

Making sense of the English language policy in
Thailand: An exploration of teachers' practices and
dispositions.

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Abstract

Similar to other countries in the South-east Asian region, Thailand has transformed its education policy so that it may be able to better face the challenges of the globalised world. In order to do this, constructs such as student-centred learning and critical thinking, as well as the teaching of English in a more communicative manner, have been promoted.

There has been little critical or grounded research carried out on the current English policy in Thailand, which emerged from the National Education Act of 1999 and the subsequent Basic Education Core Curricula of 2001 and 2008, therefore, in order to better understand how this policy works, this study explores how a group of Thai-English language teachers conceptualise the English language policy in Thailand by investigating their practices and beliefs (dispositions). In order to do this, and drawing on a social constructionist perspective from Bourdieu's theory of practice, this thesis adopts a qualitative methodology that incorporates exploratory and ethnographic elements. Employing a combination of data collection methods that include classroom observations, retrospective accounts and semi-structured interviews, the findings demonstrate that a gap exists between the goals of the policy and what actually occurs in the classroom. Thus, there were few examples of either the communicative approach or student-centred learning being employed, with teachers instead tending to transmit knowledge to their students in a teacher-centred manner. Reasons for this may be due to the influence that the national examinations has on teachers' work, the suitability and / or relevance of imported teaching and learning approaches on local contexts, as well as the need for better implementation of change. Teachers would indeed benefit from more professional development concerning the policy, but this thesis also argues that the policy itself needs to be critically examined. This would then allow Thailand, as well as other countries in the region, to better inform and improve their current education policies.

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Abbreviations used in the study

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BEC	Basic Education Core Curriculum
ELI	The English Language Institute
EP	English Programme
ERIC	Educational Resource and Instruction Centre
KWL	Know-Want-Learn
MEP	Mini English Programme
MoE	Ministry of Education
NEA	National Education Act
NESAC	National Economic and Social Advisory Council
OEC	Office of the Education Council
ONEC	Office of National Education
PPP	Present, Practise, Produce
TKT	Teacher Knowledge Test

Thai words used in the study

<i>Ferrang</i>	The Thai word for foreigner
<i>Matayom</i>	The Thai word for secondary school grade
<i>Prathom</i>	The Thai word for primary school grade

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

In the present global society, learning foreign languages is very important and essential to daily life, as foreign languages serve as an important tool for communication, education, seeking knowledge, livelihood and creating understanding of cultures and visions of the world community (MoE, 2008, p. 252).

This quote, taken from Thailand's most recent Basic Education Core Curriculum (BEC), goes on to state that the 'foreign language constituting basic learning content that is prescribed for the entire basic education core curriculum is English...' (*ibid.*). Although there is some provision made in the curriculum for other foreign languages, it is clear where the Thai government's priorities lie. This decision is hardly surprising as the number of English speakers around the world continues to increase (Graddol, 2006), while its position as the language of globalisation and modernity still seems very much assured (Rappa & Wee, 2006), despite concerns from some authors about the impact that globalisation may have (see Canagarajah, 2005). Indeed, this decision to focus on English is not only restricted to Thailand, as many other countries in the Southeast Asian region are also heavily promoting the language (Nunan, 2003), leading to an obsession which Graddol (2006, p. 36) terms 'an educational 'arms race'', as countries attempt to improve their own economic competitiveness (Fry, 2002; Keyuravong, 2010).

With this context in mind, the main aim of this thesis is to explore the English language policy of Thailand and in particular to view how this policy is realised through the practices and beliefs (or dispositions) of a group of Thai-English teachers based in the north east of that country. To demonstrate how these teachers make sense of the current policy in their teaching context a qualitative methodology that also contains exploratory and ethnographic elements will be employed in order to demonstrate "what is" as opposed to how things "ought to be" (Canagarajah, 2006, p.155). Though this makes both the generalisation of the study and any claims of it being representative rather difficult, it does offer a grounded view of how this language policy is represented within the teaching context. The idea of theory emanating from practice and practice evolving from theory, or 'dialectically interacting' with each other (Freire, 1970 as cited in Canagarajah, 1999, p. 35), is

important and not only because the classroom is where language policies truly come to life. Indeed, by having teachers co-construct the data with researchers means that they are no longer viewed as simple implementers of policy but rather may be able to influence or shape the policy itself (Breen, *et al.*, 2001; Canagarajah, 2005; Tollefson, 2006).

1.1 Rationale for the Study

Though described as ‘forward-looking’ (Watson Todd, 2004, p. 46), there have been suggestions that the English curricular reforms in Thailand have failed (Watson Todd, 2001b), as levels of English have not improved, either domestically or internationally (Bunnag, 2005 and 2008; Punthumasen, 2007). Indeed, Kosonen notes that the ‘(v)ast investments in English proficiency has not yet lead to the expected economic and other benefits’ for the country (2008, p. 174). Reasons offered for this failure are myriad and include problems with policy implementation (Hayes, 2000), the fact that gaps between policy and practice still remain (Thongsri, *et al.*, 2006); a lack of appropriate materials (Watson Todd & Keyuravong, 2004), as well as the problem that important national examinations do not always reflect policy goals (Fry, 2002). Much of the research conducted on the changes in the English language policy in Thailand has mainly dealt with aspects related to the changes in teaching approaches, which reflects the suggestion that ‘poor outcomes in language learning are the result of problematic teaching methods’ (Liddicoat, 2004, p. 154). Thus, despite having little say in its formation, as well as working with the policy on a daily basis, it is often the teachers who are viewed as being the main cause of the problems associated with the policy’s lack of success: their poor levels of English make it difficult for them to carry out the policy’s goals (Vacharaskunee, 2000; Foley, 2005; Baker, 2008); they are unaware of how to work with the new teaching approaches (Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008; Mackenzie, 2004; Saengboon, 2003), which leads to suggestions that these teachers need more professional development (Watson Todd, 2001b; Mackenzie, 2005; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008). This is consistent with the idea that teachers are often viewed as being too entrenched in their own traditional ways of teaching to accept more modern versions offered by Ministries of Education (Liddicoat, 2004). Nevertheless, there is little criticality of the English language

policy in Thailand but instead it appears to exist as an accepted form of knowledge (Hayes, 2010), despite failing to consider political, historical, social and economical aspects (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2005).

When implementing a language policy, it is often difficult to comprehend the effects it may have on those that receive and subsequently work with it (Ball, 1997). This may, as previously suggested, be due to the misunderstanding of such policies or that teachers have not received relevant training but it may also reflect how teachers' belief systems operate, which can act as a filter to any acceptance of a new policy (Breen, *et al.*, 2001; Liddicoat, 2004; Stritikus, 2003). These beliefs not only have an effect on whether a teacher will accept a policy but how that acceptance will be manifested through their teaching methods or practices. In addition, the construct of teachers' beliefs 'casts an instructive light on potential obstacles to policy initiatives and reforms' (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007, p. 449).

The evaluation of a language policy is rather complex, due to the multitude of variables involved (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Ricento, 2006b). However, if carried out in a critical manner, the reification of policy can be challenged thus preventing this policy from becoming an unchallenged or accepted 'truth' in society (Ramanathan, 2002). This point is important for two reasons: first, knowledge is created not just by individual minds that impose meaning on things but that these individuals have in turn been influenced by the social practices that surround them, that is, they are socially constructed (Crotty, 2003). Secondly, as they have been created from society, these constructs are often representative of dominant ideologies (Ernest, 1994; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2005; Ferguson, 2006). With this in mind, this study explores the English language policy in Thailand from two perspectives: first, that it is not a static construct formed in a vacuum but rather is one 'rooted in contingent historical and socio-political realities' (Blommaert, 1996, as cited in Ferguson, 2006, p. 10). Secondly, as those holding a dominant position in society have invariably been involved in the construction of these policies, it is important to explore the ideologies that constitute them. Therefore, due to both the complex and political nature of discovering more about a foreign language policy, a combination of social

constructionism and critical theory will help to inform the theoretical perspective of this thesis.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The issues surrounding language policy and planning are complex (Ricento, 2006a; Cooper, 1989). This complexity may exist because there has been very little grounded research carried out on the effects of such policies, which may in turn be due to the fact that many teachers feel that language planning and policy is ‘far removed’ from their lives (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 401). Canagarajah (2005) suggests that by not taking into account how teachers engage with such a policy, they become relegated to the role of implementers, meaning that we fail to ‘...grasp the conceptual and paradigmatic underpinnings that elevate the status of practice and local and emergent forms of knowledge’ (p. 449). Indeed, this local knowledge at the practitioner level will be lost for ‘... locality is not just the end point of top-down directives but also the genesis of bottom-up initiatives ...’ (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007, p. 449). Furthermore, there has been little research carried out in this field with teachers who do not use English as their first language (Canagarajah, 2006). Indeed, Ramanathan and Morgan (2007) feel there should be more research conducted in this area in order to discover how these contexts react to policy that has been devised and implemented by an elite, which, may or may not, have been influenced by dominant viewpoints from within the industry. Therefore, rather than adopting an objective macro-evaluation of the policy, investigations into the effects that policies are having on those who have to work with them are vital (Canagarajah, 2006). This in turn can inform such issues as improving professional development, addressing the question of when best to start learning a foreign language, understanding the influence exerted by national examinations on language curricula, as well as the role that English plays in a foreign language environment. Furthermore, despite the fact that huge differences exist, other Southeast Asian nations share many commonalities with Thailand with respect to educational policies (Nunan, 2003), meaning that research conducted on how teachers respond to the English language policy in Thailand may also be relevant to other parts of the region.

1.3 Research Aims

With this in mind, the main aims of the study are to investigate the current English language policy in Thailand by exploring the effects that this policy is having on teachers' contexts and to attempt to understand how teachers make sense of the policy. Furthermore, it can examine the possible gaps that may exist between the policy and these teaching contexts in order to suggest how these divisions may be reduced.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the aims of this thesis, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What teaching practices do a group of Thai English language teachers employ in their classrooms?
2. What dispositions or beliefs underlie these practices?
3. What is the relationship between the teachers' practices and beliefs with the current English language policy in Thailand?

1.5 Organisation of the Study

This thesis is made up of seven chapters. The current chapter provides the rationale, significance, aims and research questions of the study. Chapter two will situate the study in a political, social and pedagogical context, as well as discussing English language teaching approaches in Thailand. Chapter three will provide the theoretical framework for the thesis, introducing and discussing key concepts that will help to inform this study. It will then build on this theoretical perspective by introducing and critically evaluating the relevant literature on the main constructs to be discussed in this study, namely the role of English in the region, teaching approaches and teachers' beliefs. The methodology of the study will be described in chapter four, in which a detailed explanation of the research context will be offered, as well as a description of the research methods, data collection and analysis. Themes that emerge from

classroom observations, interviews and field notes will be presented and analysed in chapter five. Chapter six will discuss some of the salient points from this analysis, before offering implications and conclusions in the final chapter.

Chapter 2: Context of the Study

2. Introduction

As this paper seeks to explore how teachers conceptualise the current English language policy in Thailand, it is important to situate both the study and the language in a wider social, political and historical context (Blommaert, 1996; Tollefson, 2006; Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007; Ferguson, 2006). By not doing so, would limit any form of analysis, as this would only account for idealised situations (Bourdieu, 1991). Therefore, from an historical viewpoint, it is necessary to note that the current language policy in Thailand has not been formed in a vacuum without any connection to previous policies, but rather has been constructed and subsequently influenced by pedagogical, economic, political and social issues over time (Fry, 2002). Since different parts of society may react in different ways to the original intention of a language policy (Canagarajah, 1999), it is important to understand the social context in which such a policy operates, for instance, the status and use of English can differ within the same country depending on its relevance, usefulness and ease of access. Linked to this is the important role that agency plays in the development, formation, dissemination and acceptance of a policy: those who devise the policies are themselves influenced by their own linguistic, pedagogical or political experiences while those who work with the policies can choose whether or not to adopt, adapt or ignore them (Ball, 1997). Furthermore, the political context needs to be evaluated in order to better explain and understand the role that a language policy plays in a society, particularly when that society places value on the learning of one language over another. Indeed, with respect to pedagogical issues, language policies not only attempt to decide which languages are to be used in a region but may also influence how those languages are to be taught, meaning that, directly or indirectly, they act as manifestations of particular theories of language learning.

These issues suggest that any study concerning the English language policy in Thailand cannot divorce itself from external or historical perspectives (Fry, 2002; Blommaert, 1996). Therefore, this chapter will comprise three main sections: the role that the English language plays in Southeast Asia and how that role has been manifested in Thailand. The second section will trace the way that previous language

policies have operated within the Thai education system, paying particular attention to how the English language has been taught in the country and what learning theories have been employed. The final section will examine the current English language policy in Thailand.

2.1 The Role of English in Southeast Asia

Though Baker's assertion that English acts as a *lingua franca* in Southeast Asia may be rather exaggerated (2008), the position that the language holds there is an extremely important one. The special status that it has been accorded in the region is partly a reflection of the fact that English is now viewed as a global language (Graddol, 2006; Punthumasen, 2007) and that it has a 'presence in the most vital aspects of Asian lives' (Kachru, 1998, p. 91), that is, through culture, language, discourse, economy and identity. Rappa and Wee (2006, p. 125) suggest that English is not a language that 'Southeast Asian nations can afford to ignore ... because of its importance in facilitating economic development...' Indeed, English has been the working language of the main political and trading bloc in the region, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), since that organisation's inception in 1967 (McArthur, 2003) and it has become the language of finance, trade and tourism of the region (Baker, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2007). Further, Graddol (2007) notes that many of the people in the region speak English as a second or third language and that much of the communication that they carry out is with similar types of speakers. This leads to what Kachru terms (1998, p.120) a 'functional nativeness' between speakers from different countries; indeed the same author suggests that the concept of English as an Asian language is already a reality (*ibid.*).

Despite the fact that there has been little protest at this leading role of English, it can be argued that the status of the language in the region favours those countries with a colonial past (Pennycook, 1994). Singapore, The Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia share membership of what Kachru terms the 'Outer Circle', that is, a group of countries where English is used as an 'institutionalized additional language' (1998, p. 93). English is recognised as a co-official language along with Malay, Tamil and Mandarin in Singapore, while in the Philippines and Malaysia it acts as a *de facto*

official other language, indeed, these countries also have their own varieties of local Englishes (Kirkpatrick, 2007). The remaining six nations of ASEAN: Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Burma and Thailand have been described by Kachru as ‘expanding circle nations’ (1998, p. 93) and by Phillipson as ‘Periphery English countries’ (1992) as English is mainly used as a foreign language there. These countries are norm-dependent meaning that they have little or no influence on what forms of English are to be used or how it is to be taught in their respective countries, instead, relying on inner circle nations like the UK or Australia to provide them with these norms (Baker, 2008).

2.2 Commonalities in the region

Analysing commonalities with respect to the role that English plays among the countries in the region is somewhat arbitrary as there are huge differences in economic levels, religious beliefs, political systems and cultural perspectives. Yet, by doing so, it can help to illuminate the context within which English operates and may go some way to explaining why this ‘transplanted language’ (Kachru, 1998, p. 93) has become the most important in the region (Baker, 2008), particularly with respect to the ideas of modernity and education.

2.2.1 Modernity

English is viewed in the region as the language of modernity (Rappa & Wee, 2006) and seen as the key to economic success (Abhakorn, 2003; Graddol, 2006). For instance, Rappa and Wee (2006) see similarities in the way that Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines all view English in instrumental terms, though it should be noted that the language is not as dominant in Thailand as it is in Singapore and Malaysia. Nevertheless, this idea that English is the language of modernity or technological advancement is not one shared by all authors (see Phillipson, 1992). Indeed, there are concerns that this opinion has emerged due to a persuasive discourse of legitimising English that has been spread by countries with vested interests (Phillipson, 1992). Pennycook (1994, p. 36) wonders just how ‘natural, neutral or beneficial’ the global spread of English actually is, while Bruthiaux (2002) warns that the promise that English holds of being a tool to eliminate problems may not always

be the case.

2.2.2 Education

English has had a significant impact on the education policies of countries in the region due to the increasing presence of globalisation (Baker, 2008; Graddol, 2006). Nunan, however, suggests a clearer understanding about the educational policy implications of global English is necessary as they are often framed without ‘adequately considering the implications of such policies and practices on the lives of the teachers and students they affect’ (2003, p. 591), while Mühlhäusler (1996) questions whether English actually aids education at all. Despite these concerns, it is the most common foreign language taught in schools in the region and is compulsory in many countries there. Teacher education programmes have also been changed throughout Southeast Asia, with the introduction of new teaching and learning methodologies (Nunan, 2003), while the demand for English is so great that, among other issues, the teaching of the language at an earlier age is becoming more prevalent (Abhakorn, 2003). According to some commentators this may cause future problems as governments start language-learning programmes for young learners, though with little funding, inadequate training or teacher education (Nunan, 2003). More crucially, there is still little understanding of what effects this promotion of the language may have on mother tongue learning, for instance, causing possible negative effects on future literacy skills (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003). There is some disagreement in the region about this issue with some countries encouraging the teaching of English at an early age while others are still unsure, so, for example, Korea promotes the early learning of English, while Japan does not (Nunan, 2003). A further issue to be considered is the role of English as the language of instruction in subjects such as mathematics and science, with Malaysia, for instance, recently deciding to revert to Malay to teach these subjects, though this may be viewed as a political decision rather than just a pedagogical one (Gooch, 2009). One area in which countries do agree is the concern with the poor levels of learning and teaching of the language, which may be due to insufficient numbers of qualified teachers and inadequate training, as well as a lack of exposure to the language, particularly in countries like Thailand which has no history of being colonised.

2.3 Thailand: Socio-economic and Political Context

Situated at the heart of Southeast Asia and bordered to the north by Burma, the south by Malaysia and to the northeast by Laos and Cambodia, Thailand has a population of 64 million people (UN, 2008). Though perceived as a homogenous nation, the country is made up of different ethnicities and languages (Luangthongkum, 2007). Thai is the official language of the country (Baker, 2008), though it is generally accepted that four regional languages also exist there, as well as a host of minority local ones (Premrirat, 2006; Luangthongkum, 2007; Kosonen, 2005). The Thai language has long acted as a homogenising influence; it is, for instance, the only language used in schools throughout the Kingdom, adding some credence to the idea that ‘Thainess’ has been socially constructed (Rappa & Wee, 2006).

Though jobs in the manufacturing and tourism sectors make up a large part of the workforce, the majority of those in employment are involved in agriculture, with around 80% of the population living in villages (Rappa & Wee, 2006) yet this figure only provides 13% of the national economy (Fry, 2002). Despite the fact that in 2008 the UN described Thailand as a, ‘middle-income country’ that had seen a reduction in its poverty rate over the previous 20 years (UN, 2008), the recent global financial downturn, coupled with internal political uncertainties, have meant that the economic situation in Thailand has somewhat worsened (ADB, 2008). Unemployment rates in rural areas, particularly in the northeast of the country - where the current study has been carried out - are high (ONEC, 2004) and the gap between rich and poor has further widened in recent years, with some commentators suggesting it is one of the worst in the region (Phongpaichit, 2009, as cited in Ekachai, 2009; Phongpaichit and Baker, 2008). There have always been deep divisions in the social fabric of the country due to economic and political inequality (Fry, 2002; Chantanusornsiri, 2009) which have been exacerbated since September 2006 when the then leader of the country, Thaksin Shinawatra, was ousted in a military coup leading to a new constitution being introduced in 2007. Thailand, since then, has experienced a period of turbulence causing the socio-economic divisions between the classes and the regions to widen even further.

2.4 Current Status of the English Language in Thailand

As previously mentioned, Thailand has been described as forming part of the ‘expanding circle’ (Kachru, 1998) or as a ‘Periphery English country’ (Phillipson, 1992), with the status of English remaining as a foreign language. This means that although English has retained its position as the most common foreign language in Thailand since the middle of the nineteenth century, it has, perhaps surprisingly, never become ‘nativized’ with little evidence of a Thai variation of English existing, unlike some of its neighbours, such as Singapore or the Philippines (Watkhadarm, 2005; Butler, 2005). Nevertheless, Baker (2008) suggests that in the future a Thai form of English may come to exist – he points to the fact that there are now websites devoted to an informal variety of Thai English known as ‘Thinglish’. Furthermore, studies that focus on ‘difficulties’ that Thai learners have with English pronunciation suggest that a separate Thai form of English exists, one that is different from other forms of Asian English (Khamkhien, 2010; Wei & Zhou, 2002). The fact that there is little overt recognition of these forms may be due to the country not having previously been colonised but as long as the Thai language plays a large role in maintaining the homogeneity of the nation (Rappa & Wee, 2006), English will always be relegated to a secondary status. It is also quite difficult to give exact numbers about English speakers in Thailand. According to the Population and Housing Census of 2000 there are almost 50,000 English-only speakers in the country and although more than 3 million inhabitants claim to speak more than one other language along with Thai, it is unclear how many of those would classify themselves as second language speakers of English (Luangthongkum, 2007). While the number of speakers has increased in recent times, it has neither threatened the dominant status of the national language, Thai, nor has it lost its association with the elite (Rappa & Wee, 2006; Baker, 2008; Luangthongkum, 2007; Hayes, 2008; Kosonen, 2008). This is mainly due to the fact that it has always been seen as the language needed to deal with the world outside of the country and that the status of English has been employed as a foreign language in order to aid social mobility (Rappa & Wee, 2006), allowing those that learn and use it to ultimately have more access to political and economic power (Canagarajah, 1999).

Although Baker suggests that English is still used as a *lingua franca* in the country, particularly in the fields of tourism, international trade and finance (2008), it has little relevance for the majority of Thai lives (Smalley, 1994; Hayes, 2008; Kosonen, 2008), though Keyuravong, (2010) notes that English is still regarded as being important in order to obtain a well-paid job. Thailand’s tourist industry is extremely well developed and in those areas where foreigners flock the use of English is generally widespread. Other domains in which the language is used, though not always widely, include the media with some small-scale radio and TV channels that broadcast in English, as well as satellite access to overseas channels. There are also three English-speaking daily newspapers in the country though publication figures are not so high outside Bangkok or other major tourist areas.

2.5 English Language Education in Thailand

2.5.1 History

Despite the fact that English has never been used as an internal language in Thailand it has always held a prominent position within the education system. By examining the historical role that the language has played within this field it may be possible to understand a little more about the current status it enjoys. Some of the more prominent landmarks in English education in Thailand will be examined in this section (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Key dates in Thailand’s English language education history

Date		Date	
1850s	First time English taught	1978	New English Language Curriculum
1892	Ministry of Education founded	1992	4th National Scheme of Education
1936	1st National Scheme of Education	1996	New English Language Curriculum
1950	New English Language Curriculum	1999	National Education Act (NEA)
1960	2nd National Scheme of Education	2001	Basic Education Curriculum
1977	3rd National Scheme of Education	2008	Revised English Language Curriculum

It is generally believed that English was first taught in Thailand during the reign of Rama III (1824-1851) though these lessons were restricted to the royal court (Baker, 2008; Foley, 2005; Fry, 2002; Toh, 2003). One of the main reasons for its adoption at this time was that the rulers of Thailand viewed English as an important tool for trading with the British who were expanding their interests in the region (Rappa & Wee, 2006). One monarch in particular, King Rama V (1868-1910) realised that working with the British would also mean there being less chance of being colonised (MoE, 2006; Wyatt, 1969, as cited in Fry, 2002), indeed, Thailand is still one of the few countries in the region to have never been taken over by a foreign power. Rama V was instrumental in establishing the first Ministry of Education in 1892 in an attempt to systematise education throughout the nation (MoE, 1998) and this was based on a western-style education system and promoted the teaching of English, though it should be noted that this system still catered mainly for the elite (Rappa & Wee, 2006). Prapaisit (2003) suggests that English teaching at that time was based on the Grammar Translation approach, principally because there were so few students learning the language and that widespread communication was not necessary. In 1932 Thailand changed from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy (Fry, 2002) and over the following 40 years, a series of National Education Schemes were established in order to further modernise the country (MoE, 1998; Kulsiri, 2006). Despite the fact that English was viewed as an international language, discrepancies existed between curriculum approaches and teachers' practices, due mainly to a lack of clarity over teaching goals and little access to natural situations for teachers or students to practice (Kulsiri, 2006).

The next major educational reform in the country took place at the beginning of the 1990s with the 1992 National Scheme of Education. This was enacted to help the country face the challenges of globalisation and for the first time, English was specifically mentioned as the language of internationalism (ONEC, 1998 as cited in Kulsiri, 2006; Fry, 2002). In 1995, it was decided that English would be taught from first grade in primary schools and though this was dependent on individual schools, it meant that some students now had the possibility of taking English classes for 12 years. In reality, however, due to a shortage of resources, many schools only started

teaching the language from third grade (*Prathom 3*), if at all (Keyuravong, 2010). The main teaching and learning approach in the curriculum was a learner-centred one, focusing on learner outcomes with teachers also encouraged to use authentic materials in a communicative fashion in their classes (Punthumasen, 2007). One other key factor from this curricular change was the introduction of the Educational Resource Information Centres (ERIC) in many areas around Thailand, which were established in order to provide teachers with information and knowledge about approaches to language learning. Nevertheless, evaluation of the curriculum yet again demonstrated weaknesses in the fact that teachers had low levels of English (Prapaisit, 2003), as well as having a lack of clarity about the objectives of the curriculum (Kulsiri, 2006).

2.5.2 National Education Act of B. E. 2542 (1999)

It has been demonstrated that socio-political, historical and economic issues have often influenced educational reforms in Thailand and the National Education Act (NEA) of 1999 was no different. Educational reform was seen to be necessary as previous acts had not been successful with Atagi (2002, as cited in Fry, 2002, p. 21) arguing that Thailand ‘...(lagged) behind internationally on many major indicators of educational quality...’ despite high spending on education in the country. The 1997 Constitution, regarded as one of the most ‘...comprehensive and far-reaching in Thailand’s recent history’ (Fry, 2002, p. 18), stressed the need for a new educational system in order to help the country compete on the globalised stage (NEA, 1999), particularly after the Asian economic crisis of 1997. The Thai government had realised that the country needed to adapt to this new globalised world, especially as its neighbours, hitherto regarded as underdeveloped, were beginning to improve their economic strength (Fry, 2002, p. 19), with the Ministry of Education suggesting that there was:

‘... an urgent need to enhance people’s ability to keep up with the rapid changes associated with globalization in order to thrive in a very competitive global arena’ (MoE, 2004, p. 3).

The 1999 Education Act served as a form of reaction to this crisis, particularly as there were suggestions that the domestic workforce was not prepared for the international workplace (UNESCO, 1999; Wiriyachitra, 2002, Chayanuvat, 2003),

with Wongsathorn (1999) claiming that,

‘...only countries endowed with vision and wisdom to understand the globalization process and its oncoming threats and opportunities will be able to secure a peaceful and productive co-existence in the international community’ (p. 54).

2.5.3 NEA (1999) Aims and Structure

The main aims of this policy were fourfold: to improve the quality of education in the country, to emphasise the learning process, to implement a decentralisation policy and to highlight the importance of morality (ONEC, 2004). Thus, the policy wished to radically change the way in which education was carried out in Thailand, mainly by placing the learner at the centre of the education process. To illustrate this, section 7 of the Act, encourages students to have a ‘... thirst for knowledge and capability of self-learning on a continuous basis’ (ONEC, 1999). Section 22 continues with this idea of learner-centredness by stressing that the ‘teaching-learning process shall aim at enabling the learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality’ (*ibid.*, 1999). When discussing how this learning process is to be carried out the Act states that teaching activities should be ‘in line with the learners’ interests and aptitudes, bearing in mind individual differences’ (Section 24). Moreover, in response to criticism that Thai students were unable to think for themselves, the Act promotes the idea of critical thinking in the classroom (Sections 7, 24 and 28), as well as the integration of learning across disciplines (Section 24) (ONEC, 1999) (see Appendix 1 for a list of key sections from the Act).

