive" than "negative" attitude towards other ASEAN people (45.00%), they have more negative attitude towards neighboring ASEAN countries than others, influenced by many factors, especially news and past history. Also, it is found that Thai students' level of negative ethnic attitude correlates statistically with "type of school", "frequency and kind of media exposure", "level of English proficiency", and "variety of their ASEAN friends' nationality", while "location of school" is the only variable which is found to have statistically significant relationship with attitudinal direction (+ or -). Roles of mass and personal media, especially face-to-face and direct communication, including language learning are also found impactful from in-depth interview.

Keywords: intercultural communication, instructional communication, perception, ethnic attitude, ASEAN

1. Introduction

With the increasing pressures and opportunities of globalization, the incorporation of international networking alliances has become essential in all circles: politic, economic, social, etc., including educational, which requires both intercultural communication competence (ICC) and multicultural communication competence (MCC). According to Gudykunst and Kim (2003), such competence calls for three domains of skill: cognitive, affective, and behavioral, which can lead a person to be so-called, "universal man", "cosmopolitan man", "intercultural man", etc. However, if sustainable development is needed, early cultivation is very important and thus educational institutions will play a great role.

In Thailand, all sectors have prepared possible changes ahead of the move to become an Asean Economic Community (AEC) in 2015. This includes schools. To enable students to be ready to face cultural diversity effectively in learning context, the Ministry of Education set up nationwide policies and programs helping students to possess essential intercultural communication competence and skill (Kim, 1991) : a) *knowledge* or to learn about other countries' culture, especially ASEAN, in all aspects as well as languages b*) affective* or to have good attitude, accept and respect cultural differences, and c) *behavioral* or to adjust themselves to express their verbal and nonverbal communication appropriately under two major programs. The first program entitled, "Spirit of ASEAN" divides Thai schools into "sister schools" and "buffer schools" focusing on ASEAN knowledge, and the second one is "Education Hub" program divided into "international program" (English) and "multi-language or foreign languages, including ASEAN languages" program. (The Ministry of Education, 2010)

While most schools under abovementioned programs give priority to academic and cultural learning and experience through all kinds of activities, such as exhibitions, connecting classrooms, cultural or academic exchange programs, field trips, etc., a number of previous articles and research conducted in Thailand tried to explore the existing relationship between Thai and other ASEAN people and to investigate key factors affecting their relationships. One of the remarkable findings and observation gained from these studies was that *psycho-cultural*

influence, particularly stereotype, prejudice, and ethnocentrism towards other ASEAN people and countries caused communication barrier. (i.e. Prachatham, 2011; Taotawin, 2010; Chutintaranond et al, 2009; Oraphan, 2008, Vivatananukul, 2008, etc.). *"Psycho-cultural influence"* is one of the four influences: cultural, socio-cultural, psycho-cultural , and environmental, in the model of interpersonal communication between people of different cultures of Miller and Steinberg (1975), which covers at least two main components: *perception* or ways people in each culture see, organize, and evaluate things around them, and *cultural or ethnic intergroup attitude*, such as stereotype, ethnocentrism, prejudice and bias, etc. On the other hand, according to intercultural communication theories, perception and attitude towards people across cultures can be influenced by a number of factors, such as exposure to mass media, influence from personal media, ethnolinguistic vitality, language learning, language proficiency, etc. Thus, it is questionable if all these psychological barriers are embedded in Thai youth, which factors affect or induce such barriers on Thai youth, and how we can cultivate students to have positive and supportive attitude leading to effective communication since early education. This research is, therefore, aimed to a) explore Thai students' communication pattern with ASEAN people, media and channel used, and their communication context, b) to study Thai students' perception and ethnic attitude towards other ASEAN people c) to find factors affecting their perception and attitude, d) to investigate their intercultural communication problems with other ASEAN people, and e) to search for guidelines towards effective communication so as to buoy up positive attitude and good relationship between Thai students and other ASEAN people. The results of this study are then expected to be fruitful information for schools and academic institutions to plan their policy and appropriate activities and programs in future.