2.5.4 Basic Education Core Curriculum (2001 / 2008)

The task of bringing these principles into practice lay with the Basic Education Commission, which formulated a set of core educational standards through the Basic Education Core Curriculum (BEC) 2001 (MoE, 2007b; Watson Todd, 2004; Kulsiri, 2006). Around these core principles a framework was constructed which allowed schools the freedom to choose how these ideas were to be implemented, that is, for the first time there would be a large amount of autonomy over what was to be taught and how this would be carried out (Kulsiri, 2006). This issue of materials is an important one when discussing policy due to the fact that it influences the way that teachers carry out their work. Thus, in the earlier version of the policy, with its

emphasis very much on de-centralisation, teachers were encouraged to adopt materials that reflected the policy aims, that is, to be more student-centred and communicative, as well as having some form of connection with the local environment. Difficulties with this proposal included the fact that teachers were often unsure about how these materials were to be developed, with some teachers creating their own materials and others either unwilling or unable to do so. Indeed, Kulsiri (2006) noted that it was often challenging for teachers to find or create materials that were localised and at the same time communicative, while Watson Todd and Keyuravong (2004) demonstrated that inconsistencies exist between the process and product objectives of the policy and the Ministry-approved textbooks, further adding to teachers' difficulties.

Therefore, due to the fact that many teachers were confused as to how to implement the new curriculum, as well as fears that learners' educational levels were not improving as expected, the Ministry of Education replaced it with an updated version from 2008 in the hope that the goals, aims and standards would be clearer for all involved (MoE, 2008). This latest core curriculum also wished to avoid some of the problems of its predecessor by providing a 'framework and direction for provision of education of all types' (*ibid.*, 2008, p.3), while still maintaining key principles of the original, including the fact that 'the learner-centred approach is strongly advocated' (*ibid.*, 2008, p. 4). The latest curriculum also maintains many of the 2001 characteristics, for instance, it is still divided into eight different learning areas, including foreign languages, each of which provides content and assessment processes. Within these learning areas, a set of strands outline how a particular subject is to be taught, while a system of indicators are used to demonstrate more clearly how the content is to be practically adapted for learners.

2.5.5 Foreign Language Learning: Strands and Standards

The eighth of these learning areas is connected to the learning of foreign languages, such as German, Chinese and French, as well as the most popular language taught in Thai schools, English. The main aim of this learning area is to,

'enabl[e] learners to acquire a favourable attitude towards foreign languages, the ability to use foreign languages for communicating in various situations, seeking

knowledge, engaging in a livelihood and pursuing further education at higher levels’ (MoE, 2008, p. 252).

These aims have subsequently been divided into four strands, often known as the four Cs: communication, culture, connection and community (Mackenzie, 2004; Keyuravong, 2010) and are discussed below:

- a. Language for communication: This aims to improve the reading, writing, listening and speaking skills of the learners so that they may be able to express feelings, interpret information, exchange data, as well as have opinions and views on a variety of issues.
- b. Language of culture: This area aims to enable the students to know more about foreign culture and how it relates to Thailand.
- c. Language and relationship with other learning areas: This idea refers to the fact that learners need to be able to link ‘knowledge with other learning areas’ (MoE, 2008, p. 252) so that learners can broaden their own views.
- d. Language and relationship with community and the world: The main aim of this strand is for students to be able to use the language in a variety of environments so that they may be able to ‘exchange learning with the global society’ (*ibid.*).

Within each of these strands exists a set of standards (see Appendix 2), which in turn has a list of indicators that offer teachers guidelines on what to teach. These indicators specifically explain what the learners should be able to do after graduating from each grade. For example, by the end of third year (*Prathom 1-3*), learners should be able to do such tasks as ‘engage in interpersonal communication using short and simple words’ (MoE, 2008, p. 253), as well as comprehending the English alphabet, being able to communicate about their own lives and understanding something of the culture of overseas’ speakers, among others (see Appendix 3 for an example of grade 3’s indicators). To sum up, the main principles laid out in the policy include student-

centred learning and critical thinking, which are then manifested through the national curriculum for each of the eight learning areas. These areas are then organised into strands that act as general aims, which in turn are then further divided into standards and indicators in order to clarify the policy as much as possible for teachers. Table 2 below offers an overview of how the policy is operationalised from policy to practice.

Policy (Principles)	Curriculum (Policy to Practice)	Learning Areas	Strands	Standards	Indicators
<i>National Education Act of B. E. 2542 (1999)</i>	<i>Basic Education Core Curriculum (2001/2008)</i>	<i>Divided into 8 different areas</i>	<i>Main aims of the Foreign Languages learning area</i>	<i>Main aims of each strand (e.g. Strand 2)</i>	<i>Detailed explanation of scope and content of each standard / grade (e.g. Prathom 3)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be able to compete on a globalised stage • To place the learner at the centre of the education process (Sections 7, 22) • To promote critical thinking (Sections 24 and 28) • To aid learning across the disciplines (Section 24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To formulate a set of core standards • To provide a greater amount of autonomy for schools and teachers • To provide a clearer framework for the eight learning areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thai language • Science • Mathematics • Social studies, Religion and Culture • Health and Physical Education • Arts • Careers and technology • Foreign Languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strand 1: Language for Communication • Strand 2: Language and Culture • Strand 3: Language and Relationship with Other Learning Areas • Strand 4: Language and Relationship with Community and the World 	Standard F3.1: Usage of foreign languages to link knowledge with other learning areas, as foundation for further development and to seek knowledge and widen one's world view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell differences concerning sounds of the alphabet, words, groups of words and simple sentences in foreign languages and those in Thai language • Listen/speak in simple situations in the classroom • Use foreign languages to collect relevant terms around them • Are skilful in using foreign languages (with emphasis on listening and speaking) to communicate about themselves, their families, schools (contd.)

Table 2: From Policy to Practice: An overview of the English Language Policy in Thailand (adapted from MoE, 1999; ONEC, 1999)

2.6 Current Teaching Situation

The school system in Thailand is organised into a 6-3-3 format (see Appendix 4), that is, six years of primary education (*Prathom* 1-6), three years in secondary education (*Matayom* 1-3) followed by three more years at upper secondary (*Matayom* 4-6) (MoE, 2007b). The first nine years are compulsory, while all twelve years are free of charge for students. The national curriculum consists of eight core subjects, or learning areas: Thai language; science; mathematics; social studies, religion and culture; health and physical education; arts; careers and technology and foreign languages. Students are graded on all of these subjects through national examinations known as O-net tests (Ordinary Education Test) at the end of *Prathom* 6, *Matayom* 3 and *Matayom* 6 (Grades 6, 9 and 12). Students wishing to enter higher education institutions can do so in two ways: by directly applying to a university and taking an examination. The second option involves taking a national examination known as the General Aptitude Test (GAT), with English as one of the compulsory subjects, which is then combined with the student's high school GPA average and their O-net scores.

With the introduction of the 2001 National Curriculum, English was made compulsory from the fifth grade of primary school – though schools have the option to teach English from first grade if they wish to - with students taking a minimum of one hour of English a week, while secondary school students have at least three hours (see Table 3 below) (MoE, 2005). English is not the only foreign language taught in Thailand but it is the most dominant. Its position as the main language taught in the country can be seen from the fact that it is the only non-Thai language that features on the GAT (NIETS, 2009) and on many university entrance examinations (Bunnag, 2008a; Praprutitum, 2008), this despite the continuing decline in the performance levels of students taking national English examinations (Punthumasen, 2007). The most recent scores showed yet again very disappointing English results with the Deputy Minister of Education demanding an improvement from all parties involved (Aramnet, 2010).

Level	Hours of teaching	Languages
Primary 1-3	40 hours a year (1 hour a week)	English only
Primary 4-6	80 hours a year (2 hours a week)	
Lower Secondary	120 hours a year (3 hours a week)	English is main foreign language
Upper Secondary	80 hours a year + elective hours (2 hours a week + electives)	Other foreign languages

Table 3: Number of hours of English instruction at primary and secondary levels
(Adapted from Keyuravong, 2010, p. 70)

In 2006, the Education Ministry formulated the Strategic Plan for Reforming the English Learning Process to Accelerate National Competitive Ability (2006-2010), in order to further improve English-language levels in Thailand and from this the English Language Institute (ELI) was established (Punthumasen, 2007). With previous education ministers warning of major changes in how English is taught after Thailand ranked near the bottom of Southeast Asian scores in TOEIC and TOEFL tests (Bunnag, 2005), the ELI's main goals included changing the way that teachers taught English, asking them to focus on a more communicative approach and to use authentic assessment in their classes (May, 2008). This was deemed necessary as teachers often lacked qualifications to teach the language, particularly in primary schools where, more often than not, teachers had not graduated in English and were often unable to speak the language (Punthumasen, 2007). The ELI, therefore, organises language training for English teachers around the country in order to aid their language development (MoE, 2006). Furthermore, the Ministry also inaugurated a scheme whereby they could 'identif[y] agents of expertise' (*ibid.*, p. 2) (known as Master Teachers) to pass on information and techniques about such ideas as student-centred learning to other teachers in their local areas, indeed, three of the teachers in the current study have reached Master Teacher status. This type of development, i.e. the passing down of information, is known as cascade training and involves Master Teachers and / or ERIC representatives who attend workshops or professional

development courses – often organised by overseas groups such as the British Council - before returning to their local areas to deliver the information to their colleagues.

Despite the fact that there is some debate over whether teachers actually change their pedagogical beliefs after receiving different forms of training (see Almarza, 1996), this issue of teacher development is an important one when discussing the effects of a language policy. Though the main aim of this thesis is to note how Thai English teachers conceptualise the current policy it makes sense to discuss some of the elements that go into the training of these teachers as certain ideas may influence how teachers interpret the policy's aims and goals.

Although some pre-service training takes place in universities, the majority of teachers usually study in education colleges known as *Rajabhats* (ADB, 2002). These courses normally last for four years during which the trainee-teachers study classes on a wide range of subjects including methods, linguistics, teaching techniques and language acquisition, as well as some English language courses (Phairee, *et al.*, 2008). Following this, the teachers have to partake in a teaching practicum which lasts for either one semester or a full year with a teaching load that ranges from six to sixteen hours a week (*ibid.*). Furthermore, this experience in the classroom gives the pre-service teachers a chance to see how the policy is put into practice, though it would be interesting to note how many of the teacher-supervisors that they work under observe or follow the new policy guidelines.

2.6.1 Bilingual Education in Thailand

The English Language Institute is also involved in providing some of the bilingual education programmes for schools throughout the country, a policy that has been developed 'to raise English language standards' (MoE, 2007a, p. 5). They organise the English Programme (EP) in schools, established in 1998, in order to improve levels of English. Currently there are over 300 of these schools in which English is used as a medium of instruction for at least four subjects including English, mathematics, science and physical education for a minimum of 15 hours a week (MoE, 2007b). The Mini English Programme (MEP) is very similar to the EP as it

uses English to teach the core subjects of Mathematics and Science, as well as English, though teaching hours range between 8 and 14 hours a week. Other forms of bilingual programmes include the English Plus Programme where native speakers teach English to local students; the Bilingual Programme, which sees some subjects taught in English and others in Thai, while the Immersion Programme has some subjects taught completely through English (Keyuravong, 2010).

In order to discover more about these types of programmes, Keyuravong (2010) interviewed some of the 'key stakeholders' within the field of English language teaching in Thailand on how these bilingual programmes are implemented. She found that schools generally have the freedom to use them as they wish though it should be noted that many of the schools around the country are unable to adopt these programmes as their students cannot afford the classes. Benefits associated with these forms of programmes include students having access to the language in a relatively authentic situation, with the Ministry of Education suggesting that they can aid students 'meet the needs of internationalization', as well as improving confidence and proficiency levels (Keyuravong, 2010, p. 82). Nevertheless, many disadvantages exist including the fact that it is difficult to find well-qualified teachers to teach the subject matter (the one school in this particular study that has adopted the MEP programme has had problems with this aspect), while there are many issues over funding, the fact that these programmes are generally restricted to areas where the socio-economic levels are high, in addition, tension sometimes exists between EP students and Thai-medium programmes (*ibid.*, 2010). Perhaps one of the biggest problems associated with these types of courses, and in particular the EP and MEP, is the effect on the levels of students in the subject areas, with Watson Todd (2001a) claiming that though students' English levels may be improving their scores in mathematics are not doing the same. Furthermore, the number of international schools in the country has increased dramatically over the past few years (MoE, 2007a) with many Thai families wishing to send their children to these schools in the hope that they can improve their English language skills, though clearly this has a minimal effect on English learning in the country as a whole (Punthumasan, 2007).

2.7 Summary

By discussing the role of English in both Thailand and the Southeast Asian region, as well as tracing the way that previous language policies have operated within the Thai education system, this chapter has situated the study in a socio-economic, historical and political context that allows for a more complex and fuller understanding of the English language policy in Thailand. By looking at this policy from a variety of perspectives it has become possible to comprehend some of the influences and beliefs that lay behind the policy. This is important as English is still strongly associated with the elite in Thailand (Rappa & Wee, 2006; Kulsiri, 2006; Hayes, 2008; Kosonen, 2008), as well as acting as a form of gate keeping with respect to university entrance and social mobility. In addition, despite holding a prominent role in the country's education policy since the inception of the Ministry of Education, the teaching of English in Thailand has not been regarded as successful (Watson Todd, 2001b and 2002; Kosonen, 2008) allowing for the policy, therefore, to be open to some form of criticality, particularly with regard to the inequalities over bilingual education programmes. In the following chapter, the theoretical framework of this study will focus on this criticality by examining the way that teachers make sense of the relationships between such constructs as the role of English and language policy.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3. Introduction

Having situated the main aims of the study in a socio-political context in the previous chapter, this thesis now moves on to critically review the relevant literature in the field, as well as discussing how this study has been theoretically underpinned. In order to do this, it will be divided into two sections. The first will focus on the epistemological perspective of this study, while part two will introduce and critically discuss some of the key constructs that form this thesis, namely, language policy, the role of English as a global language and teaching methodologies. It will further build on this theoretical framework by synthesising and critically evaluating the relevant literature in the field of teachers' beliefs and practices, as this thesis holds that by exploring more about these constructs, the current English language policy in Thailand can be better understood.

3.1 Epistemological Perspective

Crotty (2003) views the research process as being made up of four different elements: epistemology; theoretical perspective; methodology and methods, all of which inform one another. Since the last three on this list are more linked with the research plan or methodology of a study, they will be further discussed in chapter four, while the epistemological perspective, or what Hamlyn (1995, p. 242) terms, 'the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis' will be examined in this section. Pring (2000) suggests that it is important to understand the nature of what is to be investigated and therefore a clarification of both the epistemological and ontological positions is needed, that is, understanding how the world is viewed and how sense is made from it. Indeed, without an underpinning theory driving such a study, constructs such as language, school and power cannot be fully understood, or at least, critically understood (Silverman, 2000).

Troudi (2010) notes that the epistemology or what he terms the 'theoretical framework' is the intellectual structure that both guides a study and informs how data is to be viewed. He goes on to state that due to the complex nature of what is to be researched, a framework can often be made up of different elements. Therefore, due

to the complex nature of evaluating the effects of a language policy (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Ricento, 2006a) a multifaceted theoretical framework that uses a combination of social constructionism and critical theory will inform the theoretical perspective of this thesis. The former will focus on teachers' dispositions, that is, how teachers conceptualise their teaching practices, while a critical approach will be used to analyse the area of language policy, as this thesis views this construct as being representative of dominant ideologies (Morgan & Ramanathan, 2005).

3.2 Objective or Subjective?

With this in mind, this study has not set out to evaluate the English language policy in Thailand but instead aims to explore the effects it has had on those who have to work with it. I agree with Ricento (2006a) when he argues that evaluating policy is difficult due to the many variables involved and because 'success or failure is not always easy to measure, given the diverse expectations or different constituencies' (p. 18). It seems to me that assessing whether this policy has worked or not is a difficult proposition, in other words, deciding whether or not the policy has amended the speaking practices of a community, or that the language in question is perceived to have been 'successfully' incorporated or not into the community's practices are not easy questions to answer. This is due to the fact that this study does not view knowledge and reality as constructs that can be controlled or quantified, that, for instance, language change can be directly observed, but instead it is one that attempts to understand the multiple realities that are involved with the implementation of a new policy. Clearly, therefore, reality and knowledge in this study are not viewed as objective concepts to be investigated but neither can they be deemed to be solely subjective. If this were the case then it would entail placing my own perspective as the 'true' reality, rather than recognising that this 'reality' is working with other 'realities' that are already in existence. Furthermore, a subjectivist perspective would only allow for a limited form of reality. For instance, in this study, observing the teachers' practices may give me an insight into what the teachers are doing in their classrooms but it cannot provide me with the whole picture; one comprised of economic, social, political and pedagogical aspects. Nor does it offer a reason why these actions occur since this subjective viewpoint lacks contextual meaning. I would not be able to

understand the idea that the everyday reality of these teachers is one that is made up of 'prearranged patterns' that have subsequently become objectified (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 35). Thus, this thesis holds the view that meaning is not created but instead is constructed (Crotty, 2003; Blaikie, 2007), which has been manifested in this research by co-constructing the data with the teachers, much like Breen, *et al.* did in their 2001 study on teachers' pedagogical practices.

The fact that this policy has not been evaluated from either an exclusively objective or subjective perspective, but instead one that combines the two, means that the epistemology that this thesis draws upon is a constructionist one. This perspective claims that 'meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting' (Crotty, 2003, p. 43). Therefore, though the natural world is there, no meaning exists without the interaction of the mind. Indeed, this idea that meaning is constructed, not just by individual minds that impose meaning but that these individuals have, in turn, been influenced by the social practices that surround them, suggests that,

'...all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices... [that are] developed and transmitted within an essentially social context' (Crotty, 2003, p.42).

In other words, what this actually proposes is that meaning is constructed from something that already exists, an idea that Blaikie (2007) supports by arguing that as all knowledge is constructed upon previously held histories, beliefs and values, then no knowledge or reality can be theory free. Consequently, the epistemology that informs this study is based on a social constructionist view of how knowledge is formed, one that disagrees with the idea that there is a separate subjective or objective truth waiting to be discovered but instead one that works with a combination of both (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Crotty, 2003). Having already discussed in chapter 2 the historical and social contexts of the English language policy in Thailand, it can be noted that the current policy has not simply emerged from a vacuum but instead has been constructed over time and been infused with different forms of knowledge, beliefs and opinions that also need to be investigated (Canagarajah, 1999). It has, to use Berger & Luckmann's (1967)

terminology, been constructed by a sense of typification, habitualization and institutionalization.

3.3 Berger and Luckmann's Social Construction of Meaning

3.3.1 Typification

According to Berger and Luckmann (1967), typifications are routines of social interaction that become ways in which the subjectivity of others is easier to understand, that is, things that another person does can be perceived as being typical of them, which in due course help to form the social reality of everyday life (*ibid.*). Of course, other people's view of our own subjectivity is also expressed in another form of typification. The authors note that differences exist in the way that this sense of understanding the reality of others subsequently depends on whether the agents or issues are remote or close to the 'here and now' of our own reality. Thus, the teachers taking part in this study are aware that there has been a shift in the way that English is to be delivered to their students (through the policy) but for many of them this reality is far removed from their everyday lives. Instead, they have to deal with the reality of a student body that may not be interested in learning this language for a multitude of reasons, yet at the same time it is the teachers' responsibility to aid these students as this subject currently plays an important role in their students' future prospects. Therefore, the habitual actions and practices of the teachers in this particular region of the country may be different from those in other parts.

3.3.2 From Habitualization to Institutionalization

Emerging from this sense of typical behaviour is the concept of 'habitualization', which is a repeated activity that may be reproduced by an individual to help form a 'pattern of society' (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 71). When these actions are mutually 'habitualized' or adopted by others, they then become what is known as 'institutionalized'. This institutionalization of social practices comes about when habits are accepted as a given or viewed as common sense, particularly by those from future generations. This idea of passing down knowledge from one generation to another is important for these socially constructed meanings then become objectified as they appear to become real. Thus, meanings become objective in this

institutionalized process as they gain a history. This objectivity then becomes ‘hardened’ for future generations as they are further removed from the original formation or negotiation of meaning (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 76). This suggests that understanding or interpreting the original meaning may become rather complicated and that attempting to provoke or promote any form of change is also difficult to enact.

Following on from this, by its very nature, socially constructed knowledge cannot be regarded as a neutral construct due to the variety of meanings and interests that has gone into its construction. Some of these constructed meanings may represent interests that subsequently form reified common-sense practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Crotty, 2003; Breen, *et al.*, 2001), which have been accepted as ‘truth’ by some actors in certain social situations. For instance, many education ministries in the Southeast Asian region have accepted the idea that the English language is associated with modernity and progress despite concerns from some authors that this might not be the case (see for example, Canagarajah, 2005; Mühlhäusler, 1996). Crotty (2003) suggests that employing a social constructionist epistemology may help to challenge these accepted truths or what Berger and Luckmann (1967) term ‘institutionalisation’, namely, concepts and beliefs that have become accepted as common sense or real.

With this in mind, the main constructs that constitute this thesis need to be carefully examined, so for instance, how has this particular body of knowledge (the English language policy) been formed? What types of people, or actors, have been involved in its formation? Which forms of knowledge have been included or indeed omitted in its construction and what does this knowledge mean to different people in differing social and historical contexts? To answer these questions, the following section will discuss why Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1977) can be used as a key concept to allow for a better understanding of the social world and the ‘accepted truths’ within it.

3.4 Bourdieu’s Theory of Practice

This thesis draws strongly on Bourdieu’s theory of practice and, in particular, the

concepts of *habitus*, field and dispositions in order to explore the effects that a socially constructed language policy has on ‘institutionalized’ classroom settings. Despite not specifically writing on education policy, Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts can be viewed as a set of ‘thinking tools’ that can usefully research and clarify this area (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008, p. 729). Thus, with respect to the current study, it makes sense when attempting to discover more about the practices and beliefs of a group of teachers to employ this theory of practice as it offers a theoretical explanation for both the generation of these practices and what lies beneath them. Within this theory of practice, Bourdieu, like Berger and Luckman (1967), addresses the subjective-objective dynamic that both dominates and causes difficulties for social science research by bringing them together in order to provide a better understanding of social life. To demonstrate this, he notes that,

‘the subjectivist and the objectivist stand in dialectical relation. It is this dialectic of objectivity and subjectivity that the concept of *habitus* is designed to capture and encapsulate (Bourdieu, 1988 p. 782).

However, unlike Berger and Luckmann, whose work in this area was mainly theoretical and tended to focus only on practices rather than what underpins them, Bourdieu combines theory with practice. In order to do this, he employs a conceptual framework to suggest that what is socially constructed subsequently becomes objective or, in other words, ‘social facts become internalized’ (Maton, 2008, p. 53) and are ‘recognised as an embodiment of structure’ (Nash, 1999, p. 176). Thus, constructs such as school, curriculum and language policy can all be viewed through this framework, that is, something that has initially been socially constructed now forms part of an accepted objective social structure, a structure that is formed by ‘reifications of particular moments in the social process’ (King, 2000, p. 431).

Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, field and dispositions are, in turn, related to one another, with practices being formed from the relationship between *habitus* and field, while at the same time the relationship between dispositions and field also aid in the construction of the *habitus*. Despite this close connection and the fact that they do not operate alone, the next section will focus on each of them in order to clarify these concepts.

3.4.1 Dispositions

This paper aims to investigate the effects that the promotion of English in Thailand has on a group of local Thai language teachers in one particular region of the country. To do so, it focuses on how teachers conceptualise this policy by exploring what they do in their classrooms and to discover some of the reasons behind these actions (their beliefs), or what Bourdieu terms ‘dispositions’. By doing this, it is felt that both a closer approximation of what actually occurs and *why* may be ascertained as the relationship between the teachers’ practices and beliefs is explored. What this means is that in order to investigate the social practices taking place within one particular area or field then it is necessary to understand more about these dispositions for they ‘designate a way of being, a habitual state [...] a *predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination*’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977 (authors’ italics), as cited in Maton, 2008). Nash (2008, p. 53) sees the term ‘disposition’ as covering, ‘a wide range of acquired personal states, including those states of mind recognized as beliefs, which are conceived as habits embodied in a more or less durable manner’. Though dispositions are similar to beliefs and attitudes in that they influence behaviour, there are suggestions with beliefs that some form of agency is involved, that is, a teacher may know why he or she has acted in a certain manner. On the other hand, Bourdieu sees dispositions as ‘...generat[ing] perceptions, appreciations and practices’ (*ibid.*), which is rather more comprehensive and at the same time suggests that teachers may not always be aware of why certain practices are carried out. Furthermore, and this is important for this study, these dispositions arise from the socialisation process of the agents involved, that is, the teachers’ practices reflect the ‘central structural elements of their society’ (Nash, 1999, p. 185), which means that the teachers in this particular region in the northeast of Thailand share certain influences, contexts, beliefs and histories when teaching and using the English language policy.

A further illustration of this theoretical concept has Bourdieu noting that actors have a ‘feel for the game’ (Nash 1999, p. 176) and he goes on to use football as a way of explaining this idea. Players know and understand the game, they know what to do and when, they are aware of other players, the conditions and how the rules operate so that results, or ‘capital’, can be produced (Crossley, 2001; Thomson, 2008). Over time

this knowledge is built up, both from an historic (Crossley, 2001) and genetic (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008) perspective so that the players or agents have what is known as '*le sens pratique*', common sense or a mastery of what is needed to 'play the game' (Bourdieu, 1980 as cited in Breen, *et al.*, 2001, p. 471). If this is applied to the current study, it can be noted that over time the teachers have built up a set of dispositions that feed into their practices and ways of teaching, which in turn are reactions to their previous education and training, as well as policy changes that they have experienced. Bourdieu uses the concept of dispositions to explain this mastery, which explains why the teachers (or players) do particular things without necessarily knowing why as these dispositions drive their actions. Of course, when these agents (in this study, the teachers) function under different conditions or fields then this sense is not as strong. Bourdieu (1977, pp. 78-79) terms this phenomenon the 'hysteresis effect' and likens it to a fish out of water, a sense, for example, that many primary school teachers in Thailand may have experienced after 2001 when having to teach English for the first time, or how their secondary school counterparts felt when asked to teach the language in a more communicative fashion. Therefore, '*le sens pratique*' or 'practical mastery' (Maton, 2008, p. 54) is how teachers make sense of these experiences, which then allows them to better navigate differing fields.

Breen, *et al.* (2001), drawing heavily on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, carried out a study that aimed to understand more about this mastery when they investigated the principles and practices of a group of 18 experienced English-language teachers in an Australian ESOL context. The team of researchers co-constructed the data with these teachers in order to go beyond a simple description of the practices that they were seen to be doing. The teachers' practices were videoed over a series of classroom observations, which, by using stimulated recall procedures, allowed the authors to discover more about the '... interpretations of [the teachers'] own actions' (p. 477, 2001). From this data, the authors noted that individual teachers had different sets of classroom practices that were underpinned by different sets of dispositions. However, when viewed across the group, there appeared to be a finite set of practices assigned to each of these dispositions suggesting that the teachers shared a 'degree of professional consensus' (*ibid*, p.496), or what Bourdieu would term '*le sens pratique*'.

Therefore, by using Bourdieu's conceptual tools, the researchers were able to discover more about the dispositions that underpinned many of the observed practices, which in turn allowed them to understand the *habitus* of these teachers.

3.4.2 *Habitus*

It has already been noted that a set of teachers' dispositions helps to constitute the *habitus* but this 'structure' or form does not mean that it is something that is easy to view or even define, particularly as it may allow for ambiguities in its adoption (Nash, 1999). Indeed, when authors state that '*habitus* ... aims to shape our *habitus*' (Maton, 2008, p. 53) then this complexity is confirmed. This may be due to the fact that these dispositions, and indeed the fields or social spaces in which they occur, are all in constant flux, with the *habitus* constantly evolving, as well as being dependent on the social field and dispositions that help to form it. This relational link between the three aspects allows the concept to be used in order to explain how and why practices occur within social spaces and it is for this reason that the current study has adopted this conceptual framework. Bourdieu himself called the *habitus* a 'structured and structuring structure' (1994, p. 170), which means that this construct is influenced by the past, it 'helps to shape one's present and future practices' (Maton, 2008, p. 51) and is ordered rather than random (*ibid.*).

As previously noted when discussing Berger and Luckmann's concept of 'institutionalization' (1967), this issue of history is an important one as *habitus* operates as a 'system of schemes of perception and discrimination embodied as dispositions reflecting the entire history of the group' (Nash, 1999, p. 177). In other words, just as the *habitus* reflects the practices of a group so also do the practices of a group reflect the *habitus*, meaning that the *habitus* may be better understood by viewing these practices. Therefore, with regards to the current study, in order to discover more about the teaching practices that take place within this particular region, it is important to explore the reasons that underlie them. In other words, to find out more about how a group of English teachers in one particular area in the northeast of Thailand conceptualise their own practices in order to discover more about their *habitus*.

This thesis does not believe that the current English language policy in Thailand can be evaluated through objective means, for instance, by examining the performances of Thai students in domestic or international tests. Neither does it ask the Thai-English teachers in this study to explain what they think of the policy solely through a set of interviews; nor does it only observe how practices are carried out in classrooms since this is viewed as being a rather limited form of knowledge construction, whilst at the same time representing a perspective that is overly subjective. Rather, drawing on Breen, *et al*'s 2001 research, by employing the concept of *habitus* as an explanatory tool, one that encourages a combination of methods, differing viewpoints about the English language policy in Thailand can be revealed by exploring the relationship between the teachers' underlying dispositions or beliefs and their practices. It is, therefore, a tool that acts as a, 'means of viewing structure as occurring within small-scale interactions and activity within large-scale settings' (Reay, 2004, p. 439). When Maton (2008, p. 52) sees *habitus* as focusing 'on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being', it links both the dispositions and practices that the Thai teachers in this study have in their workplaces, which in turn allows for a closer look at how the latest English language policy has been conceptualised. To do this, and by that I mean to better understand the practices and dispositions of the Thai teachers, it is necessary to understand not just the *habitus* but also the social world, or field, in which it operates as these concepts are connected, ongoing and continuously evolving (Bourdieu, 1990, as cited in Maton, 2008).

3.4.3 Field

In simple terms, the concept of field acts as the social space in which agents operate and practices occur. However, rather than being seen as a separate entity, field and *habitus* are closely related to one another (Crossley, 2001), with Maton (2008) suggesting that this relationship is vital in order to understand social practices. Field can be viewed as the environment within which a social agent's *habitus* is expressed in patterns (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008) and can be studied by investigating these agents' practices. Furthermore, there are many different fields all of which generate different practices, which are, by extension, also representations of the *habitus*.

Indeed, the ‘social environment consists of a multiplicity of social fields in which agents produce practice, compete with one another and develop social capacities’ (*ibid.*, 2008, p. 732). These fields, which are viewed as being interconnected, can represent institutions such as cultural production, politics and education but subdivisions of fields also exist, for instance, language policy. Thus, the field of English language policy is examined in this study along with other related fields that constitutes its formation, including the role of English, teacher agency, as well as the field of power which Bourdieu viewed as being the most dominant as agents battle for capital (Lingard, *et al.*, 2005). Bourdieu argues that when conducting research, simply observing what happens is not enough to fully understand what is happening in a field but instead that it is ‘necessary to examine the *social space* in which interactions, transactions and events occurred (Bourdieu 2005, as cited in Thomson, 2008 (author’s italics)), a view that the current study agrees with.

Constructs such as language policy, the English language and learning theories all differ when they are looked at from different historical moments or perspectives (Crotty, 2003). It has already been noted that a *habitus* has a history and the same can be said of a field. Therefore, though the idea of a school in Thailand may be viewed as being something universal or constant, it is clear that many years ago, schools were very different places to what they are now. Compared to that time, universal access has been implemented, new subjects have been introduced into the state curriculum and there have been attempts to amend teaching methodologies. Moreover, when viewing the field of schooling in different parts of the country, it can be seen that, for instance, a city school in the Thai capital, Bangkok, is very different from one in a provincial town similar to where this research has taken place. Indeed, there are different perspectives of what a school means within this study. For example, one of the village schools in this study has only one English teacher working there but in addition to seeing itself as providing an environment for students to learn, it also attempts to help students break from some of the traditional practices that have prevented forms of progress in the area. This includes improving the role of its female students who are generally not expected to graduate from elementary school but instead remain in the village to work. This is very different from the other schools in

the study, including the one situated in the main provincial town that has adopted the Ministry of Education's Mini English Programme (MEP). In this course students learn core subjects through the medium of English with the aim of helping them to have a better chance of entering university. Thus, though the schools share similar goals - to help their students progress within their own local remits - these ideas are taking place within different social spheres or fields. These differences exist, despite the fact that the national education policy, which incorporates the English language policy, is the same for everyone in Thailand. Therefore, this study adopts Bourdieu's theoretical tools in an attempt to discover more about why this may have occurred and why education is seen as a socialising force that not only highlights but creates these differences in society (Bourdieu, as cited in Robbins, 2000).

This thesis sees Bourdieu's conceptual tools of *habitus*, field and dispositions as important ways of understanding the social space of how and why the English language is being taught in Thailand. Furthermore, Bourdieu's theory of practice emphasises the need to adopt an empirical perspective when conducting research - the practical over the theoretical - something which Canagarajah (1999) would agree with in order to avoid, 'miss[ing] most of the conflicts [that] take place in education' (p. 35). Thus, with the adoption of Bourdieu's conceptual tools underpinning this study, the remainder of this chapter will investigate some of the main constructs (or fields) that constitute the social space that surrounds a group of English language teachers in Thailand, which include educational and language policy; the role of English as a foreign language, as well as the issue of teachers' beliefs.

3.5 Teachers' Dispositions and Practices

It has already been suggested that by understanding what teachers think about what they do in classrooms, the objectified constructs of policy and curriculum may be better comprehended. Therefore, in order to discover more about how the Thai teachers in the current study have conceptualised the English language policy in their work place, it is useful to discover more about the dispositions (beliefs) that underpin their practices, much like Breen, *et al.*'s 2001 research into the practical mastery that teachers constructed to form their *habitus*. The term 'disposition' will be adopted in

this study as it forms part of the structure that generates ‘perceptions, appreciations and practices’ (Bourdieu, 1990, as cited in Maton, 2008, p. 51), which in turn constitute the *habitus* of what is to be researched. However, these dispositions are not always easy to comprehend since beliefs about teaching practices can be constructed from teachers’ own theoretical frameworks based on earlier teacher training (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000), as well as previous experiences as learners (Woods, 1996; Hayes, 2010), or what Lortie terms the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (1975). In addition, teachers are not always clear about how to verbalise their own beliefs about certain issues (Borg, 1999), while difficulty also exists in finding a clear definition of what teachers’ beliefs actually entail (Pajares, 1992; Borg, 2003; Basturkmen, *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, Breen, *et al.* (2001) note that there is considerable overlap in much of the terminology used in this field mainly due to the fact that different levels of beliefs exist, namely core and superficial. They go on to suggest in their study that teachers were able to describe their practices by referring to the principles that they held, which in turn were influenced by a deeper set of beliefs that concern such issues as the nature of teaching and learning. The fact that these beliefs are ‘experientially informed and appear to become deeply held and largely context-independent’ (Breen, *et al.*, 2001, p. 473) suggests that not only is the act of understanding what teachers do and think a difficult process, but that many studies that purport to have done so may not have actually accessed the teachers’ inner beliefs but rather only the outer principles. Indeed, this may be a factor behind claims that the ‘relationship between teacher beliefs and classroom practices is an inconclusive issue’ (Zheng, 2009, p. 79). Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, this type of research aids in the construction of grounded knowledge that can then be used in pre- and in-service teacher education, as well as offering a deeper understanding of what teachers do and why. Moreover, this form of research can challenge existing pedagogical practices, while policy reforms can also become better informed by an understanding of how teachers react to them (Breen, *et al.*, 2001).

In addition to Breen, *et al.*’s 2001 study about the relationship between teachers’ principles and their classroom practices, other studies to focus on this area include how teachers make classroom decisions (Breen, 1991; Woods, 1991), why they move

away from their lesson plans in the class (Bailey, 1996) and the idea of ‘flow’, which Tardy (2004) suggests can aid teachers comprehend more about their own beliefs and practices. This particular study, however, did not include classroom observation but instead employed an open-ended interview based on a set of statements about the concept. Woods (1991), on the other hand, in order to understand the planning and decision-making that goes on in teachers’ classrooms, employed a longitudinal study that adopted a series of methods, including classroom observations. Woods remarked that three cognitive areas emerged: knowledge, attitudes and beliefs (BAK), which can be seen as ‘points on a spectrum of meaning’ (Borg, 2003, p. 96). It should be noted, however, that research that aims to discover more about teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices often fails to recognise other contextual elements that may influence these practices (Burns, 1996).

3.5.1 Teachers’ Dispositions about Change

It is important to know what teachers think about changes in policy since they are the ones that will have to deal with these changes ‘on the ground’. Fullan (2001, p. 25) notes that educational changes can only occur when three areas are addressed: new materials, new teaching approaches and the possible ‘alteration of beliefs’. Thus, with respect to the current study, the Thai government wishes to change the teaching approaches in classrooms but if the teachers are unwilling or unable to do so then the policy’s goals will more than likely not be achieved. Teachers will not make immediate changes but instead refer to their own histories and knowledge before doing so. Thus, teachers in the current study may look at their own teaching context to see how previous policies have functioned before making any decision on whether to accept or carry out any changes.

With this idea of change in mind, Richards, *et al* (2001) carried out a study on 112 (including 22 from Thailand) pre-service teachers to find out about their beliefs about the process of learning and teaching and whether these can actually change. To do this, the authors collected data by having the participants briefly answer two questions in written form. The fact that they did not observe the teachers meant they had little chance of validating the data but instead relied solely on teachers’ subjective

perspectives, somewhat weakening the claims that the teachers' core beliefs had been changed. Indeed, the beliefs described in this study may only represent the more superficial level, which in turn may be explained by Almarza's suggestion (1996) that teachers can be seen to adopt new beliefs after being exposed to different forms of training but that these may not last, with teachers returning to their previously held beliefs soon afterwards. This raises the important issue over whether any deliberate form of intervention can have an effect on the way that teachers think or act in their classrooms. The literature is divided on this topic with some studies suggesting that change in beliefs can occur after teachers have taken a professional development course or workshop (for example, Macdonald, *et al.*, 2001; Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000), while others point out that teachers' beliefs are simply reinforced after such a course (Zeichner & Gore, 1990), or that little or no change occurs (Almarza, 1996; Tatto, 1998).

Two other studies can further illustrate this division in opinion. Peacock (2001) conducted a longitudinal study on 146 pre-service teachers in Hong Kong, all of whom were studying for an English-language teaching degree. For the main part of his study, he employed the beliefs about language learning (BALLI) questionnaire (Horwitz, 1988) and then compared the answers of these trainees to a group of more than forty experienced ESL teachers over a three-year period in order to see if the inexperienced teachers had changed their beliefs. He noted that the differences between these two groups, which he termed 'detrimental beliefs', that existed in the first year remained by the end of the course, which suggests that these pre-service teachers had not been influenced by the training and / or course material they had received over the three years (Peacock, 2001, p. 183). On the other hand, MacDonald, *et al.* (2001) observed some change in teacher cognition about second language acquisition (SLA) after a group of over fifty teachers had taken a course on this subject. This inconsistency over the effect of such courses demonstrates the problems that those disseminating the current English language policy in Thailand have with respect to promoting change, particularly as ultimately it is the teachers who decide to what extent this change is actually implemented (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

3.5.2 Teachers' Dispositions and Policy

In order to understand more about how teachers make sense of policy, then the relationship between their beliefs and the policy needs to be investigated (Darling-Hammond, 1990). The difficulties involved in accessing teachers' beliefs might be one reason why so few studies have been carried out on what Thai teachers' actually think about the 2001 English language curriculum. Thongsri, *et al.* (2006), however, conducted a research study on 156 English secondary school teachers in a southern region of Thailand in order to discover more about their views on the curriculum. The fact that this study was carried out in government schools (the teachers taught grades 4 and 5) is important since much of the research on issues relating to the curriculum usually takes place in the more idealised setting of a university. The authors used a questionnaire based on statements taken from the curriculum, coupled with some classroom observations, to see how teachers reacted to the policy. From the questionnaire data, it was noted that the teachers strongly supported the curriculum, however data from the observations revealed that this support was much lower, suggesting that a gap exists between the policy and the teachers' practices. The teachers acknowledged that there were problems, including a lack of knowledge about the teaching methodologies in the reforms (Laopongharn & Sercombe, 2009), a lack of support (Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008), few opportunities to practise English and their own poor language ability (Hayes, 2010). However, the most serious of these involved the influence of the university entry examination, which forced the teachers in this study to focus on only teaching grammar so that their students might have a better chance of being accepted into higher education, a situation comparable to another EFL country in the region, Japan (Seargent, 2008). To counter these difficulties, the authors suggest that teachers need more training in understanding the curricular goals and in particular that a more communicative approach to teaching should be adopted. These recommendations are fairly typical of studies carried out in the aftermath of the implementation of policy (see also Khuvasanond, *et al.*, 2010), reflecting an uncritical acceptance of the policy's goals and inferring that much of the blame for its failure is linked to poor performances of the teachers (Liddicoat, 2004; Hayes, 2010). Though somewhat limited, the fact that this study employed a mixed methodology to collect its data demonstrates an attempt

to avoid an overly subjective perspective. This has not always occurred in other studies wishing to understand more about teachers' beliefs and which tend to accept teachers' subjective responses without taking into consideration contextual issues (see Richards, *et al.*, 2001; Tercanlioglu, 2001). Instead, the current study, drawing from Bourdieu, notes the importance of understanding more about the *habitus* of the teachers, so that discovering more about what teachers think and do in their classrooms may allow for a better understanding of the English language policy in Thailand.

3.6 Education Policy Research

Since the main aim of this thesis is to explore the role that the English language policy is having on a group of English teachers in a rural area of Thailand, it makes sense to discuss the social fields that constitutes the *habitus* of these particular agents. The perspective that this discussion takes is critical in that it views education policy, and by extension language policy, as being socially constructed and therefore influenced by previous ideologies and beliefs (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007). Furthermore, no policy can include all forms of knowledge, which means that what is included is not neutral (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Cohen, *et al.*, 2004), while issues about why certain types of knowledge have been omitted also need to be addressed. Therefore, policies need to be viewed as constructs formed by dominant epistemological and ontological perspectives (Morgan & Ramanathan, 2005) that represent different power structures in society (Pennycook, 1989; Tollefson, 1991 and 2002; Canagarajah, 1999). Ricento (2006a, pp. 6-7) confirms this when stating 'Decisions about which languages will be planned for what purposes ultimately reflect power relations among different groups and socio-political and economic interests.'

Before focusing on the field of English language policy, it is useful to examine and clarify some of the issues surrounding the concept of education policy and curriculum. Ball (1997), in reviewing the educational policy landscape in the UK, raises some interesting points with respect to both how policy is defined and viewed. He draws on Elmore's argument that policy is, by its very nature, 'additive, layered and filtered' (1997, p. 264), which suggests that not only is this kind of knowledge

socially constructed, but that it is important to take a critical perspective when investigating it. Elmore (1996) further expands on this idea of criticality when he suggests that education policy is often made up of three different aspects. The first concerns the introduction of a new policy which is often viewed as, ‘tak[ing] precedence over all previous policies’ (p. 500), which subsequently lends it a sense of superiority and legitimacy. The second issue involves the perception that a policy carries within it a single message and that this message emerges from a central organising body.

When considering the English language policy in Thailand the latter part of this is true, especially in the policy’s implementation, which is very much ‘top-down’ in nature emanating as it does from the centralised Ministry of Education. However, though the Ministry may have intended this policy to be viewed as one containing a consistent set of ideas and values, this has not always been the case; for those having to deal with it, such as the teachers, do so in a variety of ways that reflect their own beliefs and local contexts. This is linked to Elmore’s third point, which argues that a policy does not operate in a similar fashion in all contexts, that is, no idealised version of a policy exists. Ball (1997) agrees with this when he states that, ‘policies pose problems to their subjects’ (p. 265) meaning that they only truly start to function when they are acted upon by those having to work with them, that is, until there is a sense of agency involved (Canagarajah, 2005).

3.7 Agency

This question of participant involvement or agency is an important one as it allows policy to come to life as teachers decide on whether to adopt, adapt or ignore policy goals. Indeed, until this agency is initiated, policies are little more than idealised versions of what policy-makers see as solutions to problems (Ball, 1997). Thus, according to the current policy guidelines, teachers and students in Thailand need to be aware that English is the language of the future and that teaching styles have to be modernised in order to achieve the goals of the government (ONEC, 2005). However, not only are policies messy and problematic (Ball, 1997) as they have been constructed onto previous layers of policy (Elmore, 1996) but they may also be

viewed as irrelevant by those who have to work with them. For instance, some teachers in this study are already accustomed to the policy's goals and have few difficulties with the new teaching concepts and ideas that are being promoted. Others may not see the policy aims as being in any way beneficial for their particular circumstance or that they already use something that is perfectly suited to the contextual demands of their social spaces due to experiences built up over years of practice. For other teachers, however, this may not be the case, with the policy introducing a level of stress or anxiety that they may never have previously experienced. Primary school teachers in Thailand, for instance, had never needed to know or teach English until it became a compulsory subject in 2001. This added pressure of teaching English for the first time, or having to do so in a new manner, may be one of the reasons behind the significant number of English teachers who have retired in recent times (Mackenzie, 2002). A further effect that this policy has had on local contexts is that secondary school teachers have noticed that there are now different levels of English in their classes due to the fact that many primary school teachers had never taught the subject before.

Therefore, the way that a teacher reacts to the policy is an important aspect of a policy's life. Canagarajah (2006) suggests that the manner in which teachers deal with a language policy is ideological – they may reject it or indeed, it may be re-worked to suit the pedagogical situation that the teachers find themselves in, particularly in what he terms 'periphery areas' (Kachru's 'outer circle' countries), such as the one involved in this study. This is illustrated in Canagarajah's 1999 ethnographic study on the teaching of English during a time of war in Sri Lanka, when he realised that the learners there were unable to engage with the English language being taught, as it did not speak to them of their own context or, to use Bourdieu's terminology, the field. A further issue, according to Canagarajah (1999), was due to the fact that teachers, unable to produce their own materials, had to rely on those produced by Western communities, which lacked local context and, therefore, meaning for the learners in those areas, something that certain authors also suggest may be the case in Thailand (Watson Todd & Keyuravong, 2004). However, he does not suggest that learners and teachers simply wish to dismiss English but that it can be taught additively, insofar

that if allowed to do so, there is enough agency among those receiving English to ensure that the language can suit their own needs (Canagarajah, 1999).

In conjunction with this, Ball (1997) notes that many studies about classroom practices fail to take into account the influence that a policy may have on teachers, students, the development of materials and even the way that social practices are carried out away from the school environment. This ‘de-contextualisation’ of studies then allows for policy-makers to view and promote policy as a stand-alone construct that acts as a remedy to solving problems that the school or teachers may be perceived as having. A further issue emerging from this is that research into policy can be limited as it only focuses on single cases whose outcomes tend to be a ‘reiteration of the ‘policy-practice’ gap’ (Ball, 1997 p. 265), a gap that the writer goes on to suggest is often viewed as, ‘an implementation failure on the part of teachers or schools’ (*ibid.*). Understanding more about the impact of localised agency can further improve critical reflection (Canagarajah, 2005), as well as discovering more about ‘uncommon sense’ (Freire, 1970). This also allows the recognition of local and vernacular modes of learning and teaching (Canagarajah, 1999), as well as a more critical analysis of syllabus design itself (Benesch, 2001; Kubota, 2004; Toh, 2003). This criticality leads onto the next section of this chapter, which will focus on another of the main constructs underlying this study: the language policy field (in Bourdieu’s sense of the word) and the effects it may have on the *habitus* of the agents involved.

3.8 Language Policy

Needless to say, language policies share many of the characteristics of education policy including the fact that they are rather difficult to define. Nevertheless, it can be seen that language policies attempt to bring about some form of change in the way that languages are used, spoken or taught and include ‘deliberate choices made by governments or other authorities with regard to the relationship between language and social life’ (Djité, 1994, p. 63). When these desired changes occur in education, the term language-in-education policy is often used to describe this phenomenon (Liddicoat, 2004). Thus, when a language policy is formally declared, much as the English language policy has been within the Thai Education Act (ONEC, 2005), then

its purpose is to bring about change. This type of change needs to be evaluated but Cooper (1989) suggests that as there is no ‘generally accepted language planning theory, if by theory [it is meant] a set of logically interrelated, empirically testable propositions’ (p. 41), then it is a difficult construct to evaluate or assess. This may be due to the complexity of the issues involved, or the multitude of variables, with Ricento (2006a, p. 18) also pointing out that, ‘success or failure is not always easy to measure, given the diverse expectations or different constituencies’. These complexities arise from the fact that any discussion on language policy must involve much more than just the issue of language (Pennycook, 2001; Tsui and Tollefson, 2007). It is, for instance, clearly politically motivated, with language choice and planning, ‘...ultimately reflect[ing] power relations among groups and socio-political and economic interests’ (Ricento, 2006a, p. 6). These ideologies about the role of languages affect the policies and, by extension, the way that these languages are to be taught.

In attempting to unravel the complex processes of language policy and possibly also to compensate for the lack of a clear definition, Hornberger (1994) offers a framework to aid in the comprehension of this construct. Based on previous research from the field (for example, Cooper, 1989; Haugen, 1983) she has constructed a framework containing three types of planning: status, acquisition and corpus. In addition, she includes two main approaches that deal with form (policy planning) and function (cultivation planning). The policy planning refers to macro-issues such as standardising forms of a language, while cultivation planning is connected to smaller, micro-issues that include the maintenance of a language. Further clarification of how these approaches could affect the study of a language policy were added in the form of ‘goals’, which can be seen in Table 4 below (Hornberger, 1994, p. 78). To further explain these different types of planning, it can be noted that status is concerned with the way languages are used; corpus deals with how a language is constituted; while acquisition planning generally refers to issues surrounding those who use the language.

Approaches	Policy planning (on form)	Cultivation planning (on function)
Types	Goals	Goals
Status planning (About uses of language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardization status • Officialization • Nationalization • Proscription 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revival • Maintenance • Interlingual communication International / intranational • Spread
Acquisition planning (About users of language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group • Education/School • Literature • Religion • Mass media • Work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reacquisition • Maintenance • Foreign language / second language • Shift
Corpus planning (About language)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardization Corpus Auxiliary code • Graphization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernization Lexical Stylistic • Renovation Purification Reform Stylistic simplification Terminology unification

Table 4: Language Planning Goals: An Integrative Framework

Adapted from Hornberger (1994, p. 78) (Note: In **bold** the main focus of the current study)

This framework is useful, especially as ‘there is no overarching theory’ within the field (Ricento, 2006a, p. 10), allowing researchers to ‘unpeel the onion’ of language policy studies (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 401). Using the information from Table 4, it can be noted that the current study has adopted an acquisition planning approach (highlighted in the table), as it deals with Thai speakers of English. The English language policy has been implemented at a national level (from the Ministry of Education) and its main focus is on schools (though as the Thai government’s overall aim is to establish English as an important second language in the country, mass media and work could also have been highlighted). As for cultivation planning, the main function of the language policy is to improve the levels of English, though

the issue of whether this is at the level of a second or foreign language is one that needs to be addressed further.

3.9 The Role of English

English is not the official second language in Thailand but it is recognised as the most important foreign language there (Baker, 2008; Wiriyaichitra, 2002). In chapter two, it has been pointed out that previous English policies in the country have not always been successfully incorporated across the whole of Thai society, with only urban, elite groups benefiting (Hayes, 2010; Kosonen, 2008). Indeed, Cummins and Davison (2007, p. 3) argue that in ‘non-colonial contexts [such as Thailand] access to English is also associated with social stratification both with respect to who gets access and the social advantages of access’. Notwithstanding this, there has been little or no debate concerning the major role that English now plays in the country, or indeed in the region. It is almost universally accepted in Thailand that English is necessary to aid with its future development (Wiriyaichitra, 2002), mirroring suggestions from Philippon (1992) that the language is often linked with the concepts of technological advancement, democracy and modernity. Indeed, he goes further and suggests that English acts as a form of imperialism through ‘linguistic hierarchisation’ (Philippon, 1997, p. 238) that helps to create and maintain forms of dominant power, though there exist a wide range of dissenting voices with respect to this view (see for example, Crystal, 1997; Widdowson, 1998; Canagarajah, 1999). There is a general acceptance in Thailand that English is vital (MoE, 2008), despite the fact that there is a significant amount of criticism about the role of the language (Pennycook, 2001). This is an important point as it disagrees with the assumption that everyone needs to learn English (Bruthiaux, 2002), while implying the importance of taking into consideration issues such as the impact the language may have on local or mother tongue languages (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006; Troudi, 2009) other parts of the curriculum (Mühlhäusler, 1996), or indeed whether any actual benefits actually accrue (Toh, 2003).

Furthermore, the notion that learning English is necessary in order to participate in the globalised world is based on the premise that all knowledge is equal and that all people have the same access to this knowledge (Canagarajah, 2005). This is clearly

not the case, with many learners of English in Thailand having to invest huge amounts of time and money into learning what may be a second or even third language; indeed, the participants in this study and many of their students are multi-lingual speakers. This investment means that before participation in this globalised world occurs, the speakers from these areas are already at a disadvantage compared to those from the West. This subsequently allows those with dominant forms of knowledge, in this case English, to promote their own values through this language. Thus, though English in Thailand is viewed, indeed promoted, as the language of modernity and democracy, it may actually hinder any progress towards those goals, particularly for those who do not speak it as their first language.