2. Research Methodology

The study is both quantitative and qualitative. For **quantitative research**, the population are Thai students studying at grade 10-12 or high school under the

program, "Spirit of ASEAN", and "Education Hub" of the Ministry of Education, totaling 82 schools. Sampling is multi-stage. The first stage is stratified sampling by **type of school**: Education Hub, Buffer School, Sister School, ASEAN Focus and Thai-Indonesian Focus, and then by **region or location of the schools :** Bangkok and neighboring provinces, central, northern, northeastern, and southern provinces. The second stage is stratified sampling of Thai students at grade 10, 11, and 12, of the selected schools from the first stage. From the statistics of students in Thailand in 2013, the total population of Thai students at grade 10-12 all through the country are 1,162,558. (Policy and Planning Group, 2014) According to Yamane's sample size of the population over 1,000,000, the samples should not be less than 400 students. However, for this study, the total samples are 1,200 Thai students from all types of schools in every region. Data is collected by self-administered survey questionnaire with check-lists, and ranking scale.

      Qualitative research is conducted by in-depth interview with 4 sample groups: 40 Thai students, 32 Thai teachers responsible for ASEAN studies or center, 25 ASEAN teachers in the selected schools, and 6 scholars and professionals in communication, media, culture, and ASEAN.

      For quantitative analysis of survey questionnaires, besides percentage, mean, and standard deviation, **Chi-square, One-way Anova, and Pearson Correlation** is used to find and test the relationship between Thai students' perception and ethnic attitude and some variables, such as demographic factors, region of school (i.e Bangkok, central, northern, southern, northeastern part of Thailand), location of school (near or neighboring any ASEAN country), kind of school (sister, buffer, or education hub), number of ASEAN friends, language learning, language competence (English and ASEAN language), travel and cultural experience, and media exposure (kind and amount of media exposed)

3. Research Findings

      Objective 1: Communication pattern, media/channels used, and context of communication between Thai students and other ASEAN people

From survey research, it is found that 33.8% of Thai students have ASEAN friends, who are Burmese the most (25.2%), Malaysian (21.3%), Laotian (20.00), and Bruneian the least (0.30%). Most Thai students (74.29%) have 1-5 ASEAN friends, 6-10 (16.56%), and more than 15 (5.23%)

- 40.6% of Thai students used to travel or have an educational trip or have a cultural-exchange tour to an ASEAN country. The countries which they used to go the most are Laos (23.8%), Malaysia (19.4%), and Myanmar (17.5%), and the least are the Philippines (0.2%).

- The frequency of communication with ASEAN friends mostly found is 1-2 times/year (45.73%), 1-2 times/week (17.19%), and 3-4 times/year (13.05%). The overall average is at "low" level ($\bar{x}$ = 2.41) The medium used mostly by Thai students to communicate with ASEAN friends is "online networking", especially Facebook, at "moderate" frequency level.($\bar{x}$ = 2.88) (Illustrated in Table 1- 2)

Table 1 exhibits frequency and percentage of Thai students' communication with ASEAN friends through each kind of communication media/ channel

Communication media/ channel	Frequency and Percentage of Communication with ASEAN Friends					
	Almost everyday	1-2 times/week	Once a month	3-4 times/year	1-2 times/year	Total
1. Face-to-face or non-mediated	140	108	44	72	400	764
	11.7	9.0	3.7	6.0	33.3	22.7
2. Phone calls	62	91	62	89	384	688
	5.2	7.6	5.2	7.4	32.0	20.5
3 Line	72	130	72	81	261	616
	6.0	10.8	6.0	6.8	21.8	18.3
4. E-mail	39	85	93	97	296	610
	3.3	7.1	7.8	8.1	24.7	18.1
5. Social network (i.e. Facebook , twitter, etc.)	124	164	100	100	197	685
	10.3	13.7	8.3	8.3	16.4	20.4
Total in average	437	578	371	439	1,538	3,363
	13.0	17.2	11.0	13.1	45.7	100.0

Table 2 exhibits means, standard deviation, frequency level, and ranking of media/channels Thai students use to communicate with their ASEAN friends