3.9.1 Imported Methodologies in Local Contexts

The promotion of English as the language of the future and modernity in a globalised world also means that ‘appropriate’ teaching methodologies accompany this spread. Consequently, the Ministry’s guidelines for teaching foreign languages in Thailand include the call to ‘develop students’ basic practical communication abilities’ (ONEC, 2005) in order to counter the poor levels of teacher-centred lead approaches. Much of the blame for this, according to the Thai Ministry of Education, lies with the outdated teaching methodologies that exist in Thai schools. Therefore, students are encouraged to become more autonomous in their learning, as their teachers adopt more student-centred approaches into their practices, while in the field of language learning a more communicative language learning style has also been demanded.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) first appeared in Thailand in the 1980s when eight educational service areas (ERIC) were established in order to disseminate the concept of attaining communicative competence (Kwangsawad, 2007). However, despite being promoted in each national curriculum development since then, there are still worries over the success of this approach, with many teachers still unsure as to what it actually entails (Hayes, 2009), while there are few opportunities for teachers and learners to practically engage with it (Khamkhien, 2010a). Indeed, teachers in Thailand still tend to teach in a passive manner despite these changes (Watson Todd & Keyuravong, 2004). For example, Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison (2008) note

that there was no demonstration of communicative language teaching practice in their classroom observations of three teachers from grades 5-8 in a Thai metropolitan school, despite having been told by the school's supervisor that the English language teachers in question had been well trained. The authors subsequently changed the approach of their methodology in order to find out how much and what type of English these teachers were using. They analysed the recorded transcripts of classroom talk in order to note the proportion of L1 (Thai) versus L2 (English) and discovered that the teachers only used English between 7.5 and 25.5% of the time, with much of this talk either followed by translations into Thai or consisting of basic classroom instructions. Afterwards, when asked about this in stimulated recall protocols, the teachers stated that they were disappointed with their students' performances, which they felt was due to the low level of general education studies in the school. The authors suggest that as the teachers misunderstood the main components of the new policy, better resources and training are needed to help improvements in this area, a suggestion that implies that these teachers were somehow to blame for not understanding the policy. This is interesting because, despite calling for more teacher involvement in policy decisions so that a sense of 'curriculum coherence' may be attained (Johnson, 1998), the researchers failed to question the policy itself. This was despite the fact that when asked about the current policy the teachers replied that it did not suit their students' or contextual needs. This would suggest that these 'stakeholders', as Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison term them, may need more training before they could be fully involved in the policy process, yet, and this is similar in many other studies, there is little or no questioning of the policy itself (Hayes, 2010).

Using feedback from questionnaires, as well as follow-up classroom observations, Kwangsawad (2007) wished to know whether a group of 173 teachers from the northeast of the country had become more accustomed to using CLT practices. The author noted that the participants preferred to use a PPP (present, practise and produce) approach to teaching and were worried that their low levels of English would prevent them from adopting the CLT approach. Though the research design was somewhat limited, the author did raise some interesting questions about the fact

that these teachers were used to teaching in the style that they themselves had been taught (Lortie, 1975); while the time and language demands of the new approach left many of them ‘overwhelmed’ (Kwangawad, 2007, p. 275). On the other hand, Iemjinda (2007) conducted a study with nine primary school teachers of English in which she attempted to change their teaching practices through a professional development course so that they would be less teacher-centred and act more as ‘facilitator[s] in a learner-centred classroom’ (p. 91). Iemjinda used questionnaires and interviews, as well as employing a classroom observation checklist to collect her data. Using six different criteria to measure CLT, she found that the teachers’ practices changed after taking this professional development course, the content of which was organised around a task-based learning approach to teaching. Though it should be remembered that there is still confusion over the effects of these types of courses, she suggested that they could successfully help a more learner-centred approach to be adopted across the country.

In a study from another EFL context, Nishino (2008) used a questionnaire to discover more about 21 Japanese secondary teachers’ beliefs on communicative language teaching. Her findings suggest that for CLT to become more effective, then ‘changes in educational conditions are necessary’, (*ibid.*, p. 44). This is in tune with the idea that promotion of these approaches often fails to understand the constraints that learners in peripheral areas face, namely a lack of motivation, poor learning facilities, few chances to practise and the fact that many of the learners are already multilingual (Hayes, 2010). Liddicoat (2004) suggests that there has been a lack of research into the relationship between language teaching methods, such as communicative language teaching (CLT) or student-centred learning and how they may affect language learning. Interestingly, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996, p. 200) argue that:

‘terms like ‘communicative approach’ ‘learner-centredness,’ and “group work” have long become for many non-native teachers and learners synonymous with progress, modernization, and access to wealth’.

This reflects the issues raised by Philippon (1992) over the language itself. Further to this, Ellis (1996) doubts whether CLT can actually be adopted into all educational contexts, and in particular Asian ones. Block (2008) agrees and sees CLT not only as being inextricably linked with the spread of English but suggests that many of the

problems associated with this form of learning are linked to the gap between imported pedagogical principles and local teaching contexts.

3.9.2 Student-centred Learning

Soon after the 1999 Education Act was implemented, the Secretary General of the National Education Commission, Dr. Rung Kaewdang, claimed that rote learning, will 'be eliminated from all primary and secondary schools and be replaced with student-centred learning...' (Bunnag, 2000, p. 5). Student-centred learning is another of the constructs that form part of the current education policy and can be viewed as a concept that allows students to take more control over their own learning. The Secretary General went on to warn that any teacher that continued with this teacher-centred approach would receive special training in order to promote the ideals of learner autonomy in the Thai classroom. However, Kantamara, *et al.*, (2006) note that since the reforms have been introduced, student-centred learning ideals have yet to infiltrate Thai classrooms on a wide scale, indeed, they suggest that a 'relatively small percentage of Thailand's 400,000 plus teachers have made the shift towards learner-centered teaching' (p. 5), something which Punthumasen (2008) would agree with.

Much like the curriculum of 1996 when the construct was first introduced into the Thai curriculum, the latest version does not offer a set of norms or rules about the concept of student-centred learning for teachers to follow but instead allows teachers to decide for themselves how they wish to go about incorporating, or not as the case may be, this approach. This flexibility may be seen as something positive as teachers create new ideas in the classroom but at the same time, other teachers and their school directors may not fully understand the concept. This creates a situation in which the large extent of 'flexibility' involved raises questions about consistency, with some schools providing better quality teaching and materials than others. This issue is also considered by Thamraksa (2003), who in discussing the issue of student-centred learning in Thailand suggests that teachers may be somewhat 'perplexed' about their relationship with this form of teaching pedagogy (p. 59). Students, according to the author, are also concerned that the teaching quality they receive might be affected and

although the author does not carry out any empirical research to support these claims, she sees this learning approach as beyond criticism and instead blames ‘the teachers’ misinterpretation, misuse and abuse of the concept’ (p. 60). On the other hand, Hallinger and Kantamara (2000) see the Ministry of Education’s traditional top-down approach of implementing a policy before any training has been organised as one of the reasons for this confusion amongst teachers, while Kantamara, *et al.*, (2006) suggest that reasons for the failure of this approach to take root is due to the fact that the term ‘learner-centred’ does not exist in the Thai language which then causes misunderstandings among teachers and directors of schools. They also feel that due to cultural and historical contexts, this type of learning style is somewhat difficult to put into practice, which means students do not question teachers who, in turn, rarely question school directors. The writers suggest that in order to promote the ideals of student-centred learning, a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches are needed and they offer the suggestion of a small-scale agricultural case study to help with this change of approach to learning. They point out that by working with the local community, teachers and students can design a curriculum that reflects local contexts and interests. This idea can subsequently be ‘scaled up’, thanks in part to funding and support from the Ministry, which would then allow the project to be adopted in other areas. This principle can be applied to the design of a local English language curriculum with students working on localised issues that affect their lives rather than dealing with something away from the ‘here and now’.

Wongphothisarn (2009) notes that in other studies connected to learner autonomy carried out in Thailand, both teachers and students have difficulty in teaching or learning through a learner-centred approach. This review focuses on eight different studies though only two of them were carried out in secondary schools, with the remainder from university contexts. In both of the secondary school studies the policy or the idea of learner-centredness was not seen as having succeeded with Nonkukhetkhong, *et al.* (2006) noting that in their case study of five English-language teachers working in the north of the country that, although the teachers were enthused with the idea of implementing a learner-centred approach, it was clear from classroom observations (some of which were videotaped), interviews and self-report

questionnaires that the teachers were not fully aware of how this construct was supposed to work. It should be noted, however, that these teachers also felt somewhat let down by a lack of support regarding this issue, thus reflecting similar claims made by participants in studies by Kantamara, *et al.*, (2006) and Thongsri, *et al.* (2006), especially as Nonkukhetkhong, *et al.* (2006) suggest that policy implementation needs to take into consideration teachers' voices. In the second study, which focused on the effectiveness of student access centres, Darasawang, *et al.* (2007) demonstrated that a majority of students (69%) only used these centres as they were told to do so, while the institutions involved did not feel that the centres were worthwhile and only implemented them due to government pressure. The authors suggested that this lack of interest was due to the small amount of training that the teachers received, and that teachers and students clearly did not understand the concept of learner autonomy.

One reason for the difficulties with this approach is that there is also a suggestion from some authors (see Wongphothisarn, 2009; Adamson, 2005; Foley, 2005) that due to the influence that Theravada Buddhism plays on Thai life, concepts such as cooperation and respect help, 'to preserve a natural, hierarchical, and social order' (Saengboon, 2004, p. 24), meaning that Thai teachers are held in high esteem by their students (Baker, 2008). Indeed, Adamson (2005), in his study on the need for foreign teacher development in Thailand to include cultural awareness, highlights the importance of understanding the strong role that Buddhism plays in the education system. With this in mind, reasons for the rejection of learner autonomy in classroom settings may be understood, as students do not wish to question authority or to move away from the teacher-centred dynamic. One further issue that needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that learner-centredness, much like communicative language teaching, is viewed as a 'western' approach (Sinclair, 1997; Kantamara, *et al.*, 2006), which is often simply accepted without any criticality by those involved in its dissemination (in this case the Thai Ministry of Education). This is important, as this acceptance of the approach tends to not take into consideration local issues or contexts (Little, 1991; Biggs, 1994). Indeed, as previously discussed, the same questions need to be addressed about the English language itself when discussing the role it plays in an EFL environment such as Thailand.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has built upon the theoretical perspectives provided by the conceptual tools of Berger and Luckmann (1967) and Bourdieu (1977) to note that knowledge and reality are both plural and socially constructed. By examining and discussing constructs such as teachers' dispositions, the role of English in an EFL context and its related teaching methodologies, the chapter has further added to this theoretical underpinning. It also contends that as much of the research carried out on the English language policy in Thailand has tended to suggest that the continuing low levels of English are due to teachers' failings (Kwangsawad, 2007; Khamkhien, 2010a), then a different perspective is needed, one that wishes to discover more about those who work with the policy, as well as exploring where and why a policy comes to life. If classrooms are viewed as a microcosm of a language policy, after all, this is the social space where policy makers wish to influence and where a policy can be seen to come to life, then these are the spaces, which need to be examined. Therefore, the following chapter will focus on ways to discover how this policy is conceptualised by those who have to work with it.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4. Introduction

The preceding chapter outlined the theoretical perspective of this study, as well as reviewing the relevant literature in the field, while the main focus of this chapter is to outline the methodology employed in this thesis. Since this study draws upon the view that multiple realities and therefore, multiple meanings exist, it will employ an interpretive research framework in order to explore what Bourdieu (1991) terms the *habitus* of a group of Thai teachers and how they make sense of the current English language policy through their teaching actions and dispositions. Furthermore, as this area of language policy is rather ‘messy’ (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), one that often causes problems rather than solves them (Ball, 1997), choosing a methodology that best suits this field is not such an easy task (Crotty, 2003). Ricento (2006b, p. 131) notes that in investigating beliefs and opinions on the effects of language policies, ‘...best research is that which uses an array of techniques and perspectives in order to achieve the most valid results possible’. Therefore, rather than relying on one particular methodology, this study will draw on a well-established body of methodologies that have been adopted in interpretive studies in order to enable these multiple realities to be better understood. This combination of methodologies, inherently qualitative in nature, will feature exploratory and ethnographic perspectives.

This chapter is divided into two sections: the first will offer a brief description and justification for adopting this framework of research, while the second part will describe how this research process has been conducted, with particular reference to the context of the study, the participants, the methods of data collection, a consideration of the ethical issues involved, as well as how this data has been analysed. Before examining the methodology in more detail, it may be useful to note that this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What teaching practices do a group of Thai English language teachers employ in their classrooms?

2. What dispositions underlie these practices?

3. What is the relationship between the teachers' practices and dispositions with the current English language policy in Thailand?

4.1 Research Paradigms

As the epistemology of this thesis has already been outlined in the previous chapter the remaining three elements of Crotty's model (2003) will be discussed in this section, beginning with the theoretical perspective, which Troudi (2010) notes as being both practical and theoretical unlike the epistemology, which lacks a more practical component. Within the literature, there is some confusion over the terminology of this element with Creswell (2009) and Perry (2005) both calling it research design, Troudi (2009) uses research framework, while Richards (2009) terms it the constructivist paradigm and Crotty (2003) employs the phrase theoretical perspective. However, for purposes of clarity and to avoid confusion with the theoretical perspective that has already been discussed in the previous chapter (Crotty's epistemology), this thesis will adopt the term research paradigm (Ernest, 1994, Cohen, *et al.*, 2000; Richards, 2009). It has already been noted in chapter three that language policies are not static and that the idea that their evaluation can be objective has been challenged in recent times (see Ricento & Hornberger, 1996) as the effects that are produced from these policies are often difficult to predict due to such criteria as the involvement of local agency (Ball, 1997; Canagarajah, 2006). Therefore, this thesis has adopted an interpretative research framework to explore the effects of the English language curriculum in Thailand on local teachers' practices and the dispositions that drive them.

In chapter three it has been demonstrated that this thesis draws on a combination of social constructionism and critical theory in order to explain the theoretical underpinnings of the key constructs discussed in this study, namely, the influence of the English language, teaching methodologies and policy, as well as teachers' practices and beliefs. From this perspective it is clear that a positivist research framework would not suit this study as it '...postulates the objective existence of

meaningful reality... [that is] value-neutral, ahistorical and cross-cultural' (Crotty, 2003). The interpretive research paradigm, on the other hand, attempts to make sense of the world rather than control it (*ibid.*), which is what this study aims to do when viewing the way Thai teachers conceptualise the English language policy in their own classrooms.

For the most part, theory generally emerges from the data in the interpretive paradigm, while also allowing for a wide variety of interpretations on how research should be carried out, which is consistent with the theoretical perspective that this study draws upon. In addition, the interpretive paradigm is not usually seen as something neutral, since it contains personal involvement from the researcher and, in the case of this study, the teachers being researched, which suggests that some element of criticality may also be adopted. Bourdieu views this type of research as encompassing some criticality and indeed his own methodology is viewed as one 'liberating' individuals – and society - from the social forces that dominated them' (Grenfell, 2008a, p. 5). Despite this, the critical paradigm has not been adopted as the principle research framework in this thesis since the main aim is not to set out to change any particular system of education or teachers' belief but rather to discover more about how the curriculum has influenced teachers' work, that is, this study aims to understand rather than to challenge (Crotty, 2003). However some elements of criticality have been employed in this thesis and will be dealt with in the discussion section in chapter 6.

4.2 Methodology

Similar to the terminological issues used to describe the previous element, a number of differing definitions exist about the guiding plan of the research. For instance, both Pring (2000) and Crotty (2003) use the term methodology, Richards (2009, p. 150) notes that in the literature this element is often referred to as 'tradition... analytic framework or approach', while Creswell (2009, p. 11) uses 'strategies of inquiry', which he describes as giving 'specific direction for procedures in a research design'. These strategies are important as they act as a plan that attempts to answer the question of how the information needed for the research is to be gathered (Miles and

Huberman, 1994). With this in mind, it is felt that the best way to explain the overall plan or strategy (Crotty, 2003) of this thesis is to describe it as one that is qualitative in nature with exploratory and ethnographic perspectives.

4.2.1 Qualitative

Qualitative research is a way of exploring and understanding the meanings that people assign to social or human issues and problems (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, Silverman (2000, p. 8) offers the suggestion that qualitative measures can offer a ‘deeper understanding of social phenomena’ than quantitative ones, while Richards (2009) sees this form of research as one that allows for a richer understanding of phenomena. Ritchie (2003, p. 28) would agree with this viewpoint as she views qualitative research as one that can ‘examine subjects in depth ... for studying what lies behind, or underpins, a decision, attitude, behaviour or other phenomena’. This is what the current study aims to do by understanding more about how the teachers in this northeastern region of Thailand construct meaning and reality from the English language policy. Though there have been many definitions of what constitutes qualitative research, Richards (2009) feels that Denzen and Lincoln’s version (2000, pp. 4-5) best sums up the main aspects of this form of research:

‘... a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. ... This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.’

To further explain this concept it is useful to look at how Creswell (2007) views the main characteristics of qualitative research based on a composite analysis of studies appearing in the literature. He came up with the following list of nine elements:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. Natural setting | f. Emergent design |
| b. Researcher as key instrument | g. Theoretical lens |
| c. Multiple sources of data | h. Interpretive |
| d. Inductive data analysis | i. Holistic account |
| e. Participants’ meanings | |

For the first of these characteristics, Creswell (2009) refers to the fact that data is collected in the field, which has obviously occurred in the present study as I carried out fieldwork, a term closely connected with ethnographic study, in the northeast of Thailand in order to observe and interview teachers in their workplace. I was also heavily involved in the data collection process, eventually deciding that it would be better to employ a combination of data collection methods so as not to be over-reliant on only one set of data. Qualitative researchers tend to use a variety of collection methods to generate data from which categories or themes can then emerge and in the case of this particular study, these methods included document analysis, observations and interviews. In qualitative research these emergent themes are built up through an inductive process to become increasingly comprehensive, which reflects in some way the grounded theory concepts proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In order to ensure that this happens, Creswell (2009) suggests a co-construction of the data with the participants, which Breen, *et al.* (2001, p. 471) also view as a way of ‘going beyond description’ so that better access to the nature of the research may be gained. This meant that, where possible, the words of the teachers involved in this study were used to help form the basis of the themes that emerged in the subsequent analysis. In other words, adopting an emic perspective in this study allows for a better understanding of the underlying beliefs that drive teachers’ actions.

Unlike the quantitative research process, which tends to be carefully controlled throughout, in the qualitative version this happens less so as research questions and data collection methods may change to suit the situation. This occurred in the current study as contextual issues, logistical constraints and unexpected themes emerging from the data, meant that the study often shifted in direction or emphasis, which again, is consistent with the ‘messiness’ associated with this kind of study (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006, p. xiii). In addition, as noted in the previous chapter, the role of theory underpinning the research is important in qualitative research so that the reader and the writer may situate themselves philosophically. For instance, this study draws on the concept that there exist multiple forms of reality and these realities are socially constructed and need to be interpreted in multiple ways. Finally, qualitative research attempts to ‘develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study’

(Creswell, 2009, p. 176), that is, it aims to understand the surrounding context of the research in order to better understand the research itself.

4.2.2 Exploratory

Holliday (2007) suggests that traditionally the divide between qualitative and quantitative is one way of differentiating between research traditions, though there are many authors who would disagree with this view (Ercikan & Roth, 2006; Pring, 2000). Perry (2005) not only feels that these methodologies are not distinct entities but sees them as belonging on a type of continuum and goes on to suggest that there are two other continua involved, namely basic-applied and exploratory-confirmatory. Though some questions have been raised about the ability of this approach to offer a complete explanation of research methodologies (Richards, 2009), it is a useful way to view how a study can put its strategy of inquiry into action. These three continua that Perry (2005) proposes can be summarised in Figure 1 below.

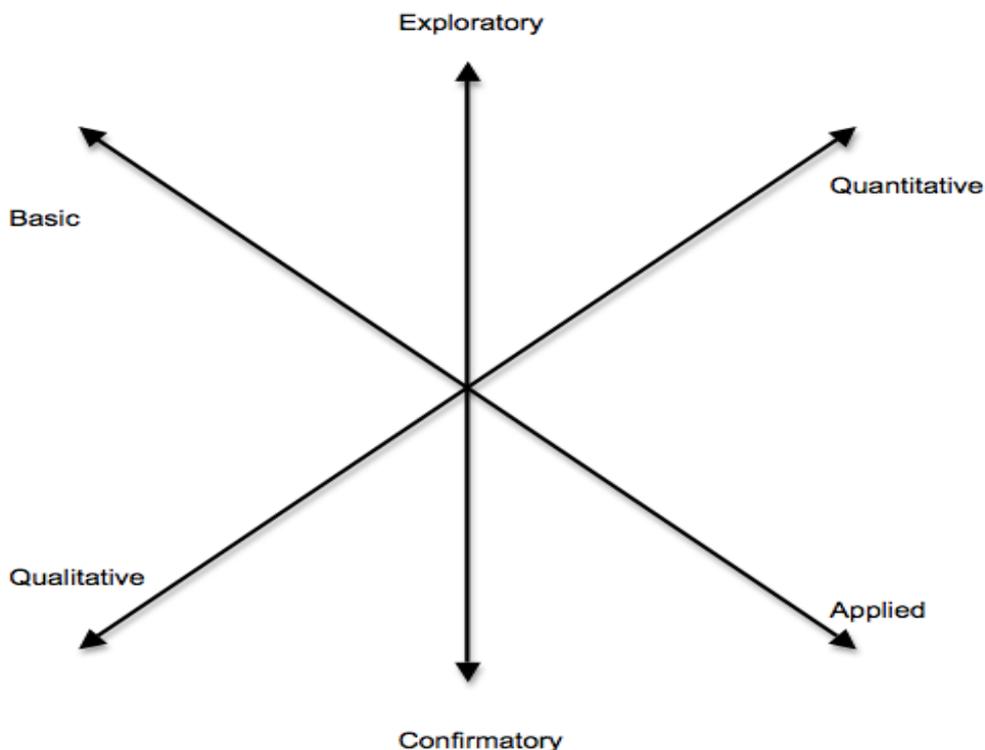


Figure 1: Design continua for classifying research (Perry, 2005, p. 72)

The basic-applied continuum refers to research that is either highly theoretical (basic) or something that is very practical (applied), with the current study probably being situated more toward the applied end of the continuum as it focuses on how teachers operate in their classrooms, rather than addressing solely theoretical issues. Furthermore, the exploratory-confirmatory continuum attempts to answer whether the research aims to discover some form of evidence to support a hypothesis (confirm) or to ‘...explore some phenomena prior to the development of any hypothesis’ (Perry, 2005, p. 80). Exploratory research is concerned with ‘describing participants’ understanding and interpretations of social phenomena in a way that captures their inherent nature’ Ritchie (2003, p. 28), while Robson (2002, p. 59) sees these types of studies as a way of ‘assessing phenomena in new light’. In adopting this framework, this study would be placed far closer to the exploratory end of the continuum than the confirmatory one as it aims to discover more about, rather than evaluate how, the English language policy in Thailand is realised through the classroom practices and dispositions of teachers. Moreover, since the research paradigm in this study is interpretive, theory emerges from the data, which means it is difficult to generalise and is ‘suggestive rather than conclusive’ (Crotty, 2003 p. 13), in other words, exploratory. Overall, therefore, adopting Perry’s 2005 framework, this thesis’ methodology may be described as being applied, qualitative and exploratory, which ties in with Ritchie’s view (2003) that qualitative research is exploratory, interactive and interpretivist in nature, which, in turn, allows for a better understanding of the social world. One further element that can aid the interpretation of this social world is by adopting an ethnographic perspective, which has been done in order to explore the research questions in this thesis.

4.2.3 Methodologies in Language Policy

The fact that language policy is such a complex construct naturally means that there is no obvious form of methodology with which to conduct research in this area. Historically, studies carried out on this construct were perceived as being unquestioned solutions to language policy problems, particularly in post-colonial contexts (for example, Fishman, 1977). However, some authors (notably Pennycook, 1989; Canagarajah, 2005) have warned that these methodologies lead to a specific

form of objective outcomes and so often fail to recognise or solve deeper problems. Furthermore, not only has research moved away from these predominantly post-colonial contexts but instead it critically examines the interests that underpin them (Phillipson, 1992). In order to do this, a wide variety of methodologies are now being employed to understand more about such issues as language use, identity and acquisition (Ricento, 2006b). These include: historical investigation which helps to challenge what Blaut (2000) terms the coloniser's view of the world, one that places the West at the forefront of a world that decides on the value of inventions and, as will be discussed later, dominant language models, which are then 'diffused to the periphery' (Wiley, 2006, p. 143). One of the most influential studies to employ this type of approach was Phillipson's 1992 research on the linguistic imperialism that emanated from such powerful western organisations as the British Council. In this study, Phillipson relied mainly on a critical analysis of official documents and, though flawed in its overall view (for example, Canagarajah (1999) notes that it fails to take into consideration localised issues), it has had a significant influence on subsequent research about language policy. In addition to this historical perspective, other methodologies of assessing language policies include linguistic discourse analysis of policy documents (Wodak, 2006); the geo-linguistic analysis of policies which attempts to answer questions concerning the 'what, where, when, who and why' of language policy (van der Merwe, as cited in Cartwright, 2006, p. 194) and the psycho-social analysis of policy (Baker, 2006), which draws on language motivation studies (Gardner, 2002) to investigate teachers' attitudes about language policy, principally through analysing census and social network data. Though any of these methodologies, combined or otherwise, could have been adopted to understand more about the English language policy in Thailand, it has been decided to employ an ethnographic approach in this study in order to 'account[...] for the nature and / or effects of language policies or policy approaches' (Ricento, 2006b, p. 130).

4.2.4 Ethnographic Perspective

Heath and Street (2008, p. 45) note that 'all ethnographic research is inherently interpretive, subjective, and partial' and that this link with the interpretive paradigm provides insights into social lives and experiences. To do this, such concepts as

immersion and systematic observation while living with a community in order to describe what occurs in its 'natural' state are often employed (Heath & Street, 2008; Silverman, 2000). Moreover, ethnography offers a chance to view the professional world of teachers (Richards, 2009) and can also help to illuminate the gaps between policy and practice (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004), two issues that are particularly relevant to this study. Indeed, I had felt that this form of research would be ideal for this type of study but I had been concerned with the fact that I would be unable to spend a long period of time in the field, which could undermine the study. Since it has emerged from an anthropological background, ethnography is often associated with a prolonged period of time in the field, collecting data from observations and interviews (Creswell, 2009) in order to gain a 'deeper understanding of how individuals view and participate in their own social worlds' (Harklau, 2005, p. 179). However, the question of how much time should be spent in the field is not a clear one, with Jeffrey and Troman (2004) suggesting that there are three different types of ethnographic time frames, which depend on the type of study being carried out. The first of these is known as the compressed time mode in which the researcher collects as much data as possible over a shorter period of time than traditional ethnographic studies. The second is termed the selective intermittent time mode, which sees researchers using more flexible approaches to data collection, though this collection of data occurs over a longer span of time. The final mode refers to the idea of recurrent time in which a certain period of time is chosen, such as end-of-term examinations, from which data is gathered that can be subsequently used for such tasks as comparisons.

Furthermore, Green and Bloome (1997) note that there are distinctive elements that make up ethnographic studies and that differences exist between 'doing ethnography', 'adopting an ethnographic perspective' and employing 'ethnographic tools'. The first of these would correspond to the more traditional view of ethnography including the issue of spending a lengthy amount of time in the field. The second feature would adopt the ethnographic 'spirit' in the research process but would also employ a much shorter period of time in order to collect data. The authors see this as using a 'more focused approach (i.e. do less than a comprehensive ethnography) to study particular aspects of everyday life and cultural practices of a social group' (*ibid.*, 1997, p. 183

(authors' brackets)). The final aspect, ethnographic tools, refers to how the researcher collects the data, through field notes, interviews and observations. Thus, drawing on the two concepts described above, my own particular study can be viewed as employing a compressed time mode as the fieldwork only lasted just under three months and so cannot truly be termed 'doing ethnography'. Instead, it may be seen as adopting an ethnographic perspective that also employs the use of ethnographic tools to collect its data in order to provide what Jeffrey and Troman (2004) call a 'snapshot' rather than an evaluation of a policy.

In order to gather this data, which in this study means to discover more about the teachers' practices and dispositions about the English language policy in Thailand, an emic perspective has been used which aims to understand by penetrating the frames of meaning from the perspective of the people being studied (Snape & Spencer, 2003). This allows for both an understanding of how the teachers make sense of the curriculum changes in their classrooms by explaining how they have socially constructed their own realities, as well as reflecting on my own view of socially constructed reality. Drawing from research carried out by Breen, *et al.* (2001), by co-constructing the data with the teachers, this study aims to 'describe what happens in the setting, how the people involved see their own actions and those of others, and the contexts in which the action takes place' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 6).

Another feature of this form of research is that often a more indirect and ongoing manner of gathering data, which Ramanathan (2002, pp. 40-41) terms 'less tangible data', occurs. Thus, when visiting the schools to carry out observations, I invariably stayed for most of the day, which meant that I constantly spoke with teachers in the staffroom, went to lunch with staff, was introduced to colleagues both from the English and other departments and was able to move freely around the school. Being in the school for long periods of time also meant that I often helped the teachers (and their colleagues) with things like materials' development, joined in with some classes when asked to, helped to organise and teach on English camps for students, as well as aiding teachers in their preparation for training courses. Furthermore, on occasion, I socialised with some of the participants away from the school environment, which

allowed them the opportunity to talk about issues related to the school, their local area and the country. I feel that this time, both in and away from the school, though not directly involved in the formal data collection process, provided me with rich context and background information that otherwise I would not have been able to have had access to, something which Breen, *et al.* refer to in the possible limitations of their 2001 study on teachers' beliefs and practices. This also suggests that the teachers were, for the most part, comfortable in my presence which, in my opinion, strengthens the validity of the data collection, for teachers may be more likely to offer opinions when they are more at ease, (Devereux & Hoddinott, 1992). Creswell (2009, p. 181) also notes that collecting data that goes beyond typical observations and interviews can 'capture useful information' that more formal types of collection may miss. These invaluable insights, which may not have been available to me from other forms of data-collecting tools, also helped as I do not speak Thai very well and so spending more time with the local teachers meant I was able to discover a lot more about what was happening in the area with respect to English education.

4.2.5 Ethnographic methods: Understanding the local

Adopting an ethnographic approach to investigate a language policy may not appear to be the ideal way in which to conduct research, particularly as Cooper (1989) suggests that these policies deliberately attempt to influence others from above, but since Canagarajah (2006) views language policies as being ideological with effects that are 'difficult to predict' (p. 154) then this form of research approach may be useful. It can, as Ricento (2006b, p. 130) notes, 'provide insights about life at the grass-roots level and lead to better understanding of the role of language(s) in the lives of people directly affected by overt or covert language policies', while Cummins and Davison (2007) recommend that individual issues cannot be viewed in isolation but rather need to be viewed alongside 'contexts, purposes and politics of language teaching and policy' (p. 3). This research approach may also address the fact that there is a lack of rich empirical data that may demonstrate 'connections between macro and micro policy' (Johnson, 2009, p. 139). This is a reflection of both Canagarajah's additive learning and Ramanathan and Morgan's challenge to ask not

“what do language policies do,’ but instead ‘what can we do with language policies in our immediate professional contexts?’” (2007, p. 450).

In Thailand, the implementation of language policies function in a top-down manner, for instance, it is the responsibility of those at ministry level to formulate and decide on policy issues and those on the ground, the teachers, to act on these decisions. This implementation is carried out through a cascade training process, a system that passes down information from top to bottom through in-session workshops and conferences, as well as preparing certain teachers in schools to become master trainers whose main role is to attend seminars and pass on information to their colleagues. If an ethnographic research perspective is adopted towards this top-down approach then ‘grounded theories about language as it is practiced in localized contexts’ may be developed (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 153). In other words, those who have to deal with the policy can illuminate aspects that policy makers and specialists in Ministries of Education may not be able to predict or even comprehend when formulating the policy. Hayes (2010) agrees with this idea and views the understanding of what happens in the classroom as an important part of the overall educational context, which can then address the ‘lack of research into ... the socio-educational context of English language teaching (ELT) prior to curriculum reform programmes being implemented’ (*ibid.*, p. 306). In other words, by adopting a bottom-up approach, one with ethnographic elements included, language education reforms may become better informed with a more grounded set of data (Breen, *et al.*, 2001), which can allow ‘us to understand how the environment of teaching works’ (Hayes, 2010, p. 307). To do this, he carried out a case study with an experienced teacher in the northeast of Thailand and from the data that formed her ‘life story’, he suggested that policy-makers should take into consideration local information from teachers working with the policy rather than applying a centralised, one-size-fits all programme. Canagarajah (2006) also sees ethnography as aiding with language policy goals as it can offer feedback on the policy implementation process – providing, of course, that someone is listening. In agreeing with this idea, Baker (2008) goes on to suggest that by focusing on the teaching practices that occur at ground level then a model may be

formed from these experiences that, in turn, may be used by other Southeast Asian countries to inform their own language policies.

4.3 Methods

As noted in chapter three, a wide variety of data collection methods, both qualitative and quantitative, have been employed in researching the construct of teachers' beliefs. For instance, Woods' 1996 case study; Cabaraglu and Roberts (2000) used interviews; while Tercanlioglu (2005) and Peacock (2001) both adopted questionnaires in their research. In order to reflect the theoretical perspective that this study employs (Mason, 1996), I employed an ethnographic approach to the data collection, which is in keeping with both an interpretive research paradigm and a socially constructed epistemology. The study uses ethnographic tools generally associated with fieldwork studies, which in this thesis include non-participant observation, interviews and document analysis to collect the data (Green & Bloome, 1997). Drawing on Breen, et al.'s 2001 study on teachers' practices and beliefs, I used a variety of methods in this research as I felt that this would offer a better way of understanding why the teachers carried out the classroom practices that they did. Indeed, Richards (2009, p. 154) sees this area of multiple methods as one with 'considerable scope for further exploration' in qualitative research, while Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006, p. 20) feel that these methods can 'interact with each other and inform the research process as a whole'. By adopting a variety of data collection methods the context to be researched can be better understood (see Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Ricento, 2006b), with Atkinson and Coffey (2002, p. 806) suggesting that a combination of observations and interviews when conducting a study can 'capitalize on the respective strengths of these methods, or to counteract the perceived limitations of each'. Therefore, in keeping with interpretive studies, the data collection was varied in order to provide as much data as possible, so that the social context may be better understood, as well as aiding with the issue of triangulation (Mason 1996; Creswell, 2009), though other writers warn that this may be an overly 'optimistic' way of providing a fuller picture of what is to be researched (Silverman, 2000). Perhaps more importantly, it also acts as a way of helping further data to emerge, which has occurred in the current study with the initial observation data providing

themes that served as a basis for the subsequent interviews. In addition, using only one form of data collection tool may lead to accusations of unreliability, for instance, retrospective accounts from teachers are not always a reliable method of collecting data from interviews, particularly as teachers are often unaware of how to make their opinions on certain issues implicit (Breen *et al.*, 2001; Borg, 2003) or that the proffered views may only represent one of many experiences (Silverman, 2000).

Since both the observed and those observing are influenced by a variety of factors that can threaten the reliability of the research. The teachers that took part in this study were closely involved in the data collection as it was felt that by co-constructing it with the researcher, an attempt at gaining a more ‘truthful’ perspective would be reached. This is a view held by Willis (1997, as cited in Ricento, 2006b) who sees researchers as needing to work closely with those being observed and to reconsider the roles of everyone taking part in such a study. The methods employed in this study were as follows:

1. Classroom observations
2. Post-observation interviews
3. Semi-structured interviews
4. Document analysis

4.4 Credibility of the Study

By its very nature, interpretive research is not something that can be deemed generalisable and so this leads to questions over the validity or credibility of this research. Creswell (2009, p. 190) states that validity within qualitative research does not have the same ‘connotation’ as quantitative research. Heath and Street (2008) agree and recommend that the researcher clarify ‘decision rules’, which are guidelines on how a piece of research is to be carried out. For instance, by simply being in the classroom when the observations took place, I am in fact participating in the scene that is unfolding before me and so with respect to the issue of observer’s paradox, Duranti (1997, p. 118) suggests the need to ‘*understand the different ways in which the presence of certain types of social actors ... or artifacts... play a role in the activity that is being studied*’ (author’s italics), which is to say that rather than

ignoring something that is impossible to avoid, the issue needs to be addressed and made public. Moreover, using multiple approaches to the data collection also reduces this issue of ‘observer’s paradox’ that might arise when a study only relies on observations to collect its data. Indeed, Creswell (2009, p. 191) argues that by employing a variety of strategies, accusations over a lack of validity can be avoided. These involve spending a prolonged time in the field and using someone to aid with the checking of data accuracy, neither of which occurred in this study due to logistical reasons. However, other recommended strategies which were adopted included: employing triangulation methods, using the study’s participants to aid with checking the accuracy of the data, clarifying researcher bias and clearly describing the setting.

4.5 Background of the Study

Creswell (2009) feels that the audience may be able to better understand qualitative research if background information is provided and so in the following section, the setting and the participants, as well as offering some of the reasons why the research was undertaken in the first place will be discussed. As the nature of the construct to be investigated is rather ‘messy’ (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006), this study has adopted a multi-faceted approach to answer its research questions. Originally when deciding on a methodology for this research, I had wished to carry out a case study that involved as many different actors from within the field as possible: those who formulate the English language policy; those who disseminate it and those who deal with it on a practical level, the teachers. However, I soon realised that this would be overly ambitious and beyond the scope of what this study wished to accomplish, so instead I focused on only one set of actors, the teachers, in carrying out the research. This was mainly due to the fact that, much like Williams and Morris (2000) and Tollefson (2006), I agree with the idea that those who experience the consequences of language policy should play a role in making decisions about how that policy functions. The participants in this study were drawn from one particular education board area as I wished to include a broad spectrum of teacher types and schools in the research rather than focusing on one particular school. I also wanted to include both primary and secondary teachers because many of the participants in this study have worked in both types of school, and since English has been taught in primary schools

since 2001 it makes sense to see what kind of effects this may have had on these teachers.

4.5.1 Location

The province in which this study was carried out is one of nineteen located in the northeastern part of the country, known as Isaan, which is regarded as the poorest in Thailand (U.S. Department of State, n.d.; McCargo and Hongladarom, 2004). This province borders both Cambodia and Laos and the proximity to these two countries means that it is a multilingual area with many local teachers and students being able to speak Thai and one or more of Khmer, Lao and the local dialect, Suay, which is estimated to have about 300,000 speakers in the region (Grimes, 2000). Much of the province's income is based on agricultural products such as sugar and rice, though tourism is also important, indeed, the local university places a large emphasis on tourism courses. Like Thailand itself, there is a wide range of economic and social conditions within the region, with the main town, which has a population of about 30.000, being much better off than some of the surrounding towns and villages. This difference was reflected in the types of schools that were involved in the current study, with some having far better facilities than others.

4.5.2 Schools

In addition to allowing for a richer form of data, it was decided to conduct research in primary and secondary schools, as English now being taught in both. However, depending on the type of school involved, this learning experience is a varied one meaning that the language competencies of students graduating from primary to secondary school is often very different indeed. Thus, the teachers in this study represent all levels of teaching from upper primary school (*Prathom 5 and 6*) to upper secondary (*Matayom 1- 6*).

The six schools involved in this study all fall under the control of the local provincial educational board. They are government-funded state schools and follow the national curriculum, though, as noted in chapter two, due to the flexibility and freedom involved in the application of this policy, this does not mean that they all teach in the

same manner. Three of the six schools from the study are based in the main provincial town while the remaining three are situated in villages between thirty and fifty kilometres away (see Table 5 below for an overview).

School A is a small village school based 50 kilometres from the main provincial town. This primary school has a total of 270 local students spread over its six year programme of study (*Prathom 1 to Prathom 6*) and nearly all of these students use Suay as their first language though Thai is the official language used in the school. The students there have three hours of English classes a week. According to the sole English teacher working there, approximately 75% of students do not go on to high school but instead remain in the area working on local farms. This decision to not graduate was often taken by the families themselves who saw little or no benefit for their children to continue with their studies. A further illustration of this problem is the fact that almost half of the students do not attend classes during harvest time. The school's facilities were basic though students did have access to a small computer room and listening laboratory.

School B is a secondary school situated in a medium-sized town about 30 kilometres from the provincial capital. It is far bigger than school A and has a student population of 2.400 and a dozen teachers working in its English department. Facilities were generally good, with students, particularly in the two final years (*Matayom 5 and 6*), having access to computer rooms. Thai is the language of the classroom but many of the students speak Suay or Lao as their first language. They also take between 2 and 4 hours of English classes a week depending on the year of study they are in, while according to one member of staff approximately 50% of the students go on to study at university.

School C is located about 50 kilometres outside the provincial capital and is a village secondary school with approximately 800 students enrolled there. Facilities were fairly basic though the four English teachers working there did have access to a computer room and a listening laboratory for their classes, while the students generally had 4 hours of English classes a week. Much like the other two schools

from the rural area, the first language of these students was generally Lao, Suay or Khmer, rather than Thai.

School	Town or Village	Primary or Secondary	Student Numbers	English Teachers	Student L1	School Facilities
School A	Village	Primary	270	1	Suay, Lao, Thai	Basic
School B	Village	Secondary	2,400	12	Suay, Khmer, Lao, Thai	Good
School C	Village	Secondary	800+	4	Suay, Khmer, Lao, Thai	Fairly Good
School D	Town	Secondary	1980	9 (including 1 overseas)	Thai with 40% Khmer or Lao	Good
School E	Town	Primary	3,500	10	Thai, Suay and Lao	Excellent
School F	Town	Secondary	3,500	10+	Predominantly Thai	Excellent

Table 5: Overview of schools involved in the study

In the three schools from the provincial capital far fewer of the students use Suay as their L1 but instead are predominantly Thai speakers. School D is one of the main secondary schools in this town with a total of 1980 students, of which 40% speak either Khmer or Lao as their first language. This school was viewed as one of the better schools in the town and the facilities reflected this, while according to one of the teachers working there, 30% of the students usually progress on to the local university. The school's English Department has eight local English teachers and one overseas member of staff and the students generally have four hours a week of English classes.

School E is one of the biggest and most prestigious primary schools in the province. There are more than 3,000 students enrolled there and they usually have 4 hours of English classes a week. Their English department has ten teachers and there are very modern facilities throughout including air conditioning and audio-visual access. Most of the students from this school go on to high school, including to school F, which is

viewed as the most prestigious secondary school in the main provincial town with over 3.500 students taking classes there. This school also runs the Mini English Programme (MEP), which is a government-run scheme that teaches mathematics, health studies, science and computer studies through the medium of English to a small group of students, who have to pay for these classes. Students from this school have the most English class time a week among those involved in this study, with a total of seven hours.

4.5.3 Participants

As this exploratory study does not purport to be representative of all English teachers in Thailand, the initial group of participants was purposively sampled, in order to give a better understanding of the research problems involved (Creswell, 2009). This notion of purposive or ‘non-probability sampling’ (Cohen, *et al.*, 2000, p. 103) is consistent with interpretive research as the results are not regarded as being generalisable but instead can attempt to offer a better understanding of individual teachers’ beliefs and practices. Another reason for its use was that this form of sampling reflects the theoretical perspective of the study (Mason, 1996), in that it wishes to discover more about a construct that is difficult, at least on the surface, to observe (Calderhead, 1988). It was felt that working with a group of teachers with whom I had had some contact with beforehand would alleviate this difficulty somewhat and allow for a better opportunity to access these beliefs. As I was an outside observer, convenience is another factor that needed to be taken into consideration when carrying out this type of study, meaning that issues such as the ease with which the study could be established, access to schools and the level of English of the participating teachers should be factored into the decision. In addition, having previously worked with some of these teachers, it was thought that finding other participants willing to be involved in the study would be easier, which indeed proved to be the case.

In February 2009 I contacted a group of eight teachers from this region, as well as the former head of the local education board, all of whom I had previously worked with on a volunteer teacher-training course, in order to see if they would be interested in

participating in this study. Four of the teachers replied that they would take part, two others declined and two did not reply. One of those who had accepted, later withdrew due to study commitments but thanks mainly to him and the former education board leader of the region, other teachers in the area expressed an interest in participating and this 'snowball effect' (Cohen, *et al.*, 2000, p. 103) was something I had hoped for when contacting these two participants. Not all of those who had expressed an interest were then able to participate due to work commitments while others were living in regions outside this particular local education board's remit, so for logistical reasons were not involved. This meant that by the middle of May, when I planned to start collecting data, I had a total of 15 teachers ready to take part in the study, however, one of the teachers withdrew soon after starting the data collection process which meant that my total research cohort numbered 14. Table 6 (below) summarises the main characteristics of those who participated in this study and in keeping with this form of research, pseudonyms have been used instead of the teachers' real names.

Table 6: Background of Participants

Teacher	M / F	Type of School	School Year (1)	Student Numbers (2)	Weekly Teaching Hours	Teaching Experience	Years at Current School	Languages Spoken	Highest Academic Achievement	Professional Development (3)
Nattaporn	F	Village - Primary	P6	25	21	26 years	1st year	English; Thai; Lao	BA (Admin/Eng)	ERIC
Kwan	F	Village - Secondary	M5	23	20	28 years	28 years	English; Thai; Lao; Khmer	BA (Eng)	/
Parn	F	Village - Secondary	M6	44	19	27 years	27 years	English; Thai; Lao; Khmer; Suay	MA (TEFL)	ERIC
Tak	F	Village - Secondary	M2	34	21	2 years	2 years	English; Thai; Lao; Khmer; Suay	BA (Eng/Tourism)	/
Warot	M	Village - Secondary	M1	38	20	7 years	1st year	English; Thai; Lao; Khmer	BA (Eng)	TKT
Sansuda	F	Village - Secondary	M5	30	20	29 years	29 years	English; Thai; Lao; Khmer; Suay	BA (Eng)	NZ teacher training
Tuk	F	Village - Secondary	M4	44	20	10 years	10 years	English; Thai; Lao; Khmer	BA (Eng)	/
Thanawan	F	Village - Secondary	M4	19	16	17 years	13 years	English; Thai; Suay	B (Ed)	ERIC
Nok	F	Village - Secondary	M5	26	20	1st year	1st year	English; Thai; Khmer	BA (Eng)	ERIC
Aom	F	Town - Secondary	M3	46	21	22 years	7 years	English; Thai; Lao; Khmer	M (Ed)	Regular Conferences
Nuch	F	Village - Secondary	M3	35	20	6 years	1st year	English; Thai; Khmer; Suay	B (Ed)	ERIC
Siriwan	F	Village - Secondary	M6	22	25	8 years	2 years	English; Thai; Suay; Lao	BA (Eng)	ERIC
Somchai	M	Town - Primary	P5	52	16	19 years	2.5 years	English; Thai; Lao; Khmer; Suay	M (Ed)	NZ teacher training
Panumas	F	Town - Secondary	M1	25	16	7 years	20 years	English; Thai; Khmer;	M (Ed)	ERIC

(1) P = *Prathom* (Primary) and M = *Matayom* (Secondary) (2) Numbers of students in observed class (3) ERIC = Educational Resource Information Centre | TKT = Teacher Knowledge Test

Two of the teachers work in primary schools (Grades 1-6 are known in Thai as *Prathom*), though they also had some experience of secondary school teaching, while the remaining twelve were all working in secondary schools (Grades 1-6 or *Matayom*). The fourteen participants are all qualified English language teachers, which means that they possess at least a Bachelor's degree with a major in English. Four of them have completed a post-graduate degree in either education or English while another two are about to complete one. As Table 6 points out, two of the teachers were relatively new to the profession, with one in his second year and the other just starting her new job, while the remaining members of the cohort had experience ranging from six to twenty eight years. In addition to their qualifications, most of the teachers had participated in some form of professional development course at some time during their careers, such as those formally organised by the Ministry of Education (MoE) or its local representative the English Resource and Instruction Centre (ERIC), as well as less formal ones including visiting NGO organisations and local teacher-run sessions. Three of the teachers in this cohort had reached the level of master trainer in their school which meant that they had passed a Ministry of Education exam and would be sent to conferences and workshops in order to report back to their colleagues on teacher development issues, a form of cascade training (Jacobs, 2001). In fact, two of them had recently returned from a four-month long teacher-training programme in New Zealand that had been sponsored by the Ministry. One of the teachers involved in this trip was a male teacher from the leading primary school in the town and he was one of only two males taking part in this study, which is not so surprising as English language teaching is a predominantly female profession in Thailand (Hayes, 2008).

Nearly all of the teachers had been working in their current school for some time though four of them were starting in a new school when this study began. All but two of the fourteen teachers were from the local area itself and the two that were not had been living there for many years and were able to speak the local language(s). All of the teachers were able to speak more than one language other than Thai, including the local dialect Suay and either Lao and / or Khmer, and of course they all spoke English. Their respective levels of English varied though overall this did not unduly affect comprehension during the data collection process. However, this issue may have been a factor with respect to the one teacher who withdrew from the study after

her first interview. Though she did not directly give a reason for this withdrawal, she had had difficulty understanding my questions during the interview and had needed a colleague to help translate. She did not make herself available for any of the subsequent meetings and I did not pursue her on the matter, as I did not wish her or her colleagues to feel uncomfortable. Of course, it was also stipulated in the consent form (see appendix 6) that she had signed, that she, or any other of her colleagues, could withdraw at any time during the study.

4.6 Ethical Issues

This incident of the participant withdrawing from the study highlights the importance of the role of ethics in research. Perhaps the most important part of this is that there needs to be a clear understanding of the balance between what it is that the researcher is aiming to obtain without harming the rights and values of those taking part in the study (Cohen, *et al.*, 2000). One way of ensuring that this balance is maintained is by gaining informed consent from those involved in the study, which means that an individual taking part can choose whether or not to participate based on information supplied about this study (Diener & Crandall, 1978), something I attempted to do by meeting with the teachers beforehand. Indeed, the principle of informed consent not only allows for any of the participants to withdraw at any stage but also means that they are made as aware as possible of what is involved for them in the study (Cohen, *et al.*, 2000). In addition, to the notion of informed consent, Denscombe (2003) argues that two other important principles need to be taken into consideration, namely the participants' rights should always be protected and that those carrying out the study should avoid deceiving those that are being researched. Furthermore, when collecting data in classrooms, the social structure of what is to be researched needs to be successfully understood (Wanat, 2010). This entails gaining access from those in positions of authority, the formal gatekeepers (Creswell, 2009), but also the informal ones, such as the teachers being observed and / or their work colleagues. Wanat (2010) goes on to suggest that there should be some form of negotiation with the different types of gatekeepers within the school in order to build and maintain good relations with those taking part. As I had previously worked with some of the participants in the study, I felt that I had established a relationship with them, which lead to a sense of trust and indeed, to other teachers making themselves available to take part in the study. However, it should be noted that some of the more junior

teachers in a school might have had less choice than their senior counterparts in whether or not to participate in the study due to the entrenched sense of hierarchy that characterises Thai education. Furthermore, gaining permission from those ‘on the ground’ may not be enough if those in authority deny the request, which meant that I also had to gain official permission from those in positions of power.

4.6.1 Permission

The first step was to complete and submit a certificate of ethical research approval form to my own institution, which was subsequently approved, allowing me to conduct the study (see appendix 5). The next step was to contact the Thai teachers in order to ask permission to observe and interview them for the study. I did this by email, briefly explaining the type of research I wished to conduct as well as offering some possible dates in which to meet. One of the teachers had translated this letter from English to Thai and so, in order to ask for permission, I asked the teachers to forward this translated version to the director of their schools (see appendix 6). All six of the schools’ directors granted me permission to carry out the study. I then contacted the Thai Ministry of Education and explained the main focus of my research, as well as where and when this study would occur and I then received a special visa allowing me to carry out research in the province. Soon after arriving, I met with the teachers to discuss some of the ethical issues surrounding the study, which mainly consisted of explaining the consent form to them (see appendix 7). I emphasised the fact that any data would be treated in a confidential manner, that their names would remain anonymous and that they would be able to leave at any stage during the study. Each of the teachers signed two copies of this form, keeping one for them and returning the other to me.

4.7 Classroom Observation

It has already been stated that this study has used ethnographic tools to gather the data, which is consistent with studies that are exploratory and have an ethnographic perspective. In order to collect data from the field, Creswell (2009) suggests that differing forms of observation can be used when collecting data: as an observer, as a participant or by a combination of the two (for instance, the observation may begin as a non-participatory one but after time may evolve into one that is participatory). In this particular study, the classroom observations were of the non-participant variety

and though these can be carried out in a structured manner, with the observer looking for aspects that had been previously decided upon, it was mainly conducted in an unstructured manner as theory generally follows data in interpretive research and I wished to see what kind of themes would emerge.

Most of the schools in the region started the new term in the second and third weeks of May so I aimed to begin the observation schedule during the final week of the month in order for teachers to have time to get to know their new students and prepare for the term ahead. I also did not want to observe during the final weeks of the term as it would be extremely busy with exams, so week three of the semester seemed an ideal time to begin for many of the teachers. Further, in the preliminary meeting with the teachers I offered each of them a selection of dates and times for the observations so that they could choose the most suitable for them and their students (see Table 7 below for the interview schedule).

I did not make any suggestions as to what kind of lesson was to be taught, as I did not wish to add any more pressure to the situation and I wanted to see as 'regular' a class as possible. The observations were non-judgemental, in that, I was not interested in evaluating the quality of the teaching but instead wished to observe the teachers' practices so that I might be able to discover more about what they thought about them. Furthermore, from these observations, emergent themes would feed into subsequent interviews, as well as aiding with the overall analysis.

NAME	M / F	SCHOOL	SCHOOL YEAR	OBSERVATION DATES		
				MTNG 1	MTNG 2	INTVW
Nattaporn	F	School A	P6	May 28th	June 11th	July 2nd
Kwan	F	School B	M1	June 1 st	June 15 th	June 30 th
Parn	F	School B	M6	June 2nd	June 16th	June 30th
Tak	F	School B	M1	June 2nd	June 16th	June 30th
Warot	M	School B	M2	June 2nd	June 16th	June 30th
Sansuda	F	School B	M6	June 2nd	June 16th	June 30th
Tuk	F	School B	M4	June 2nd	June 16th	June 29th
Thanawan	F	School C	M4	June 3rd	June 17th	June 25th
Nok	F	School C	M5	June 3rd	June 17th	June 25th
Aom	F	School D	M3	June 4th	June 18th	July 1st
Nuch	F	School C	M3	June 5th	June 19th	July 25th
Siriwan	F	School C	M6	June 5th	June 19th	July 25th
Somchai	M	School E	P6	June 8th	June 23rd	July 1st
Panumas	F	School F	M2	June 10th	June 24th	July 1 st

Table 7: Observation and Interview Schedule

Note: Mtng = Meeting | Intvw = Interview | P6 = *Prathom 6* | M4 = *Matayom 4*

As previously stated, this study aimed to carry out non-participatory observations but the fact that I was an outsider entering a class immediately makes me a participant of some form. For instance, all of the teachers introduced me to the class at the start of the first observation and explained who I was and what I was doing there. For many of the students in the villages this was the first time that they had ever seen someone from another country (*a ferrang*), which caused some consternation at first but as the term progressed and they became more accustomed to my presence around the school this concern over what Perry (2005) terms the ‘researcher effect’ diminished, while in the three town schools (schools D, E and F) this was not a big issue at all.