Communication Media	Means	S.D.	Frequency Level	Ranking
1. Face-to-face or non-mediated	2.37	1.63	Low	3
2. Phone calls	2.07	1.41	Low	5
3 .Line	2.47	1.49	Low	2
4. E-mail	2.14	1.32	Low	4
5 Social network , i.e. Facebook, Twitter	2.88	1.50	Moderate	1
Total in average	2.41	1.25	Low	

<u>Remark</u> Interpretation of frequency level

Highest	=	4.21 – 5.00
High	=	3.41 – 4.20
Moderate	=	2.61 – 3.40
Low	=	1.81 – 2.60
Lowest	=	1.00 – 1.80

- Purposes of communication with ASEAN friends are "to talk about activities and hobby" (22.2%), "to talk about lessons and assignment" (21.3%), and "to ask about tourism information" (20.2%). Only 1.3% is "to consult about personal matters". 96.6% of Thai students use "English" as a medium language to communicate with ASEAN friends and teachers. (Illustrated in Table 3)

Table 3 exhibits frequency and percentage of topics Thai students communicate
with ASEAN friends

Topics	Frequency	Percentage
Classroom learning / homework	396	21.3
Cultural information exchange	309	16.6
Language teaching	339	18.2
Tourism information	376	20.2
Activities / hobbies	413	22.2
Personal affairs	25	1.3

Besides it is found that Thai students can speak 1-6 foreign languages
(including English and ASEAN language). 37.3% can speak only one foreign
language, 24.4% three languages, and 24.0% two languages. For only ASEAN
language, Thai students can speak "1 language" the most (60.2%), "2 languages"
(32.4%) and "3 languages" (6.6%). The ASEAN languages they can speak the most
are Lao (28.2%), Burmese (15.8%), and Cambodian (11.3%) Besides, Thai students
rate their English proficiency at "moderate" level, namely between 5-7 scores
(61.3%). Cambodian and Lao language proficiency at "moderate" level", and
other ASEAN languages at "low" level (1-4 scores). However, from the interview
with ASEAN teachers, ASEAN teachers perceive Thai students' English proficiency
at "low" level.

From an interview with all samples, the results show that Thai students
have good relationship with ASEAN friends and teachers and communicate to
one another, both in class and outside class, by using all kinds of media, i.e.
personal media, email, lines, mobile phones, and Facebook, including through
all kinds of school and daily activities. Face-to-face interaction is the most
common channel of communication with ASEAN teachers. Moreover, it is found
that informal face-to-face communication, especially during school's activities,
is an effective channel to enhance good relationship between Thai students
and ASEAN teachers.

Objective 2: Perception and ethnic attitude of Thai students towards other ASEAN people

From survey questionnaires, it is found that most Thai students have more "positive" than "negative" attitude towards other ASEAN people (45.00%) while having "both positive and negative" attitude (41.49%) and more "negative" than "positive" attitude (11.61%) respectively. However, they have more negative attitude towards people of neighboring countries than other ASEAN countries, except Malaysia. On the other hand, they have more positive attitude towards people of farer countries, such as Singapore and Brunei. From the interview, it is found that such countries are portrayed and emphasized mostly by mass media on positive "economic and technological dimension"

- Thai students express negative ethnic attitude which obstructs effective intercultural communication at "moderate" level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.29). Among such negative attitude, they express "prejudice" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.42), "ethnocentrism ($\bar{x}$ = 3.32), and "stereotype" ($\bar{x}$ = 3.06) respectively. (Illustrated in Table 4)

Table 4   exhibits means of Thai students' level of overall perception and ethnic attitude towards other ASEAN people and ranking

Perception and Ethnic Attitude	Means	S.D.	Means Level	Ranking
Ethnocentrism	3.32	0.64	Moderate	2
Stereotype	3.06	0.91	Moderate	3
Prejudice	3.42	0.72	High	1
Perception and attitude in average	3.29	0.56	Moderate	

Remark Interpretation of means level

Highest	=	4.2 – 5.00
High	=	3.41 – 4.20
Moderat	=	2.61 – 3.40
Low	=	1.81 – 2.60
Lowest	=	1.00 – 1.80

- Most Thai students express "positive" more than "negative" attitude towards their own country. The positive characteristics of Thai people mentioned the most is "helpful" (30.34%), and "friendly" (29.21), and the most negative is "non-energetic" (22.47%).