Since I was a non-participant observer, I generally sat at the back of the class, in what Duranti (2000, p. 101) terms the 'blindspot', where I took notes, though as the term progressed, teachers, and sometimes even students began asking me questions, which was, again, probably a reflection of their becoming more accustomed to my presence. During each observation, which generally lasted for an hour, I would note down in my field note journal all the teaching activities (the practices) that I saw the teacher carrying out in the class. These included such activities as how many times the teacher used the board, the organisation of the students into pairs or groups, how student feedback was delivered, the use of materials, as well as L1 and L2 usage, among others. I also noted down descriptions of the classroom and other details that might possibly be useful at a later date, including questions and comments I had for the teacher (see appendix 8 for an example). As I am not a fluent Thai speaker many of these comments and questions were clarified in the sessions held after the observations.

I was also able to observe how teachers managed their classes, which many of them suggested was an important aspect of their teaching, as the majority of the classes often had more than 40 students in them, with one class having as many as 52. Perhaps because of this reason, I noted down many activities connected to the managing of the students in class. There were, for instance, examples of teachers reacting to misbehaving students, while one of the main concerns for many of the teachers were the poor facilities in the classroom, rendering such things as group work difficult to organise due to the cramped nature of the room. One or two of the teachers also complained that the technology often did not work well in the classrooms, though it should be noted that not many of the classrooms had any technological facilities at all.

In addition, I noted down how teachers generally engaged with their students. For the most part, this involved the teacher standing at the front of the class, transmitting information to the students, often in Thai, with hardly any questions being asked by the students. This is not to say that the classroom atmosphere in the lessons I observed was poor, on the contrary, there was usually lots of fun and in three of the classes, the students moved amongst each other checking their answers and finding out

information. One of the teachers told me afterwards that she had never seen students do this before but said nothing against it as she had thought it was a good idea.

Perhaps the most interesting class I observed over the time I was in the region took place during Parn's reading lesson for her high school students. It took place in the school's audio-visual room and she instructed two of the students to go to her desk as they would be in charge of the activity. She then set up the task for the whole class, a reading text on the Inuit in Canada, before encouraging the remainder of the students to ask the two students at the front any questions they would like to know about this topic. These two students would then research the answers, translate vocabulary and attempt to explain new words and phrases to the rest of the class. The teacher saw her role as a facilitator, for instance, ensuring that the questions were relevant and that the students remained on task throughout. When I asked her why she thought this might be useful for the students she replied that:

Thai students are very quiet when they see the teacher so I just ... I want to be a facilitator... I try to get less role as a teacher just a little to help them. I think they like it because they are not afraid to speak to their friends.

The students seemed to respond positively to this method of managing the class as they moved around asking questions and collecting information on the text from their colleagues, while constantly asking further questions to the two students at the front. I asked Parn how she was able to evaluate the students' performance in this type of activity and she said that as it formed part of a larger process that involved a writing exercise she would be able to see how well (or badly) they had done from their writing.

4.8 Interviews

The main idea of utilising interviews in research is to '[obtain] qualitative descriptions of the life world of the subject with respect to interpretation of their meaning' (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). Interviews in qualitative research tend to involve open-ended and unstructured questions in order to allow for participants' opinions to emerge (Creswell, 2009). Generally this was true of this study though there was some form of loose structure involved in the first set of interviews, with the data from the classroom observations feeding into the final semi-structured interviews. As for the second set of interviews, I employed a semi-structured approach, which allowed me

to gather open-ended data for this exploratory study. This approach aided me in gathering a more focused form of data (Radnor, 2001), rather than simply hoping that the 'right' data would emerge. Further, this study draws on Kvale's (1996) list of aspects involved in qualitative research interviews, with particular reference to the following five areas:

- a. Life World: The study wishes to discover more about how a set of teachers make sense of a language policy in their own local contexts and so the only way, as far as this study is concerned, to do that is by finding out more about the everyday life of these teachers.
- b. Meaning: One way of doing this is by uncovering what it is the interviewee wishes to say.
- c. Qualitative: The questions employed in the interviews in this study focused not on how often a teacher did something but to discover 'nuanced descriptions', that is, the what, how and why things happened.
- d. Specificity: In line with the fact that outcomes that emerge from interpretive studies are not generalisable, the interviews in this study are interested more in specific details of those involved in the study.
- e. Focused: The interview wished to explore certain themes about the context that was being investigated.

Kvale (1996) also suggests that an interview may be likened to a professional conversation, one that is social and interactional and this was the approach that I wished to take in this research. Not only had I previously known some of those involved in this study but during the research period I also built up a relationship with all of the other teachers there meaning that the interviews were conducted in this professional and social manner. This interaction should be seen as an 'InterView' (*ibid.*), that is, 'an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest' (Cohen, *et al.*, 2004, p. 267), which is what this study aimed to do. Whether this always occurred or not is open to debate as I was the one who generally

lead the questioning throughout the interview, with the teachers, though happy to provide answers to all the questions, barely asking any themselves which somewhat challenges the idea of an interchange. This may have been due to teachers feeling slightly intimidated as they were being interviewed by a native speaker, who they may have perceived as being an 'expert' and so might refuse to question the authority of that person. Indeed, sometimes it is easy to forget that the teachers not only have busy schedules but are also being interviewed in a language that is not their first. This may be the reason for one teacher's response of 'Is this the last interview?' when asked if he had any further comments to make at the end of a session, though it should be noted he was smiling at the time.

4.8.1 Post-observation Interviews

For the most part, I was able to meet the teacher soon after the class had finished in order to go through all the activities that she/he had carried out in the lesson and to ask her/him to discuss them with me. These meetings lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and, with the permission of the teacher, were recorded and later transcribed. There was no designated space available for the interviews but instead these sessions took place in whichever room was available at the time: the staffroom, an empty classroom, a coffee shop or outside in the school grounds. After asking for some biographical details from the teachers (see appendix 11), the teachers were asked to verbalise their thoughts on things I had witnessed in the class; what they meant and to offer an explanation on why they had done them. Mackey and Gass (2005) recommend that these types of interviews should occur as soon after the observation as possible to avoid problems with memory loss. These authors also suggest that the participants should not be trained in this technique and that the questions should reflect the main research questions, which I feel occurred in this study. Woods (1996) notes that when asked an abstract question about beliefs, teachers may well answer with an abstract answer, whereas when asked a question that is rooted in a real situation (in the case of the current study, a teaching practice) then there is an increased possibility that the teacher's response will be grounded in the truth, something which Breen, *et al.*, also agree with (2001). Not only did this form of questioning help to confirm what had gone on in the class but it also offered some insight into the context behind the observed actions, as well as to the dispositions that underpinned them. I then transcribed and coded these interviews (see appendix 9 for

an example of Nattaporn's interview) and returned to the teacher for confirmation at a later date – usually before the following observation or interview. This also allowed for those involved in the meeting the chance to ask any additional questions arising from the class observation (see appendix 10 for an example of the classroom practices of Nattaporn).

4.8.2 Semi-structured Interviews

This set of interviews took place soon after the observations had finished and generally lasted for between 45 and 90 minutes. Before each meeting, I sent an email to the teachers explaining the areas that I would focus on based around some of the themes that had emerged from the classroom observation, as well as from the literature. This interview guide (Kvale, 1996) included the following: the role of the new English curriculum; approaches to teaching; teaching materials; the students; tests and evaluations, the role of English, as well as any other comments (see appendix 12 for an example of Nattaporn's interview). At the start of the interview, I confirmed the list of practices that I had seen the teachers doing during the observations along with their explanations about why they had carried them out, which served as a form of triangulation for the already gathered data. However, it should be noted that not one of the teachers asked me to make any major changes to this information, which either suggests that the data had painted a fairly accurate picture or possibly that the teachers were maybe intimidated by my presence. Either way, I then went through the themes on my list with each teacher, though not in any particular order and at the same time allowed for other themes or topics of conversation to be included. Kvale (1996) notes that there are nine different types of questions that can be asked in an interview that cover such issues as introducing the topic, following up a topic, clarifying an issue, as well as structuring and interpreting questions. In this study nearly all of these types of questions were employed during the interviews and in particular the use of clarification questions was fairly important, as the teachers do not use English as their L1. Needless to say, not all of the question techniques I employed in the interviews followed Kvale's recommended style. For instance, the first question I asked Nattaporn in the semi-structured interview caused her some trouble:

DF: How would you describe your teaching style? How is your approach to teaching?

N: Again, one more time

DF: Some teachers like to practise grammar and translation with their students, other teachers like to present the information, practise the information, produce the information, P-P-P. Other teachers like to be more communicative, they like to have the students communicate a lot with the language, some teachers mix everything, what do you think you are, what kind of teacher are you?

N: I think it's good and I need to do (pause)...

DF: Which one?

N: Speaking

DF: Do more?

N: Do more speaking and listening and after that reading...

Although we had been discussing her classroom practices beforehand, this type of question placed the teacher under some pressure. It is after all a difficult one to answer in any language not least in a third language, after Thai and Lao. To further complicate things for Nattaporn, when she asked for clarification, rather than using the same language or at least attempting to explain it, I re-phrased it and added examples, which may have confused her even more. Furthermore, when it was clear that she did not fully understand the question, I allowed her to carry on. When I did return to the topic later on in the interview, the form of questioning appeared somewhat interrogatory as opposed to Kvale's interchange of views:

DF: Old style for example, more grammar, more translation?

N: Yes, yes

DF: Teacher-centred?

N: Yes

DF: Older, more traditional?

N: Yes

Interestingly, though this appears rather intimidating, this exchange takes place at the end of a working day, in which I had helped to teach some kindergarten classes, met and had lunch with all the teachers in the school, chatted to the director about issues concerning the school and the surrounding area, observed Nattaporn's class, spoken with the students and then sat down outside in the school garden with a drink to chat with the teacher about the school day.

In section 4.5.3 it was noted that a possible reason for one of the teachers dropping out of the study was that her language level might not have been strong enough and though the English levels of the participating teachers was generally good there were some occasions when misunderstandings occurred. For instance, I asked one of the

teachers about the effects that the policy may have had on her teaching style. This lead to some confusion, particularly over the word ‘change’, with the teacher explaining to me that she sometimes modifies the way she teaches in response to the class level. To clarify the issue a little more I then re-phrased the question to include a time frame (‘ten years ago’), which seemed to help.

DF: So, for example, effect ... effect, the effect, the results of the curriculum on your teaching. Have you... you've been teaching here for 13 years, has your teaching changed?

Thanawan: Changed?

DF: A little? A lot? Or not at all?

Thanawan: I change. I change.

DF: Yes?

Thanawan: I change for them and for class... medium class, high class or low class

DF: But, for example, your teaching style?

Thanawan: Oh style

DF: Ten years ago and now ...is very different? Or similar?

Thanawan: Different because the teacher can improve yourself

DF: OK

There were also occasions where I asked the teachers what may be termed ‘leading questions’, which may have limited their ability to answer, particularly those whose language level was not so strong. For example, when trying to discover more about Thanawan’s opinions on the curriculum, I asked her if she thought this was something positive or negative. She did not initially answer which I took to mean she had not understood the question. However, her reticence in replying may have been due to the fact that the alternatives I had offered her had not corresponded with her own ideas.

DF: So the curriculum is positive?

Thanawan: Positive?

DF: It's a good thing. It's good, it's ok or negative?

(Pause and then she laughs as she appears to not understand)

DF: For your teaching?

(Pause)

DF: The curriculum is good for teaching or not good for your teaching?

Thanawan: I think, I think it's good... some... for some students but not for some students.

DF: Not others. For some students it's ok

Thanawan: Some students it's ok...

DF: Other students

Thanawan: ...it's not

DF: OK...

4.9 Document Analysis

Since the main aim of this thesis is to explore how teachers make sense of the new English language policy in their work place, information was also gathered from official documents related to this theme. These include the National Education Act of B. E. 2542 (1999), the English curriculum (2001) and its updated version of 2008, as well as official MoE documents on future education plans, for example, the document ‘Towards a learning society in Thailand: Developing 21st Century Skills’ offers explanations and guidelines on how the new curriculum can aid the future of the country. Of course, as I am not a Thai speaker, this meant that I had to work with translated versions of these documents, albeit official ones, which makes them secondary sources as they are forms of interpretation of the original documents (Duffy, 2005). These documents, along with other written records such as teaching materials, and textbooks were mainly used to supplement my own understanding of how the English language policy is being conceptualised by this group of local teachers.

4.10 Data Collection Summary

Though the differing forms of data collection for this study appear to have been carried out on an individual or separate basis, this was not the case. Instead, these multiple forms of data collection were able to feed into one another with, for example, the observations leading to field notes, which in turn were responsible for driving the post-observation interview themes. This combination of data collection methods not only complements the strengths of the methods involved (Ricento, 2006b), but also defuses criticisms about certain methods being limited. For instance, Atkinson and Coffey (2002) warn that interview data may be viewed as an opinion about something that happened as opposed to what actually did. However, when this interview data is combined with that of the observation then this fear can be somewhat alleviated. Table 8 below offers a summary of the data collection methods involved in this study.

Data Collection Method	Notes
Pre-study Meeting	To introduce the study and to meet the teachers (30 – 120 minutes)
Observations	To observe classroom practices (2 x 1 hour sessions)
Retrospective Accounts	Post-observation interviews to confirm practices and discover beliefs (2 x 20-40 minute sessions)
Semi-structured Interviews	Interview (1 x 45-90 minute session)
Document Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Policy • Curriculum documents • Ministry of Education documents • Teaching Materials

Table 8: Summary of data collection methods

4.11 Data Analysis

Silverman, (2000) sees two forms of approaches to data analysis, realism and narrative, with the former taking the perspective that what is said as being ‘true’, while the latter holds the view that this is only one form of what is the truth, that is, it is representative. This thesis agrees with this latter perspective as it attempts to unveil the multitude of realities involved in this particular field. It also draws on the concept that an analysis is a ‘*selective process of representation of a given phenomenon with the aim of highlighting some of its properties*’ (author’s italics) (Duranti, 1997, p. 114) meaning that not everything can either be observed or reported on.

Furthermore, data analysis is an ongoing process that starts well before observations or any other form of data collection takes place. This is due to the fact that when proposing a study, the researcher already has some idea of what he or she may discover, due to personal inclination or the effects that similar studies in the literature have had on the researcher. Therefore, with respect to this study, I was aware that many teachers in Thailand, particularly those in rural areas, were more accustomed to adopting a teacher-centred approach to their classes (Nonkukhetkhong, *et al.*, 2006)

and that their levels of English might not be so high (Foley, 2005), which meant that I presumed certain types of practices and beliefs would be more prevalent than if I had observed a school in another region or even the capital (Hayes, 2010). In addition to this influence of the literature, information from official documents, my observation notes, the post-observation interviews, the follow-up interviews, as well as the discussions with teachers throughout the time I was there generated the data for this study.

4.11.1 Categorising the Data

Unlike quantitative research, an ongoing process exists that entails a constant re-checking, similar to the series of steps proposed by Creswell (2009). The first step in this model is to organise the data into different types so that the analysis can be easily carried out. In this study, this involved the transcription of interviews, collection of field notes and document analysis (see Appendix 13 for an overview of this process). During this study the interviews were transcribed soon after the interviews took place and this period proved to be a good time to form general impressions of the overall data, which Creswell termed the general sense of the analytical process (*ibid.*). Consequently, at this stage in the research process, in addition to questions and comments that I may have had for the teacher, I found myself starting to note down initial categories in my field notes. This continued in the post-observation interview as I tested out some of these categories while talking with the teacher about her / his class. I was already beginning to reject or confirm areas that I thought could be used in the overall analysis during the transcription stage, while I also began to write down a prototype coding system, or forming what Kvale (1996, p. 190) would term, 'meaning categorization'. By the time I had observed the teacher for the second time, I had more of an idea of the types of activities that she / he would carry out in the class since I had had some experience of their work.

After writing up the transcription for this second observation, I began to look for further patterns, key words and interesting topics so that some semblance of order with regard to the list of practices would start to emerge. The next step was to examine these categories more deeply and so, drawing on suggestions from Tesch (1990), I chose one teacher's set of data, generated from both the field notes and transcripts, and worked through them by assigning and re-assigning the data to

different sets of categories, before finally doing the same across the whole cohort of teachers. Following this, I grouped themes together before returning to the data to check for other themes to emerge.

4.12 Summary

This chapter has set out the research plan of this thesis in order to explore more about the ways a group of Thai teachers make sense of the English language policy in their own working contexts. It has been designed to discover more about their classroom practices and dispositions by adopting an interpretive research framework that employs a qualitative methodology infused with exploratory and ethnographic perspectives, as well as multiple forms of ethnographic tools in the data collection. Analysis of the generated data involves some grounded theory perspective and this collected data will be the main focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

5. Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to explore how a group of English-language teachers in a rural part of Thailand conceptualise the English language policy in their workplace. To do this, data generated from the following three research questions is examined:

1. What teaching practices do a group of Thai English-language teachers employ in their classrooms?
2. What dispositions underlie these practices?
3. What is the relationship between the teachers' practices and dispositions with the current English language curriculum in Thailand?

5.1 Data Analysis: Practices

5.1.1 Types of Practices

The first step in organising the data was to list all of the teachers' practices. To do this, I returned to my field notes and to the post-observation interview transcriptions to highlight examples of activities carried out during all of the classes I had witnessed. The term practice in this study broadly refers to any action that a teacher carries out in the class to aid in any of the following aspects: to help students with their language learning, to demonstrate how language is used, the different forms of classroom interaction employed and how teachers manage their students. There were variations in the ways that the teachers described their practices, for instance, some repetition of practices occurred in the same class, at other times teachers appeared to only carry out one or two activities, while others seemed to have managed to include large quantities of them into their lesson. All practices were noted down, even those that occurred on more than one occasion during the class, since the teacher may have assigned a different disposition to each of them.

Overall, the 28 separate classroom observations generated over 200 types of classroom activities, though with repeated forms taken into consideration, this figure was narrowed down to approximately 90. To facilitate the analysis, these practices were then divided into general categories, which can be seen in Appendix 14. Not

every observed lesson included similar practices as all teachers, naturally, have individual styles and face different curricular and contextual circumstances. For instance, some of the classes I observed, particularly those involving high school students (Parn, Panumas, Nuch and Siriwan's lessons), tended to focus on only one specific skill such as reading, which subsequently influenced the type and quantity of practices that were produced. This was possibly due to the fact that the teachers of these high school classes were preparing their students for upcoming university entrance examinations. Nattaporn, on the other hand, spent more time on practices related to aiding her primary school students' comprehension than her other colleagues, which may be due to her students having only recently started learning the language. Other factors to take into consideration when listing the practices include the fact that some of the observed lessons formed part of a series of classes. For example, while observing Sansuda's class, I noted that the students were working on a reading text but in the post-observation interview the teacher explained to me that this stage was the second of a four-part cycle of lessons that involved vocabulary building and mind mapping before finishing with a writing exercise

5.2 Teachers' Dispositions

The following step was to see what the teachers thought about these practices, that is, their dispositions. By discovering more about these dispositions it is possible to construct a picture of the *habitus* of this particular social field: how the teachers in this area make sense of the English language policy. To do this, I reviewed the reasons given by the teachers to describe their activities and subsequently formed categories. These are listed in Table 9 below. One further note to be added here concerns the language of the teachers. For purposes of this study, I only made few changes to some of the teachers' words as I wished to let their own voices be heard.

<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Evaluate student performance • Check meaning <p>Role of English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to English • Make the topic real <p>National Examination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of the national examination 	<p>Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help understand • Help remember • Help with grammar • Help with pronunciation • Help with reading • Help with listening • Learning atmosphere • Motivation • Fun • Cooperative learning <p>Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to teaching • Materials • Topic introduction • Classroom management
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Table 9: List of Teachers' Dispositions

The research questions also help to frame the way that the data has been organised in this study, particularly as it has employed multiple data collection methods that generated large amounts of data. Thus, the data that emerged from the classroom observations, combined with the data from the post-observation interviews, were then divided into five main themes that represented the teachers' dispositions. The first two of these themes were in response to the first two research questions, that is, the dispositions that underpin the teachers' classroom practices. The third, fourth and fifth themes relate these practices and dispositions to the third of the research questions, namely how the English language policy is related to what the teachers think and do in their classrooms. These main categories were as follows:

1. Teachers' dispositions about teaching
2. Teachers' dispositions about learning
3. The influence of the English language policy
4. The role that English plays
5. The influence of the National Examination

Within these five categories there was also a series of sub-categories (see Table 10 below). Thus, the first category was teaching, which is made up of topics such as approaches to teaching, the type of materials these teachers employed in their

classrooms, as well as how they evaluate their students. Category two includes sections on approaches to learning, in particular how teachers feel about student-centred learning, since this forms an important part of the current education policy (see chapter two). Further sub-categories in this section include the ways that teachers help their students with their overall learning: how to remember information, how to aid their comprehension, as well as how to improve such skills as pronunciation and reading. The third category concerns the effects that the English language policy has on teachers, while the fourth focuses on the role of English, including opinions from students and parents about the language in one sub-category, with another sub-category focusing on when the optimum time to learn English should be. The final main category deals with the teachers' views on the national examination (See Appendix 15 for example).

Teaching	Role of English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to teaching • Materials • Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimum time to learn the language • Students' opinion • Parents' opinion
Learning	National Examination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to learning • Help students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to understand (classroom language) - with reading and vocabulary - to improve pronunciation - to improve listening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of the national exam
Policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect of the policy on teaching 	

Table 10: Main categories and sub-categories of data

5.3 Teachers' Dispositions about Teaching

5.3.1 Teaching Approaches

At the start of each of the semi-structured interviews, I went through the list of practices I had observed each teacher do in class. I felt that these practices had acted as a type of snapshot of their teaching style, so I asked them if they were representative of their general teaching approach. Initially, not everyone was able to verbalise their thoughts on this topic but over the course of the interview I was able to tease out information on their different approaches to teaching. The approaches of the 14 teachers can be seen in Table 11 below.

Grammar-Translation	Communicative Approach	P-P-P	Mixed
Nattaporn (Kwan) Tak (Warot) Nuch	Tuk Aom	Thanawan Siriwan	Parn Somchai Panumas
	Sansuda Nok		

Table 11: Teaching Approaches of Participants

Note: P-P-P = Present, Practise, Produce (In brackets = based on observations)

Despite the fact that the policy stresses the importance of a more communicative approach to teaching (ONEC, 2005), only Tuk and Aom stated that they adopt this teaching style. Two others, Sansuda and Nok, suggested that they see themselves as employing a combination of the grammar-translation and communicative approaches due to the fact that their students need to focus on accuracy, with Nok stating that although she had been trained at university in the communicative approach, she felt that in her,

... real work I guess I focus on accuracy more than fluency. In person, I like communication but I think the real focus of Thai students is to study.

This idea of ‘real work’ suggests the existence of a gap between how she would like to teach and what she actually has to do. Interestingly, she said she feels ‘comfortable’ with the communicative approach but has adapted her style to suit the local context and so she uses a grammar-translation style in which she not only learned as a student but which is also common among the other English language teachers in her school.

Three other teachers (Parn, Somchai and Panumas) also adopted a rather pragmatic approach to local conditions, by suggesting that the context of each class drives their teaching style. One possible reason for this was that Thai students are not accustomed to certain approaches to teaching, something which Somchai referred to when he stated that ‘teaching English in Thailand is not teaching in abroad because Thai [people] use ... Thai language in the central life’. Two of the teachers felt that their styles had changed over the years with Panumas stating that in her seven years as a teacher, she has used many different styles that have been constructed from different

experiences. Thus, she currently uses a combination of a teacher-centred approach through lecture style classes, along with a more student-centred style through project work and student-driven activities. Parn also sees herself as someone who can select from a variety of teaching styles that she possesses depending on the way her students react to class content. As the main focus in her class was preparing students for the reading test in the national examination, she stressed the need for improving the learners' vocabulary skills and uses the approach known as KWL (Know-Want-Learn), formed in the 1980s in the USA and which attempts to activate learners' previous knowledge so that they may become interested in learning more through asking questions (Bos & Vaughan, 2002, as cited in Fengjuan, 2010). Thus, Parn felt that even though,

There are many teaching approaches... KWL is suitable for teaching my students to read. I like the style of asking questions very much because when I studied the Master's degree I did the research experiment... research about reading by verbatim question and conceptual questions so I like it very much. I think questioning is very important for teaching reading.

It is interesting to see that she based this decision on empirical research though I did not discover any more about this study and have to admit that this was the first time I had ever come across this approach.

Three of the teachers described themselves as regularly using the grammar-translation approach, with Nuch claiming that this form of teaching is important because it can help the students speak correctly, while she also added that this particular method had helped her to learn the language. Nattaporn remarked that though she wanted to teach in a more communicative style, she felt that as her primary school students did not have enough knowledge to be able to do so, she reverted to using a more teacher-centred / grammar-translation approach to her teaching.

Nattaporn: But if my students cannot go along with me I try to help them and use my old style.

DF: Old style for example, more grammar, more translation?

Nattaporn: Yes, yes.

The other teacher to use the grammar-translation method was Tak who suggested that although her approach depends on the class context, the fact that she does not have enough experience of the communicative approach means she employs a more grammar-based style in class. The remaining two teachers, Kwan and Warot did not directly acknowledge that they adopted a grammar-translation style, in fact, they were

unable to explain what their approaches to teaching might be but from the classroom observations and the subsequent interviews it was fairly clear that this was their preferred approach. Warot, for instance, frequently translated material in class and even accepted answers in the L1 from his students in order to help them understand better.

As previously stated, Tuk and Aom saw themselves as communicative English teachers with the former describing this approach as important for her students to learn the language as they can ‘use [it] in real life, in their daily life’. Two other teachers described their teaching styles as following the Present-Practise-Production (P-P-P) procedure with Siriwan stating that this was the way she had learned the language while a student herself. One further issue to be raised involved the question of foreign teachers. Only one of the schools in this study employed an overseas teacher but some of the teachers in the study wished their schools had access to someone that could motivate their students. However, Kwan was against this idea stating that:

Thai teachers can teach Thai students better than foreign teachers... because they can explain in Thai to make the students more understand the structure and to make the student more understand of the meaning of the word.

5.3.2 Materials

Perhaps the biggest influence that the perception of the policy has had on these teachers is the way in which they use materials in their classes. Many of them, such as Kwan, Tak, Thanawan and Nuch, followed Ministry of Education-approved textbooks though this did not always mean that they thought positively of them. Sansuda said that although it meant more work for her she preferred making her own lessons and often based these on subjects connected to local issues, which she knew formed part of the curriculum’s goals. One of her colleagues at the same school said she did not like using the textbook either, as the choice of topics and levels was somewhat limited, which Aom agreed with and added that her students often found the textbook difficult to follow. Another teacher, Kwan, said she supplemented the textbook activities by finding dialogues that her students would be able to use in the future. Few of the teachers had any say over the choice of textbook, instead stating that often the reason for one particular text being chosen is due to the fact that other schools in the region were also using it. Somchai also said he spent a lot of time creating his own

materials, though he understands that other teachers, particularly those with less experience, may not share his enthusiasm for doing so. He wondered, however, if the government would be able to distribute new sets of textbooks to the millions of students around the country. Nok agreed with this and added that those in the Ministry need to ‘decide on a textbook that is really matched to the new curriculum fast’. However, when suggesting a textbook like this might be introduced Sansuda was a little more sceptical mainly because of influence from overseas:

Sansuda: I think it's like the company from other countries are trying to sell the text to the government and ... it's like how many percent, something like that the government, or the people involved who has authorised to choose the text will get from each company, it's something like that...