- Thai students expose themselves to information and pictures about ASEAN countries and people in general at "moderate" level ($\bar{x}$ = 2.93), especially those portrayed by mass media ($\bar{x}$ = 3.01). Mass media to which they expose the most is "TV news" at "high" level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.56), next are "soap opera/ film" and "textbooks" at "moderate" level : $\bar{x}$ = 3.25, and $\bar{x}$ = 3.23 respectively. For "personal media", they expose at "moderate" level ($\bar{x}$ = 2.89) and "a teacher" is the personal media to which they expose themselves the most at "high" level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.50)

Objective 3: Factors affecting Thai students' perception and ethnic attitude

- From statistical analysis of survey research, the findings can be divided into 2 groups:

Group 1: The relationship between "level of overall ethnic negative attitude" and the following variables :

Organizational variables: type of school, and region (location of school)

Personal variables: sex, religion, parents' occupation, travel experience in ASEAN countries, variety of ASEAN friends' nationality, number of ASEAN friends, numbers of ASEAN languages learned, level of English proficiency, frequency and kind of media exposed to ASEAN Information, kind of communication channel.

In Group 1, it is found that **"type of school", "level of English proficiency", "variety of ASEAN friends' nationality", and "**frequency and kind of media exposure" are variables which have statistically significant relationship with the level of negative ethnic attitude of Thai students towards other ASEAN people, as shown below:

Type of School

The relationship between *type of school* and *the level of negative ethnic attitude* of Thai students towards other ASEAN people is found statistically significant at 0.05 (P = 0.000) (Illustrated in Table 5)

Table 5 exhibits the relationship between type of school and the level of negative ethnic attitude of Thai students towards other ASEAN people

Factors	Variance Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P
Type of school / negative ethnic attitude	intergroup	7.77	6	1.295	4.101	.000*
	intragroup	373.966	1184	.316		
	total	381.737	1190			

* P < 0.05

Level of English Proficiency

The relationship between means of English proficiency scores and means of negative ethnic attitude of Thai students towards other ASEAN people people is found statistically significant at 0.05 (P = 0.008) (Illustrated in Table 6)

Table 6 exhibits the relationship between means of English proficiency scores and means of negative ethnic attitude of Thai students towards other ASEAN people

Factors	Variance Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P
English proficiency scores/	intergroup	3.114	2	1.557	4.893	.008*
negative ethnic attitude	intragroup	365.665	1149	.318		
	total	368.779	1151			

* P < 0.05

Variety of ASEAN Friends' Nationality

The relationship between the numbers of ASEAN friends' nationality Thai students know and the level of negative ethnic attitude towards other ASEAN people is found statistically significant at 0.05 (P = 0.002) (Illustrated in Table 7)

Table 7 exhibits the relationship between the numbers of ASEAN friends' nationality Thai students know and the level of negative ethnic attitude towards other ASEAN people

Factors	Variance Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	P
Variety of ASEAN friends' nationality/ negative ethnic attitude	Intergroup	4.783	3	1.594	5.021	.002*
	Intragroup	376.954	1187	.318		
	Total	381.737	1190			

* P < 0.05

Frequency and Kind of Media Exposure

From Pearson's Coefficient test, it is found that degree of media exposure and the level of negative ethnic attitude of Thai students toward other ASEAN people has a negative correlation at 0.05 statistical significance. (Illustrate in Table 8)

Table 8 exhibits the correlation between degree of media exposure and the level of negative ethnic attitude of Thai students towards other ASEAN people

Kind of Media Exposed	Means	S.D.	Pearson's coefficient	P
Mass media	3.01	0.83	0.134**	.000
Internet	2.94	1.06	0.101**	.001
Personal media	2.89	0.98	076**	.000
Activities	2.75	1.05	0.113**	.000
All kinds of media exposed	3.29	0.56	0.139**	.000

** P < 0.01

Table 9 exhibits the analysis of the relationship between all studied variables and level of negative ethnic attitude of Thai students towards other ASEAN people in group 1.