She felt that teachers invariably remain with their own teaching style regardless of the guidelines or texts that are recommended. She also questioned the fact that the English language policy now offers too much choice.

DF: Too flexible?

Sansuda: Too flexible. It's changed [from] few years ago... because normally in the class we only have one text for the same level.

DF: The Language Institute say they left the policy open because they want teachers to choose content, to connect culture, the 4 Cs...

Sansuda: It's like the whole... just one text might cover everything that should be in the curriculum, right, but it has nothing to do with the teaching technique. You can apply the technique.

Very few of the teachers stated that they integrated other subject material into their classes apart from basic topics such as counting for mathematics or discussing the local area for geography class. Panumas, however, was closely connected to this topic as she worked in the English immersion programme (MEP) at the local secondary school (see chapter 2). She explained that the English teachers in her school would offer language support to the students by using materials based on science or geography in their English classes. They would discuss these topics with the content teacher though she did point out that there were many issues that still needed resolving, not least of which was her own class in which she had to teach mathematics.

Panumas: Because the students have to take the test there are some content that... very authentic that cannot be learned in English...

DF: OK

Panumas: About 20% but we cover those in Thai with them.

DF: Extra classes?

Panumas: Extra classes but sometimes we don't have enough Thai teachers to teach the extra classes.

DF: This programme has been running for 7 years?

Panumas: 6 years

DF: Generally the students' level of mathematics and science is the same or...?

Panumas: It's fine, no problem

Interestingly, two of the other teachers in this study have daughters attending the MEP classes with one noting that she was satisfied with the course and unconcerned about the effects it may have on content level, while the other was worried about the English level of the content teachers. Furthermore, Tak, though not directly involved with this school, thought the style of bilingual teaching could be a very successful way for students to learn English 'because students focus on the subject and they can learn English unconsciously'. I had thought that parents in the town would be very enthusiastic about this particular programme but according to Panumas it was not an overly subscribed class and she suggested that this might be due to cost and the fact that parents are more interested in their students' performances in the national examination.

5.3.3 Evaluation

A further issue connected to teaching that emerged from the data was how the participants evaluated their students. One area in particular concerned accuracy, or more specifically, error correction in speaking. Parn suggested that the communicative approach 'is more important than grammar' and so preferred fluency to accuracy, though she conceded that if 'their words became seriously wrong... so it's hard to understand ... I have to correct them'. On the other hand, Tak, like Nuch, sees teacher intervention when the error is made as being crucial to learning. Indeed, possibly reflecting the fact that she had recently enrolled on a Master's course, she questioned some of the learning theories that suggest an alternative view:

Some theories say that teachers shouldn't correct them [spoken errors] immediately. We have to let them speak and then ... we will correct them later. In my opinion, I would [gestures to stop] I don't know why.

Sansuda, in describing her students' efforts in a speaking test felt that if the students did commit an error while speaking she would tell them there had been one in the hope that the student might self-correct. The test comprised of the teacher asking comprehension questions about a topic that had been previously covered in class, with the students answering with a set phrase that had been learned from a list provided

beforehand. Interestingly, however, when asked about this she replied that she wanted her students to memorise the information as it might appear on the upcoming national examination. One other teacher to have a speaking test during my observation was Aom, who had students practise in pairs before making them perform a short dialogue in front of the class. This, she felt, allowed her to know what kind of problems the students had with respect to pronunciation and understanding, though again, it can be noted that students were not asked to produce anything original but simply had to follow the target language. Tak said she sometimes used role-plays in her class as a form of speaking test, something that Nuch also did, and that the students enjoyed doing them. Siriwan had also used this activity in class before and on the day that I observed her high school class, one of her groups of students stood up and performed the story that they had been reading about. Despite the fact that it was in Thai, this did not seem to worry the teacher as she saw this performance as a way of demonstrating their knowledge of the material.

5.4 Teachers' Dispositions about Learning

5.4.1 Student-centred Approaches

All of the teachers in this study made some reference to student-centred learning, which is a major feature of not only the English-language policy in Thailand but also the whole educational system. Only five of the teachers said that their classes demonstrated some elements of student-centred learning, with Sansuda stating that her adoption of this approach has been influenced by external factors.

DF: So has your style changed? I mean, before were you ... more communicative or less communicative or...?

Sansuda: Less communicative but ... yes ... not student-centred... teacher-centred

DF: Why did you change?

Sansuda: It's the world, the world has changed, okay and we need to do something new.

It has already been noted in chapter four that in Parn's class, the students had some say over their own learning with respect to reading English texts. Tuk also viewed this approach favourably, thinking that it is useful 'because some students want to show her ability, some students are shy but it's good for students...Yes, child-centred is better I think.' Another of the teachers to use a student-centred approach was Somchai but he claimed that in order for it to work he had to maintain some control over the students' learning by providing clear models for them to follow. Warot also touched on this issue when he revealed that his students were lazy but it was not so evident

that he was actually too familiar with this learning style.

Warot: In my opinion, I think students ... suppose to do this... ask students first what they want to study and let them study first and teacher look around students' learning and then to help them for their learning. Some students don't know and I have to suggest and discuss with them, like this.

DF: Do you do this sometimes?

Warot: I sometimes do this.

DF: Do you like it?

Warot: I quite like it because my students is lazy. If I let them study by themselves it's my problem... it's important I have to leave them.

Nattaporn, much like her comments about the communicative approach, felt that as the students in her class had only started to learn English they did not have enough of a foundation to use this style.

Nattaporn: After they can understand English, they can read, they can speak and understand what I try ... to do, I think [is] child-centred ...

DF: So you think the first step is to give them a base and then child-centred learning comes afterwards?

Nattaporn: I think so.

This sentiment was shared by many of the other teachers who pointed out that though they may wish to use this form of approach, their students were incapable of adapting to this system. Thus, Nok and Aom have tried this approach but change when their students do not respond to it.

Aom: Yes, sometimes teacher-centred is better because if the students cannot follow the lesson so I have to ... influence them to ... talk to them and by show and read them and let them follow the teacher.

DF: Repetition? Grammar practice?

Aom: Yes.

Tak agreed and wondered whether a student-centred approach to learning could actually work in Thailand:

Actually, I don't like much child-centred ... because some class ... we cannot let them to do like that... as for my understanding about child-centred... teachers would guide and students would do activities ... and do the things by themselves. Teachers just walk and observe their activities ... to know if they can do or not... but we just guide them. But ... most of my classes that I teach they don't have much ability ... they need help all the time and they cannot do by themselves because as you know that English is not the second language in Thailand and we cannot do like Singapore.

This was an interesting comment as this concept of learning forms the cornerstone of the education system in the country. Tak was not alone in her misgivings about this approach however, with many other teachers noting that their own teaching contexts were not conducive to it with Panumas suggesting that this may have to do with

cultural differences:

To use it in Thailand... it's quite hard because the Thai students are not brought up to think freely ... that's why when we use child-centred [approach] sometimes they cannot do it, like they always ask for help and... yes, you have to be very careful...

When asked why this learning style was still proving difficult after almost a decade since it was first introduced into the curriculum, she responded:

Difficult, not that difficult but you know it's ...like ... it's different from the Western countries, you know, how to teach, you know, like participation maybe, in the Western students they want to participate...

One further negative comment about this approach came from Siriwan, who suggested that it would mean more work for the teachers, as they have to prepare lesson plans for each of the individual learning styles in the classroom.

5.4.2 Helping Students to Understand: Classroom Language

Nearly all of the teachers described using some of their practices in order to help their students understand more, though perhaps this should not be so surprising as this constitutes the main part of teaching. These practices included translation techniques, using the board or handouts to explain ideas, asking a variety of questions, as well as focusing on the type of classroom language the teachers adopted.

With the Ministry of Education promoting English as a communicative language, it is important to note how much English was used in the observed classes and for what reasons. Of the 14 teachers that make up this research cohort, only three really used more English than Thai when it came to general classroom language. The three who did so are all fluent English speakers and have participated in many professional development schemes, while one of them, Panumas, works in the immersion-based programme (MEP) attached to her school. She gave most of her instructions in English and only offered some parts of the lesson through Thai because 'if you speak in English for the kids who have short concentration they won't listen', while in her mathematics classes she said that she mainly used Thai. Somchai works in an elementary school, where he feels that by constantly exposing the students to classroom instructions through English, his learners will 'understand one day'. Though this may sound a little more like hope than design, he noted that the stronger students in the class can understand and are therefore able to help the weaker ones.

The third of these teachers to mainly use English in class was Sansuda who works with a class of students who were in their final year of high school (*Matayom 3*). She commented that she tries 'to use easy English' with her students and seemed rather puzzled when asked why she uses English in the class as she saw this as part of her job:

Oh, it's the English class (laughs) and I should do that right, I mean, I am confident enough to speak. I want to be ... like, the model for my students...

This was an interesting comment from her because as she was born in the local area and went to the same school where she now teaches, she was indeed a strong model for the students there. Not all of the teachers had such belief in their own ability; however, with two of them stating that they did not feel confident in their own 'low level[s] of English' (Nattaporn). This was not to say that they did not use any English at all but they were clearly reticent in speaking the language in front of their students. Further reasons for teachers not using very much spoken English included the fact that they felt that the students were unable to comprehend, with Kwan claiming that:

It ... is impossible to explain in English because they cannot understand... it is important to explain in Thai so they can get... they can understand.

While another of her colleagues, Parn, when describing the role of classroom instructions in a reading class had this to say:

I think for Thai students, Thai ... is very important to make them understand the reading comprehension. I think it's very, very important because we can't teach them to think in English... they cannot. But the most thing is that they can read and that they can understand in their own language.

This was rather surprising, not only due to the fact that the students in this class had generally high levels of English (they were in *Matayom 3*) but that I had seen her use quite a significant amount of English in the two observations of her class. Her idea that Thai students cannot think in English, or at least are unable to understand very much was also held by other teachers in this study. Many of these teachers adopted a combination of using both Thai and English instructions during their lessons, though with slightly different approaches. Just over half of the total cohort used English first (sometimes repeating it twice) before translating into Thai soon afterwards. This was mainly done because they felt their students needed to hear some of the L2 (English) but also that the teachers seemed to be afraid that their students would not be able to understand. Some, like Aom, saw this use of both languages as a positive step, that is, by giving the students exposure to English they would eventually be able to

understand, however, Nok was not so sure why she had adopted both languages when giving her classroom instructions. Other issues to emerge in this area included translation with five of the teachers remarking that they do so in their classrooms on a regular basis. Some of them translated English words into Thai by writing them on the board, while others, for example, Nattaporn, often do not force a student to use English when answering a question as they are satisfied with the fact that he or she is simply able to understand. Again, the main reason for doing this involved aiding the students' comprehension, though one of the participants, Warot, did so as he knew that many of his students did not own a dictionary and so wished to make it easier for them.

5.4.3 Helping Students with Pronunciation

Many of the teachers in this study have to work with large classes, making it difficult for them to evaluate whether or not their students are making any progress. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why eight of the teachers adopted practices that involved the students responding as a whole class. Most of these teachers, it must be said, were working with younger learners so the fact that these learners did not have enough language to carry out pair work activities and that they were learning new sounds, meant that choral practice was a useful way for teachers to check students' speaking levels. Apart from one teacher, who suggested that this activity saved her time, the remaining seven all mentioned that it enabled them to hear whether or not the students' pronunciation was correct. Indeed, some teachers were worried that their learners' mispronounced forms would cause them trouble in the future when speaking to foreigners. Tak stressed that she wanted them,

to speak clearly... and maybe in the future if they speak to foreigners they would really understand ... I don't want them to speak incorrectly,

while her colleague Tuk added that:

If they don't know what vocabulary stress or pronunciation are, maybe after ... they leave from school or they meet another foreign language ... maybe they don't understand, like me too, some vocabulary. Foreign language [speakers] pronounce like this but in Thai we stress ...a different way, different form.

Other forms of helping the students to improve in this area included breaking words down into individual syllables and having students work in pairs, while one teacher asked questions to individual students in order to evaluate their pronunciation. One

further comment from Thanawan, who, it must be said, had a particularly weak group of learners, suggested that as all of the students were boys, they would prefer to speak English (or at least to repeat the set phrases she had given them) in groups as they are shy, which appears to make sense on one level. Nevertheless, it could be argued that this shyness might have been overcome if the teacher had asked them to use the language in their own way a little more. However, she would not do so until she felt the students had mastered the set dialogue from the textbook.

5.4.4 Helping Students with Reading and Vocabulary

There were a large amount of reading and vocabulary activities carried out over the series of observations, though not many writing ones, with many of the teachers stressing the importance of these two skills. This may be due to the fact that the national examination also concentrates on these two areas but also that the teachers, despite suggesting otherwise, may prefer to teach these practices as they are easier to evaluate and can be taught through Thai rather than English. One of the main areas where teachers felt they could help their students was in teaching vocabulary. This attention to vocabulary activities in order to learn new words was viewed by some of the teachers as vital, Parn, for instance when teaching her reading class states:

Vocabulary is very important for them so I focus on reading because in Thailand, Thai students have to read more than any other skills. If they find a native speaker, they can speak easily.

Tak agreed with Parn on this idea about the importance of vocabulary, or more specifically different parts of speech because she feels they will need this information in the future:

I just tell them that maybe in the future they will see the signs in the sentences like this. They can know that. For example, he is from America or he is from the USA ... they can know.

Tuk likes to use matching exercises with her students in order for the weaker students to improve and to understand some of the key words from the reading texts. She also likes to give her students a vocabulary test, something which Thanawan also does. Indeed, this teacher tried many different ways to help her students improve their reading skills but she became quite despondent about their lack of improvement and eventually translates the text for them as they 'don't know English, they don't know the meaning in English. I help them [by translating] because I want to pass on quickly'.

One of the techniques that Thanawan adopted in her attempts to help her students with their reading, included making the students copy down new vocabulary. Other teachers, such as Tuk and Kwan also ask their students to do this in each class so that they might remember new words. In addition, Nattaporn uses spelling techniques; Nok explains in Thai to help her students remember words, while Sansuda says she sometimes uses drilling techniques to help her students remember vocabulary.

5.4.5 Helping Students with Listening

Interestingly, only one of the observed classes was actually dedicated to practicing students' listening. Nok wanted her students to listen to a song by ABBA to help them understand more about the topic of money, which formed part of a textbook chapter. She prepared the students by having them do many types of vocabulary-building exercises and then gave them a worksheet with the song lyrics on it. She had highlighted some of the key vocabulary from the song and added another word, often a similar-sounding one, beside it on the sheet from which the students would then have to choose the correct answer. As the song was playing, she walked around the room encouraging the students to do the task and at the end of the exercise instructed them go to the board to write their answers. Then she replayed the song to check the answers with the whole group before telling the students that for homework they should find the track online and listen again. When asked why she had used this song in class she answered that she wanted the students to listen for vocabulary. Three of the other teachers used listening exercises to help with their students' reading. Somchai, who works in a primary school, prepared his students by writing down the term 'process listening' on the whiteboard and when I enquired if the students knew what this meant he replied that he constantly uses this type of (meta) language in class and that the students know it as 'fluency listening' in Thai. The text was connected to a reading activity they had previously done and would feed into a writing task he had planned for the following lesson. He played the first line of the text and then stopped to ask the students comprehension questions such as 'what's his name' and 'what does he do?' When asked why, he replied:

I think if you stop the tape and ask them, it means it leads them with the learning activity because I would like to check how much they understand from the text. If they understand it means we can continue the listening activity.

He wanted the students to write the whole text down as they listened, a form of dictation, and then helped them by showing the words from the text on the white board for a short while before taking them away again. This was an interesting combination of techniques accompanying this listening activity, which he explained was important because by writing the words down the students can ‘show well they can remember’. He then went on to remark that he needed to play the text until the students understood it perfectly, possibly suggesting that students learn discrete items in the same manner. Two other teachers also used a listening activity to help with their students’ reading, with Siriwan instructing the students to re-order previously read information, while the other used a recording of a story that her students had also previously worked on. I was a little surprised at the fact that so few of the other observed lessons involved any listening and that so little of it was in any way authentic. This may have been due to many reasons, including a lack of proper equipment in many of the schools, the teachers are not accustomed to dealing with authentic materials, they are unable to adapt materials to suit their teaching context or they simply felt that their students were incapable of fully comprehending them.

5.5 The Role that the English Language Policy Plays on Teaching

DF: Do you know anything about the English language policy in Thailand?

Warot: No. I just be teaching.

Warot had only been working as a teacher for a year, which suggests that his comment was borne out of inexperience rather than ignorance, though it should be noted that Nok had also just graduated from teaching college and was able to describe the policy goals in great detail. The comment above does, however, raise questions about whether or not the teachers working in the area were familiar with the guidelines, ideals, materials, aims and methodologies involved in the English language policy. Most of the teachers in this study seemed to understand what the policy stood for and were familiar with the many objectives laid out in the official guidelines, though some were looking forward to working with the newer version, which would have fewer indicators, though Somchai doubted this would happen. He was unhappy with the way the policy was currently written, suggesting that it should be clearer and easier to comprehend, while Sansuda was unsure how successful these curricular standards had been, something that Panumas also agreed with as she felt that they were rather unrealistic.

Some of the teachers viewed the policy in a positive manner and a way of helping students improve their communication. Ironically, however, Nattaporn viewed this move to a more communicative style as a problem for her because she was working with students who had never previously studied the language. Therefore, she felt she had to use a teacher-centred approach in order for the students to receive some form of grounding in the subject before they could become more communicative.

Thanawan, like Nattaporn, was another working in a small village school and she felt that the curriculum could be seen as something positive for those students in the city but not for those in rural areas, as there were not enough resources to implement the curriculum's goals. Indeed, Nattaporn suggested many of her students, who spoke Lao or Suay as an L1, needed to improve their Thai skills before learning English, something that city students did not necessarily have to address. Tak, on the other hand, when describing how she used the curriculum in her teaching, accepted that it was working well because of the expertise behind its formulation and implementation:

Tak: I just know that there will be very good people at English – maybe ... they graduated from abroad and they would think about the national curriculum in English ... for many subjects but English they would select the committee to do that and then they would send the national curriculum to each school and we look [it] up.

However, others did not share this view, particularly Somchai, who claimed that the provision of previous curricula in the country had also been prone to constant change, making it difficult for teachers to understand and implement them.

Somchai: I think some try to follow the curriculum but some [...] ignore because like this happened before, the curriculum in Thailand are changing very, very fast so sometimes, oh, it's very hard to follow them...

He also suggested that the Ministry of Education had previously promoted many of the current curriculum's indicators making it difficult for teachers to comprehend which ways of teaching are the best.

Somchai: Yes, indicators have been stated ten years ago and the last curriculum before we used this one, it's very clear for the English teacher to follow the objectives but then it changed a lot and it's very hard for teachers to... state about the objectives. Indicators are the same as many years ago in the curriculum.

This suggests that he may not have been as attentive to the current guidelines as Tak or indeed another of the participants Aom, who, as a master trainer is involved in helping teachers in her school with professional development. She thought these

indicators were very positive and regularly checks them to see what she needs to do for her lessons. She did, however, have some problems with the fact that as there are many students in her class, she sometimes found teaching the standards quite difficult, possibly because many of these students had not had any previous experience of these types of techniques in earlier classes or at primary school. This also reflected Panumas' view that the curriculum's goals were unrealistic. Aom was also unsure as to how other teachers reacted to these indicators and even suggested that some teachers do not change their teaching styles. Somchai agreed with her and though he 'glance to the curriculum sometimes', he feels that teaching styles do not change at all as many of the teachers simply do not understand the policy goals and that 'It's very hard for teachers if they don't know the way [...] to apply something from the curriculum.' Other teachers also paid a certain amount of lip service to these changes with Panumas suggesting that:

It gives more work, sometimes when you change the curriculum but you still teach the same. The curriculum is like a paper, you have to prepare and make it to show for those... you have to follow, you know, but it just... when you teach it's different things... So, it doesn't affect our teaching but we have more work to create something, create a paper, create a report...

DF: Then you continue teaching the way you do?

Panumas: Yes, right.

She also felt that policy guidelines are given to the teachers without any real support and offered the example of the proposed introduction of the approach based on backward design. During my stay in the town, I had heard many of the teachers talking about this form of syllabus creation, which was probably due to the influence of a recent workshop organised by the local ERIC centre (Educational Resource and Instruction Centre). Panumas did not think that teachers were ready to teach in this manner and instead argued that:

We should prepare like two or three years training or have a research to support that backward design that's very good for Thai schools.

DF: Is there any research?

Panumas: No nothing. Just like you have to do the backward design next term... Many teachers went through many training, three or four trainings and still know... up in the sky, know nothing...

5.6 The Role of English

The area in which this study was conducted offers few opportunities for practising English outside of class so it was interesting to hear what the teachers thought of the role of English in this part of the country, Kwan, for instance saw 'the aim of the

study of English is to communicate' yet from her observations it was noted that she seldom used any activities to help her students practise communicating in her class. Naturally, as English language teaching professionals, it should be expected that the teachers would have a positive opinion on the language though this did not always prove to be the case with their students or even with the families of their students. According to Panumas, parents who send their children to the most prestigious school in the main town are aware that English is important but not always with respect to the idea of communication. They also want their students to focus on the English needed to pass the important final examinations and this is one reason, for example, why the MEP only runs in junior high school and not the final three years of high school. She added that there were other pressures for the teachers in this school:

Panumas: Directors when they hear students speak English for example... if the student does not have very clear accent or they have a Thai accent, then they can be criticised but not criticised through the students but the teacher who are to blame, it's like, 'oh, why do the students not speak clear English?' Even though the students are trying to communicate, like answering questions and trying. A lot of pressure from ...
even parents saying that 'why my children do not speak English like a foreigner or a native speaker?' ... or something like that. Parents also want to see the students have very high score in the national test, so it's like a lot of pressure.

The two other teachers who suggested that parents were very interested in their students' ability to learn English were also from the main town, Aom and Somchai, with the latter claiming that:

If the parents are living in the city they are interested in English but if they live in a rural area or in the countryside they don't think English is important for them because of the poverty and because some of them are very, very poor and English is not good for them, they just finish from the school and work in the farm – everything stops.

According to teachers from the three different rural schools, the parents there were unable to help their children due to the fact that they were either unable to read or write (Nattaporn) or that they were simply not interested in the language (Thanawan and Nok). Siriwan disagreed with her colleagues, however, and felt that the parents had some interest in the language due to the number of tourists in the area. When I questioned her further on this, she added:

Siriwan: But maybe not tourists, maybe a man ... for a Thai girl
DF: Do you think that families tell their daughters find a foreign man?
Siriwan: Yes (laughs). I think because when they saw the girl who has a foreigner husband they think that foreigners has much money than Thais.

This rural-city divide could also be noted when discussing student motivation towards the language, with many teachers from the main town suggesting that their students are very aware of the reasons why they are learning English: communicating with foreigners and obtaining a good job. Furthermore, Sansuda tells the students about her own experiences as a learner in the same school when younger, so that the students have a model of someone from their own background who has succeeded in learning English. However, teachers from the countryside noted that their students, ‘don’t have the good attitude with English, they think it’s difficult and they can’t see how they can use English in their real life, so they don’t have motivation to learn’ (Nok), while Nattaporn added that ‘they know only to go to the test and play games, play computer games’. Thanawan said that she had told her students of the importance of English, which could possibly allow them to get a better job in the future, nevertheless Kwan disagreed with this as she saw that they ‘have many, many ways to work in Thai without using English’.

One further aspect related to the role of English in the region is connected to the relationship that it has with local languages. Prior to carrying out this study, I had thought the issue of English might have been rather controversial, particularly in a multilingual area like this one but none of the three teachers who mentioned this topic saw English as having any effect at all on the local languages.

5.6.1 The Optimum Time to Learn English

As noted in chapter 2, an increasing amount of Thai students are now starting English classes from primary school and so I was interested to know what these teachers thought of this issue. The majority of the teachers felt that this was a good idea, with Aom feeling that students would benefit from learning English songs and playing games at kindergarten so that the students would become ‘familiar with English’. However, many of the teachers were worried about the English levels of the primary school teachers. For instance, Tak thought that students should learn English as early as possible but that there were not enough qualified teachers working at primary level so she recommended a form of distance learning (though it should be noted that in one of the primary school classes, I had observed the students watching a TV programme for young learners of English that was provided by the Ministry of Education). Nuch, Somchai, Warot and Sansuda agreed with Tak in that they felt that

students should learn English at an earlier age, with Sansuda suggesting that ‘It’s very easy, I mean, it’s much easier to teach ... it’s like young dog, new tricks.’ Panumas also agreed with this though she wondered about the level of teaching there.

DF: What problems are there for students learning English in primary schools now?

Panumas: I think ... too serious, like, you know, learning English ... they have to remember some particular words and then the activities are not fun. I have heard a lot of gossip from the experience in the primary level they [her students] said that the teacher forced them to write like a diary but they have to write it ... the same thing, if they go, like, some strange thing that they want to write and then the teachers said ‘no that’s wrong’, they have to come back and write the same thing and then they feel bored and they have to write the same thing every day so they don’t see the point.

DF: So they can't create, they can't....

Panumas: No, no, no

DF: Interesting

Panumas: Maybe because if they want to create something and then they use the language not good enough then the teacher feels like it is wrong.

However, not all of the teachers held the same opinion about when the optimum time to learn English was; with some, possibly reflecting on their own experiences, feeling that *Prathom* 5 or 6 (9 or 10 years old) would be better.

DF: P1 is okay? Or is it too early?

Nattaporn: I think it’s early or so young for the students, for Thai students

DF: So too young?

Nattaporn: Too young

DF: Because they are not ready?

Nattaporn: They cannot read Thai.

Nok was not convinced that there was any proof to demonstrate that students can learn a foreign language in kindergarten and went further than many of her colleagues by suggesting that ‘Thai people should learn English, maybe in High School or in college.’ When I asked her why she replied:

I don’t think it’s necessary for Thais to learn English... I don’t know. Like nowadays they learn English because the curriculum asks them to, they don’t get a real motivation and they don’t know how to use it. I think in High School they grow up enough to think what is important for them and when they really want to learn they will have the motivation and they will work to learn it.

5.7 The Influence of the National Examination

One of the more controversial issues to have been raised throughout this study concerned the role of English in the national tests. The most important of these is the final one at the end of high school, which serves as a part of the university entrance examination. The teachers have a big responsibility to their students with respect to

the obligatory English component of the examination and so, as has already been demonstrated, spend quite a lot of time preparing them for it. Much of this preparation time is spent focusing on past exam questions, answering comprehension questions on reading texts and correcting grammar mistakes, as these are the types of questions that appear every year on these examinations. Needless to say, the teaching approaches of the participants change somewhat as these exams approach, with little student-centredness or communicative language teaching occurring in classrooms as students are prepared for the examination. As Panumas noted, there is a tension between the communication of the language and the knowledge of the test.