Table 9 summarizes the relationship between all studied variables and level of negative ethnic attitude of Thai students towards other ASEAN people and the findings.

Variables	Statistically Significant at 0.05	P	Findings
Type of School	√	0.00	Thai students in "ASEAN Focus" school has the lowest means of negative ethnic attitude
Sex	×	.088	
Religion	×	.554	
Region: Location of School	×	.231	
Parents' occupation	×	.133	
Travel experience in ASEAN countries	×	0.92	
Having friends in each ASEAN country	×	0.915	
Numbers of ASEAN friends	×	.150	
Numbers of ASEAN countries in which students have friends(variety of ASEAN	√	0.008	Students who have friends from more than 3 ASEAN countries have lower means than those who have friends from only 1-2 countries

Variables	Statistically Significant at 0.05	P	Findings
friends' nationality			
Numbers of ASEAN languages learned	×	0.559	
Level of English proficiency	√	.005	Students who have high level of English proficiency have lower means than those with low level of English proficiency
Frequency and kind of media exposed to ASEAN information	√	.000	Students who expose to personal media the most have the lowest means than those who expose to other kinds of media
Kind of communication channel	×	0.45	

Remark : √ means the relationship is found statistically significant at 0.05 level

Group 2: The relationship between "attitudinal direction (+ or -) towards each neighboring ASEAN country" and the following variables: type of school, location of school (near the border), learning a particular ASEAN language, travel experience in a particular ASEAN country, and number of friends of a particular ASEAN country"

From the analysis, the relationship between *location of school* which is adhered to an ASEAN country and *the level of negative ethnic attitude* towards such ASEAN country is found to have a statistically significant relationship at 0.05, as shown in Table 10

Table 10 exhibits the relationship between location of school adjacent to an ASEAN country and the level of negative ethnic attitude towards such neighboring ASEAN country

Location of School	Attitude Towards each Neighboring Country			
	Cambodia	Malaysia	Laos	Myanmar
Relationship (P)	0.001*	0.000*	0.000*	0.000*
Chi-Square	27.34	46.37	46.11	47.24
df	8	8	8	8

*p<0.05

Besides, the relationship between "attitudinal direction towards each particular ASEAN people" and the following variables is *partially* found statistically significant : "type of school" (sister, buffer, education hub) "learning a particular ASEAN language", "travel experience", and "number of friends of each particular country"

Furthermore, from an interview with Thai students, "economic status", "language proficiency" and "personality" is the criteria Thai students use to evaluate ASEAN people and countries, while factors affecting their perception are "type of schools' school lessons, especially history", "role of a teacher", "role of mass media", "opportunity and frequency of communication with ASEAN people", "types of communication activities", and "Thai people's own characteristics".

Objective 4: Intercultural communication problems between Thai students and other ASEAN people

- From the interviews, it is found that every group of samples perceive no serious communication problems between Thai students and ASEAN friends and teachers.

- The mostly identified problem is "language barrier", especially caused by lack of English proficiency of both Thai students and some ASEAN teachers. Particularly non-standard English accent and different Thai local accent in each area is a major communication problem.

- Other intercultural communication problems are:

- ASEAN teachers cannot speak either Thai or English, nor can communicate with Thai students.

- Thai students misperceive that foreign teachers are relatively more friendly and acquainted than Thai teachers. On the other hand, this causes ASEAN teachers feel that Thai students pay less respect and obedience to ASEAN than to Thai teachers.

- Due to too much workload, ASEAN teachers have less time and opportunity to connect themselves with Thai students outside classroom.

Objective 5: Guidelines for enhancing positive attitude and good relationship between Thai students and ASEAN people

From the interviews with all samples, the following major guidelines are recommended:

- To alter or correct Thai students' negative ethnic attitude through re-socialization by revising concerned disseminated information and increasing creative roles of all media concerned which can have an effect on Thai students' perception and attitude, such as roles of a school's lessons, history teaching, teachers, and mass media, policies and roles of the government and all related organizations, particularly the Ministry of Education, including the involvement and participation of local offices and community.

- To improve Thai students' language ability and adjust their cultural knowledge to be accurate and up to global standard by hiring native-speaker teachers and catching up with all cultural changes.

- Language laboratory, facilities, and useful learning environment should be provided or supplemented. Importantly, the improvement has to be continual to gain genuine skill.

- To increase media coverage and accessibility for enhancing cultural knowledge and positive attitude towards all ASEAN people and countries in various ways, especially through the use of online networking and the increased direct contact with native culture, including to support students to produce their own learning media.

- To broaden students' cultural knowledge and experience as a foundation which will be useful for their future communication within ASEAN community

- Government should support "shared" knowledge management among schools, concerned organizations, and ASEAN countries, such as shared files, webpage, etc., which needs to be publicized widely.

- As most schools still focus mainly on cultural artifacts and objects, i.e. flags, costume, food, greeting words, etc. Thus, real interaction with ASEAN people will help students to practice their communication skill.

- Ability of living or working among cultural differences and cultural diversity should be enhanced. To learn in a multicultural context or work in a multicultural team should be taken into action more seriously.

- To add the content of intercultural communication into lessons by highlighting the importance of intercultural communication competence and skill in all domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral, including to enlarge Thai students' self-perception as "ASEAN citizens" as well as "global citizens", which requires multicultural communication skill, together with Thai-identity recognition.

4. Discussion

From this study, it is found that Thai students express more positive than negative attitude towards other ASEAN countries and people, namely 45.00 % and 11.61% respectively, probably because of Thai personality and characteristics, i.e. friendly, compromising, etc. as observed or found in many cross-cultural studies. Still, it is also found that Thai students have more negative attitude towards

people of neighboring countries, especially towards Cambodians and Burmese. However, this negative ethnic attitude is a kind of "*red-racism*", coined by Brislin (1979), which is the level of attitude in which a person perceives people from different cultures to be inferior to him or her, but such attitude is not expressed, nor affects his or her interaction with others. On the other hand, Thai students have the most positive attitude towards Singaporeans in spite of no Singaporean friend. More surprisingly, this finding is similar to the research results conducted by Chantavanich et al in 1994, or more than 20 years ago. In 1994, there were only 6 countries in ASEAN community: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. While Thai attitude towards Singapore is the same, their attitude towards the Philippines found in this study changes from 1994 study.

From statistical analysis and result of in-depth interview, some notions are called for attention as follow:

Perception and ethnic attitude towards neighboring countries is related to the frequency and kind of media exposure

It is found that mass media impose more influence on Thai students who never have personal experience or interaction with people of other countries. Thus, Thai students have more positive attitude towards Singapore and Singaporeans because news in Thailand frequently reported about their economic growth, civilization, and strong disciplines. Similarly, Thai students report more positive attitude towards Brunei because of their wealth in oil despite the fact that only 6.5% of Thai students have Singaporean friends and 0.40 % Bruneian. On the contrary, Thai students have the most negative attitude towards Cambodians, Burmese, and Laotians, probably because of Thai news focusing on Thai-Cambodian border conflicts and dispute over Prasat Preah Vihear or Prasat Kao Pravihan (Na-Ranong, 2005; Supaluk, 2011) while emphasizing news about crimes caused by Burmese, and news about illegal Cambodian and Burmese workers. Thus, it seems that mass media plays a great role in bringing in some kind of prejudice, stereotype, and freezing perception, either in a positive or negative way.

Lessons and textbooks are found to cultivate prejudice and ethnocentrism

From in-depth interview with Thai students, the result shows that Thai students who reported to know about ASEAN countries and people from textbooks and teaching, especially from history, with higher scores tend to have higher scores in "prejudice" against ASEAN countries and people as well as higher scores in "ethnocentrism". Some examples of the content in the lessons they learned, either from history textbooks or from history course are "ancient wars between Thailand and Burma" and this induces students to perceive Burmese as Thai's enemies, "Dispute over the Prasat Preah Vihear at the border" (Prasat Kao Pravihan belongs to Thailand, not Cambodia), or "Thailand is the only country which has never been a colony of any foreign country", etc. In the research of Thai history of Streckfuss (2012), this tendency was observed.

Some scholars pointed that Name calling appeared in history of Thailand and Cambodia enlarged Thai-Cambodian conflicts. (Matichon online, 2011) Such finding is also in accordance with statistical analysis which shows that Thai students who reported to expose themselves more frequently to ASEAN information through textbooks and teaching in class have higher scores in prejudice and ethnocentrism. These findings should enable all educational institutions and instructors to be aware of this effect. One way to lessen this effect is to describe the fact or use "descriptive" statement instead of using "evaluative" statement as suggested by Gudykunst and Kim (2003).

Direct interaction, especially face-to-face communication, with people of other culture can change students' predisposition and decrease black-and-white perception.

From in-depth interview with Thai students, most students reported that their direct communication with their ASEAN friends through any channel, such as having an ASEAN classmate, communicating with the host during their academic or cultural exchange program, experiencing academic trips or visits, etc., altered

their perception and attitude they used to have towards other ASEAN people. Especially it reduced their stereotype, prejudice, and black-and-white perception. To illustrate this, they perceived that some ASEAN friends were different from what they believed before. Thus, students who used to have highly negative attitude towards Cambodians or Burmese from history or news, found some of their Cambodian friends very nice and friendly while students who used to have highly positive attitude towards Singaporeans found that some of them were modern in technology, but some not.

Additionally, it is remarkable that from this study, it is found that Thai students who have classes with filipino teachers perceive filipinos in a much more positive way than Thai students' attitude towards the Philippines found in the research of Chantavanich et al in 1994, the period in which there were very few foreign teachers and international programs in Thailand.

This may be the reason why this study found that the relationship between "location of a school which is near another ASEAN country" and the attitudinal direction (+ or -) of students since they will have more opportunity to have direct and face-to-face communication and contact with their neighboring ASEAN friends and people.

Language plays an important role in intercultural communication in educational context.

From this study, the relationship between "learning a particular ASEAN language" and "attitude towards such particular ASEAN country" is found in 7 countries, except two countries. Also, it shows that the more foreign languages a student learned, the lower level of negative ethnic attitude a student tends to gain. This finding supports some previous research in this area, i.e. Yu and Shen, 2012; McEntee-Atalianis, 2011; Le Pichon et al, 2010; Nelson, 2009, etc.

Besides, a person's motivation to learn a language or effort to speak other languages can give a good impression to the language owner, and increase better intercultural relationship. As Gudykunst and Kim (2003) stated that

"Even if we cannot speak fluently,
our efforts to speak the strangers' language probably will be
appreciated and will lead to more effective communication"

(p.165)

Gudykunst and Kim (2003), in accordance with the research finding of Yashima (2002), further believed that a desire to learn a foreign language express-es one's willingness and motivation to learn and open to new things, and this helps him or her to accept cultural differences and adjust himself or herself in a new cultural context more easily. Conversely, a person with high ethnolinguistic vitality tends to be more ethnocentrism and view their culture superior to others.

In addition, this study also found that an ASEAN teacher's English proficiency affects his or her source credibility in the eyes of Thai students, especially in an international school where students learn with both native and non-native speakers. A comparison, specifically in English accent, can easily occur and affect student's perception of their teachers' trustworthiness, and also can cause higher negative ethnic attitude accordingly. Similar to the study of Dixon and Cocks (2002) which found that regional accent is influential in intercultural context.

5. Conclusions

Globalization is inevitable and intercultural communication and multi-cultural communication competence is essential. Educational institutions and teachers are one of the key mechanism to cultivate and build up students as a universal or an intercultural man who understands, accepts, and respects cultural differences since their childhood. Thus, schools' cultural-learning policies, textbooks, academic activities and role of teachers can help a student to be equipped with three intercultural-communication competence: cognitive,

affective, and behavioral. It is important to realize the role of direct communication with other ASEAN people, and the impact of learning language and language proficiency in intercultural communication context. Beside, the role of mass media cannot be ignored since it plays a great part to portray an image of any ASEAN country and to implant an attitude towards other countries and people of different cultures. The future studies should find ways in cooperating all concerned sectors of the society: family, schools, community, mass media, and government, to help enhance students' intercultural communication and multicultural communication competence for their sustainable development.

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