DF: How does a teacher balance the two? How does the teacher do this?

Panumas: It's hard ... if we teach communicative then the students will not be able to pass the test that's why we have to ... kind of... what do you call it... split the time for you know for teaching knowledge and then also teaching like activities or communicative...

Some, like Tak and Warot, stop using any form of communicative materials or activities two months before the test starts and simply focus on test techniques, while Nattaporn, constantly thinking about the test, helps her students by preparing her own handouts. Sansuda also claimed that the test influences her choice of materials for her high school reading class from day one of term, suggesting that:

Sansuda: It forces me to teach more grammar and more reading skills to the students

DF: So even though the curriculum says be more communicative?

Sansuda: Yes but for the National Test, the test for grammar and reading skill

DF: The test doesn't...

Sansuda: ... reflect the learning that we have.

Aom is unable to understand why there is no listening or speaking component on this test so that there may be some connection between the curriculum goals and the examination and suggests that those who design the tests should find out more about these goals. Despite the fact that the test achievement scores in her school are lower than before she insists that she will continue with her communicative approach when teaching as she sees communication levels increasing among her students

Aom: Speaking and listening are going up, communication is going up but the National Test is lower because I am emphasis communication.

DF: So you are following the curriculum?

Aom: I follow the standards, yes.

DF: Why no connection between the test and the curriculum?

Aom: Because the teachers who design the test, they don't know the curriculum and they don't know the basic schema of the system in English.

This fairly controversial comment was something that Somchai agreed with, as he felt that those who set the examinations are far-removed from his teaching context.

Somchai: The one who make a paper test are working in the university and has very high[level], old students. No primary teachers like us to make the test paper so they don't know ... what is the real situation of the students.

When I asked Panumas' opinion on this subject she answered:

I don't know, it's probably to evaluate the students, it needs to be like, through the test and it's impossible to evaluate the whole students in the country in a communicative way... so, they have to use the national test.

However, she added later:

I think that the government curriculum is a bit ... like, not realistic, it's like ... communicative but then the students have... they have to pass the test which is knowledge you know, so ... for us, we don't follow 100% the curriculum.

Nok felt that there needed to be big changes if the goals of the policy were to be reached:

They should decide [on a] test that match with the communication approach, maybe have a listening test, speaking test, writing test, I think when I was in *Matayom 3* I had a writing test [But now no].

She then remarked that English is only important for a certain group of people:

Nok: Students who want to study in higher degrees and people in quite high class... This area is not like that, so English is not important for them

DF: So if they can't do English, they can't go to university?

Nok: I used to ask this question to them [the students] but they didn't answer. They think they can take the score from Thai but in fact they cannot even do that because Thai language is very difficult.

DF: Is it unfair?

Nok: I think so.

5.8 Summary

Bourdieu emphasises the importance of practice in his set of conceptual tools by suggesting that theory cannot be formed without empirical data (Bourdieu 2005, as cited in Thomson, 2008). Consequently, in order to better understand their *habitus*, the actions of the teachers in this study have been investigated. Rawolle and Lingard (2008) suggest that Bourdieu's idea of what constitutes practice can be divided into three parts: the carrying out of an activity, the subsequent naming of this activity and the fact that a practice is different from theory. These elements can be clearly seen in this study, with the observed teachers carrying out activities in the classroom and

subsequently offering explanations as to what it was they were doing and why (their practices and dispositions).

Despite the fact that these 14 teachers work with different levels of English speakers, age groups and teaching contexts, some commonalities can be noted from the data mentioned above. For example, with respect to their classroom practices, the majority of the teachers' instructions were given in Thai, while there was also a large amount of translation from English to Thai since the teachers felt that their students would not be able to understand otherwise. Observing these teachers at work, I noticed that students had very few opportunities to actually speak any English and when they did there were even fewer chances for them to discuss issues and topics that they may have been interested in or been able to engage with. Not only did the teachers decide on most of the topics, but the manner in which they were taught was, for the most part, very much controlled by them. Apart from two occasions, students seem to have little say over what they learned and how, though it has to be said that in one of these examples the way that the students organised and controlled the class was very impressive indeed. Furthermore, despite living in an area where students hardly have any access to listening to the L2, there were very few examples of teachers' practices that included focused or authentic listening practice. There was a significant amount of examples involving rote learning or memorisation in many of the activities, with teachers drilling their students in choral speaking practices and having their students repeat writing tasks until they had learned how to do them 'perfectly' – though, interestingly, one of the other teachers complained about this and claimed that her current students had been through this process in primary school and found it boring. Methods of evaluating the students were also restricted to group repetition exercises or testing the students' memory from prepared lists of answers.

Clearly, these practices do not reflect the aims of the current English language policy in Thailand, which promote the concepts of student-centred learning, and communicative language teaching. Instead, it can be inferred from the data that a teacher-centred approach, one that incorporates such techniques as rote learning, is still prevalent in the area. Much of the previous research conducted in this field has offered similar experiences, before suggesting that this may be due to teachers' confusion over the policy, which means they may need to receive more professional

development in order to alleviate this confusion (see Thongsri, *et al.*, 2006; Prapaisit de Segovia and Hardison, 2008).

Rather than make a similar claim, this study is interested in discovering more about why such a gap exists between what the English language policy in Thailand is attempting to promote and what actually happens in the classroom, that is, how teachers conceptualise the policy. Possible reasons for this mismatch include the inconsistency between what the policy is promoting and how this is subsequently assessed; the influence that imported approaches to learning and teaching have on contexts where students and teachers are not accustomed to such ideas, as well as the broader question of whether English is actually helping those it purports to help. The following chapter will examine these issues in more depth.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6. Introduction

The data that has emerged from this study suggests a gap exists between the aims of the language policy and what actually occurs in the classroom. In many previous studies this gap has often been explained by a lack of well-qualified teachers (Atagi, 2002) or that teachers have not been properly prepared (Foley, 2005; Baker, 2008; Liddicoat, 2004). However, this gap may also have been created, exacerbated or maintained by other issues, such as the impact of the national examination on teaching (Watson Todd, 2004; Atagi, 2002) or the fact that a disparity may exist between the ‘socio-cultural expectations of teachers and student roles and new forms of English language pedagogy’ (Hayes, 2010, p. 306). Therefore, this chapter will discuss some of the reasons for the existence of the gap between policy and practice by examining each of the main data categories discussed in the previous chapter.

6.1 Teaching

6.1.1 Approaches to Teaching

A wide variety of teaching approaches were adopted among the teachers in this study, with many of them also adapting their styles to suit the occasion or the context. The English language policy in Thailand encourages teachers to use a communicative approach, one that is viewed as an important part of teaching in the country (Kwangsawad, 2007; Watson Todd, 2005). Nevertheless, there were few examples of this style in any of the observations and indeed many of the participants openly admitted to either not liking or not finding it useful for their own teaching context. There seems to be a lack of faith with respect to implementing this approach, which may be explained by teachers not always being able to see its benefits. This may be due to the fact that in this area there are so few opportunities for students to communicate through the language, while the influence of the national examination, which does not have any communicative element attached to it, means that teachers may not be convinced of the value of using such an approach. Even those who support the curriculum guidelines find it difficult to reconcile them with the strong influence of the examinations. For instance, one of the teachers Aom admitted that despite trying to overcome this problem every year she has yet to find a solution, though this does not prevent her from consistently teaching through this approach. On the contrary, one of her colleagues, despite feeling ‘comfortable’ with the

communicative approach after she had studied it at university, now seems to view it as something less important than her 'real work', which means helping her students pass the examinations. This suggests that the content of what is being taught to pre-service teachers needs to be reviewed so that this reality might be better reflected.

Furthermore, the fact that the communicative approach does not originate from Thailand may also have an impact on teachers' decisions to avoid using this approach as they feel it may not suit the contextual demands of their area. This is something that Ellis (1996) raises when questioning the value of employing the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach in Vietnam (like Thailand, an EFL context). Saengbon (2006, p. 140) agrees with Ellis' ideas that CLT does not always function well in Asian contexts, possibly because "the process-orientation' of Western pedagogy ... emphasises communicative competence [which] conflicts with the 'product orientation' of the Vietnamese [or Thai] pedagogy'. Liddicoat (2004) also questions the idea that the substitution of one teaching methodology for another can occur easily. He agrees with Pennycook (1989) that when governments promote the communicative approach to teaching as an ideal method, they often fail to take into consideration external factors. Instead they need to understand that it 'is a flawed view which does not recognise the cultural, social, economic, and political relations of power involved in the promotion of one method over another' (Liddicoat, 2004, p. 155). This move to a more communicative style of teaching puts forward the argument that this approach is now viewed as a panacea to previous language-learning problems. This suggests not only that previous teacher-centred approaches were wrong but also that CLT is now the right method to adopt, which is simply substituting one form for another without taking into consideration the context involved (Hayes, 2010; Ball, 1997) or that in this post-method era multiple forms of teaching now exist (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

Closely related to this, is the issue involving the geographical area where this study was conducted. As there are few occasions for students to practise the language, teachers feel that a communicative approach may not be worthwhile. Indeed, they may ask why they need to teach this way in a non-communicative area. When discussing these difficulties in adopting such an approach to local contexts, Hayes (2010) likens the current situation to the way that foreign languages were taught in the

UK during the 1980s by quoting Byram's (1989, p. 11) warning that:

If we justify language teaching – and motivate pupils – solely, or even just mainly, by putative communication needs and those needs turn out to be non-existent, then the justification disappears – and most motivation with it.

Thus, with this in mind, it can be argued that since teachers in this study cannot see the justification for teaching in this particular manner, then they may simply refuse to do so.

The communicative approach is closely linked with ideas such as individualism, self-learning and criticality, concepts that are not traditionally seen as forming part of the Thai educational, or indeed, the social landscape. Instead, teachers are viewed as only transmitting knowledge to students for them to learn. Freire (1970) terms this the 'banking concept', that is, discrete pieces of knowledge, which can be deposited into students from which they can subsequently withdraw whenever they see fit. In Thailand this system of depositing knowledge is maintained through the grammar-translation approach and the P-P-P style of teaching. This may be explained by the fact that these types of approaches are somewhat easier to control; teachers can demonstrate clearly what it is they wish to teach and how this is to be evaluated. Indeed, nine of the teachers in this study taught through the grammar-translation approach or the P-P-P procedure at some stage. Both of these styles are very top-down in nature with teachers imparting knowledge to an unquestioning audience, making these forms of teaching a lot easier to manage. In this study, this transmission of knowledge can be seen from the large amounts of classroom practices adopted by the teachers to help their students learn grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. This implies that there is a fixed amount of discrete items to be learned by, or deposited into, their learners. For instance, one of the teachers in this study refused to move to a new topic until all of the students had learned and completed the tasks he had set them as he felt they would be unable to progress onto the next level without doing so.

P-P-P is a procedure that allows a teacher to decide what the students should learn, how they do so, as well as how they are evaluated; meaning that the 'traditional role' of the teacher is maintained throughout (Kwangsawad, 2007). This is illustrated by another of the teachers in the study who was worried about her students working in groups as 'it can be, like, crazy', which suggests that she is interested in maintaining

some form of control over how her students learn. One further point related to this issue of the non-adoption of the communicative approach is the teachers' level of English, with many of those taking part in this study openly admitting that they did not have confidence in the way that they spoke the language, a problem that Kwangsawad (2007) also found in a study carried out with a group of rural Thai English language teachers. Clearly, this lack of confidence over their language ability has an effect on the choice of teaching approach, since the grammar-translation approach and P-P-P usually only require a certain amount and type of spoken language compared with the communicative approach. Other possible reasons for this approach to have not been universally accepted include the fact that teachers are unsure of what it actually entails, for example, one of the teachers in the study likes the idea of the communicative approach but does not feel confident enough to use it, which may suggest a lack of appropriate or relevant training. Alternatively, some teachers see this approach as being one more in a long line of teaching styles that the Ministry has attempted to implement over the years, which makes them question the durability of the latest change, as Somchai, claimed:

we don't know why the government or the one who has power in the Ministry did like this. Why did they not set the resource before and ... to find out which one is the best and what is the weakest?

6.1.2 The Policy Effects

The Ministry of Education in Thailand has already revised the 2001 curriculum (in 2008) in order to clarify and make things easier for teachers but educational change cannot occur without careful planning and real engagement with those who have to deal with this change. As Fullan (1993, p. 23) states:

unless deeper changes in thinking and skills occur, there will be limited impact [...] the main problem in public education is not resistance to change, but the presence of too many innovations mandated or adopted uncritically and superficially on an *ad hoc* fragmented basis.

This quote from Fullan raises some interesting points about the effect that the language policy has on teachers, not least of which are whether or not change in teaching practices or dispositions can actually occur after a policy has been implemented. Watson Todd (2006, p. 2) suggests that the process of change in Thailand has not yet reached the immanent stage, which 'occurs where both the recognition of the need for change and the origins of the ideas for innovation are internal to the local situation'. This allows teachers to have a 'sense of ownership and

commitment to the innovation' (*ibid.*), which means that a policy has more chance of being successful. It has already been noted in chapter three that teachers' dispositions do not always change after forms of deliberate intervention, for instance through the teaching of a course or the implementation of a policy, with research findings on this issue generally being inconclusive. Furthermore, teachers, in not always reacting to the way that policy-makers or Ministry officials wish them to, need to ascertain whether the desired changes are beneficial, relevant, suitable or practical to their own teaching contexts. In this study, Somchai, for instance, suggests that as there have been so many policy changes in his career as a teacher he has adopted his own form of approach that, according to him, best suits his students' needs. Fullan (1993, p. 13) goes on to state that some reasons for a policy or a change possibly failing to occur on '...any scale, [...] is that the infrastructure is weak, unhelpful, or working at cross purposes'. Despite receiving many forms of training and professional development from the Ministry of Education, Panumas seems to agree with Fullan's quote as she notes that teachers often lack support in understanding how to adopt and implement these policy innovations (in her case, she offered the example of backward design) leading to suggestions that if teachers are not involved in policy formulation and implementation then success may not always be guaranteed.

6.1.3 Materials

Most of the teachers taking part in this study used Ministry of Education approved materials though these were not always well received. This may be seen as something natural for any teacher that has to use a textbook with a large class of students who all have various learning abilities, previous knowledge and differing interest levels. Many of the materials used by the teachers in this study were generally disconnected or decontextualised, often taking the form of vocabulary or grammar exercises or involving topics that possessed very little connection to the students' real world. In addition, many writers, including Auerbach, (2000), Shohamy (2006) and Canagarajah (1999), take the critical view that these materials transmit ideological and political agendas, while Shohamy (2006, p. 80) notes that English language speakers are often portrayed in textbooks as being 'wealthy, well established and having ample opportunities and choices', which is not always the case for some of the students in this study. This also reflects the concerns that some authors have about how modern and technologically advanced the language is viewed by students in EFL

contexts (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Phillipson, 1992). Thus, what the students in this northeastern Thai region read about or listen to from these materials generally has little connection with their own lives, something that Canagarajah's 1999 study from Sri Lanka also noted. Indeed, the gap between what these students see in their materials and what they experience in their real lives may demotivate their learning of English.

In order to counter this, Kachru (1998) suggests that materials should be developed by outer circle nations, rather than importing them from the inner circle countries as they often fail to understand local issues and contexts. Baker (2008, p. 143) agrees and sees locally-produced materials as important so that they may be 'in tune with local learners' intercultural communicative practices', while Toh (2003) also calls for more criticality with respect to materials. Although some Thai versions of textbooks do exist many of the published materials that the teachers in this study used in class were not produced specifically for the local market. Some of the teachers incorporated supplementary materials from other books or from the Internet into their lessons but very few of them actually created their own materials. One obvious reason for such little creation of locally produced materials stems from a lack of time that teachers have but it may also be connected to the fact that many of these teachers are not accustomed to doing this kind of work. Much like their counterparts in the EFL-context of Japan, where teachers are being asked to teach English communication as opposed to knowledge about the language (Seargent, 2008), they may not have enough knowledge or confidence to create new materials (Watson Todd, 2004). To counter this difficulty, Watson Todd (*ibid.*) goes on to recommend the establishment of a centralised database where teachers would be able to access or to upload materials, though as the author notes, this idea may suffer from a lack of quality, as well as adding to the teachers' already busy schedules.

6.2 Learning

6.2.1 Student-centred Learning

As noted in the previous chapter, there were very few examples of student-centred learning taking place in the observed classes and indeed, many of the teachers suggested that they were not in favour of such an approach. Similar to reasons given outlined above for the non-adoption of the communicative approach, teachers may be

unsure of how this approach functions, the fact that this approach is not native to Thailand, that it may not suit their own context and that teachers did not have enough support to aid with the implementation of this approach. Furthermore, students generally treat teachers with respect in Thailand (Foley, 2005; Baker, 2008) and are not accustomed to asking questions or challenging the power structures that exist in schools. In addition, not only is it difficult for students to change their behaviour overnight but it is also not easy for teachers to do the same, particularly as many see learner-centredness as possibly loosening their control over what is learned and how. One of the teachers did use some aspects of learner-centredness in her teaching, not just at task or class level but also at curricular level; she wanted to be a facilitator to her students, whereas most of her colleagues taking part in this study transmitted rather than constructed knowledge with their students. This may be due to the lack of experience or understanding of this learning concept on the part of the teachers but the Ministry of Education also needs to ensure that schools and teachers are better prepared in order to allow this approach to have an improved chance of being implemented (Nonkukhetkhong, *et al.*, 2006).

6.2.2 English: When to Learn?

There was a difference in opinion among the teachers over when English should be learned, which can be seen as an indication of the uncertainty that surrounds this issue (Nunan, 2003). Some of the teachers in this study recommend that students should begin learning English in kindergarten, others suggest the ideal time for a student to begin would be in *Prathom 1* (1st grade), while one, a primary school teacher, felt that *Prathom 5* would be a better age for students, as they would have had more practice in their own language. The suggestion that students should learn English at an early age is an interesting one with teachers possibly hoping that their jobs might become somewhat easier to manage if students receive more English instruction at an earlier age, as opposed to the current situation where a big difference can be noted between those students who receive a good level of teaching at primary school with those who do not. This is due to the fact that, until recently, primary school teachers did not have to teach the language, while there are still many who are unable to even speak it. In addition to the poor levels of teaching at this level, there are few suitable materials for young learners, a lack of qualified teachers, poor facilities and few opportunities to practice. Moreover, there is still a lack of research to support the idea that learning a

foreign language at an early age is better than at a later stage (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002; Nunan, 2003), something that was mentioned by one of the teachers in the study. Nok felt that students should not learn English until they had at least reached high school when she believed that they could make a more mature decision about their learning. This is something that authors such as Skutnabb-Kangas would agree with, as she feels that basic literacy skills such as reading and writing can only be learned once and this should be done through the child's mother tongue.

One further issue that surrounds this debate involves access to the English language. The Thai Ministry of Education has introduced English classes for students from *Prathom* 4 but also allows schools to teach the language from the first grade if it wishes. This favours schools that have the facilities to do so as they have qualified teachers and a budget for materials. Schools that do not have access to these resources are unable to offer the same level of classes in English to their students, which means that when many of them reach *Prathom* 5 and 6 or high school, they are at a disadvantage with respect to the language levels which may subsequently further demotivate them.

6.2.3 Bilingual Programmes

Few of the teachers in this study incorporated other subjects into their English classes, which may be due to them not having the experience, the language or content ability, while few materials exist that cater for such occasions. However, this is not to say that teachers are against the idea of teaching content through English. Indeed, those that commented on the subject generally held a positive view, which is similar to the attitude that the Thai Ministry of Education has for these bilingual programmes. In chapter 2, the different types of these courses that can be found in Thai schools were outlined and perhaps the fact that there are so many suggests that the Ministry has yet to decide on which form would be the most effective. One of the Ministry of Education's priorities for the improvement of English in Thailand is the extension of the English Programmes (EP) and the Mini English programmes (MEP) across the country (MoE, 2007a). However, these programmes are not without their problems, not least of which is the issue concerning the gap between the 'haves and the have-nots' (Nunan, 2003). These types of courses have to be paid for by the students, which means that although they are open to everyone only a small number can

actually participate in them. Schools can determine the price of these courses up to a figure of 35.000 Baht (approximately £700) a term (Keyuravong, 2010), which for families in this area is a huge sum (for instance this sum is equivalent to a top-level teacher's monthly salary). Consequently, in a region where there is hardly any possibility of practising the language this means that those with money can avail themselves of a certain amount of English-language practice, while those that do not are unable to do so. Keyuravong (2010) also notes that many school directors see them as a way of attracting students to extra-curricular classes and she feels that the variety of course titles used to describe these programmes act as an illustration of this commercialism.

The proposed expansion of these types of courses by the Ministry suggests they are successful, which is not always the case. The teacher in this study who works in an English-language immersion programme (Panumas) commented that she sometimes uses Thai as the language of instruction so that the students are able to better understand her, while the fact that her school organises extra classes in the content area suggests that this system may not be an overly successful one. Further evidence of this is that these classes only run in junior high school (*Matayom* 1-3), as parents are not completely convinced of their effectiveness, preferring that their children focus on the national examinations instead. One other major disadvantage of this type of course concerns the hiring of qualified teachers (Keyuravong, 2010). Finding language teachers that can teach content or content specialists with good English levels is difficult. Often schools will hire a native speaker to teach these classes regardless of whether the teacher has a background in the content subject – indeed, while I was in Thailand, I was offered a position within one of these programmes. Another issue attached to these types of courses revolves around the ability of students in the content area. Two of the teachers in this study have daughters taking classes in the local MEP and they commented that they were not unduly worried about a decrease in content level falling, though Watson Todd (2001) disagreed with this in his study, noting that mathematics levels dropped while English scores improved. Therefore, if the Thai government are to go ahead and increase these types of bilingual programmes then a decrease in student levels in mathematics, science and geography may occur, particularly as studies suggest that the learning of literacy skills is better through mother tongue education rather than through a foreign language

(Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003; Williams & Cooke, 2002). Linked to this is the impact that English as a medium of instruction may have on the official national language (Troudi, 2009). Currently, texts and materials for content subjects such as mathematics and science appear in the Thai language but if an increase in the number of bilingual programmes was to occur, then these texts and materials would need to be produced in English. This may subsequently have a negative effect on students' levels of Thai, as well as possibly changing their views on its status. However, it could also be argued that the Thai Ministry of Education sees these bilingual programmes as a way of protecting its language from the threat of the dominant (English) language and by promoting both languages they may be able to maintain some form of control.

6.3 The Role of English

Thailand, like many of its neighbours in the region, wishes to increase the levels of English in order to aid the country's economic progress, indeed, the language has been 'given priority in Thailand's drive towards a learning society' (MoE, 2007a, p. 2). To do this, the government aims to have 'equal access to education of high quality' for all of its citizens (MoE, 2008, p. 4) but with respect to English this has not always occurred. Hayes (2010, p. 309) suggests that English is restricted to the urban middle classes but for many other Thais,

particularly the rural and the poor, it is very much a foreign language with little impact on their daily lives... despite the rhetoric about the recent impact of globalization and the importance of English to economic success in the country.

Therefore, although the policy may state otherwise, people living in the area where this study took place have little or no interest in learning English. Further, Nunan (2003, p. 134) sees a 'considerable inequality in access to effective English language instruction between the 'haves and have-nots'' in the Asia-Pacific region and this can be seen in the current study, where few opportunities exist for students to practise the language, particularly in the more rural parts of the province. There is some tourism in the main town and a small overseas population lives there but not enough to have any real effect on language usage. This, naturally, makes it harder for those learning and teaching the language to have any real sense of practical engagement with it. This is in contrast to the fact that students are constantly being reminded that English is important for their futures; it is the language of globalization, which will subsequently aid them in gaining a better job and improving the quality of their lives, though there

are some writers who doubt this can occur easily (see Toh, 2003). It must be difficult for students to fully comprehend these views, for they cannot directly see how English will help them in their current context since there is no tradition or need to speak the language in this area. This may suggest to them that the context they find themselves in, a predominantly non-English-speaking one, is not as good or as valuable as one where English is rewarded with better jobs, salaries and prospects.

This raises the issue of assigning value to languages, with the students possibly seeing that their own local languages (Lao and Suay, for example) not being as 'valuable' as English. Though the teachers in this study did not see a direct connection between the role of English and the local languages, some indirect effects may exist. For instance, students may feel that since their own language does not have as much value as English, they may be forced to abandon it in order to improve their employment prospects. Furthermore, as they do not possess sufficient English language 'capital' (Bourdieu), they may reject the possibility of learning the language, unlike the wealthier sectors of Thai society who recognise 'the symbolic value of English' which in turn reflect 'general urban-rural differentials in access to quality education in general and English in particular' (Hayes, 2010, p. 309). This social difference with respect to English can be noticed in two ways: fewer students from the rural areas went on to study at high school than their city counterparts. Secondly, the teachers who work in the village schools remarked that many of their students' parents have little or no interest in English or are simply unable to help their children because of their own lack of education. In fact, Nok suggests that much of this could be related to traditional farming practices in the area:

Most of them [the parents] are agriculture so not important for them and most Thai in agriculture use traditional culture they don't want new technology to develop their career so they can't see how English is very important for them

This may be due to the fact that English has played little or no role in the majority of Thai people's lives but instead has been 'limited to only the highest elite of the society' (Kosonen 2008, p. 174), which has remained the case since English was first taught in the country (see chapter 2). This suggests that the learning of English may be related to social status and that even though English is promoted in Thai official policy documents as the language of modernity, the future and a way for all of its citizens to access the globalised world, it may also prevent some people from

participating in the perceived benefits that it offers because of a lack of understanding of local contexts and issues (Mühlhäusler, 1996). With this in mind, Hayes (2010) calls for more research into understanding this context, as it might help to address the gap between policy aims and what actually happens in classrooms, while also narrowing the socio-economic gap between the rural and urban communities.

6.4 The Influence of the National Examination

Shohamy (2006, p. 93) sees language tests as ‘powerful mechanism[s] for affecting and manipulating language behaviors and the use of students, teachers, parents and society as a whole’. In the previous chapter it was noted that the teachers in this study adapt their teaching styles, materials and classroom language because of the national examinations. Families of students, when interested in their children’s English language studies, were also generally more motivated by these examinations than the communicative aspect of the language. Therefore, this suggests that the national examination may act as a *de facto* language policy in the country. This might not be such a big issue if it were not for the fact that there are very big differences between policy goals and the content and style of the national examinations and the university entrance examinations. The policy promotes communication and critical thinking whereas the examination tests students on discrete items, notably grammar, vocabulary and reading exercises, leading to a clear mismatch in goals.

Although there is some scope for taking a foreign language component in the national examinations, English is compulsory for all students. This suggests that English acts as a form of gatekeeping with respect to university entry, meaning that students who perform poorly in the language may not be able to enter the institution of their choice. This use of English in the examination may be excused if the language of instruction at universities in Thailand was in English but for the most part this is not the case, which means that students preparing for the national examinations have little or no use for the language upon entry. This thesis does not hold that the language of classroom instruction at university *should* be in English but simply wishes to point out the inconsistency between what students are required to do and the reality of their circumstances. Indeed, research on the subject of language of instruction demonstrates that students do not always do as well in either the language or the content (Troudi, 2009).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Main Findings

By adopting Bourdieu's theory of practice, this paper has explored the *habitus* of a group of English teachers in the northeast of Thailand by investigating their practices and the dispositions that underpin them. Bourdieu (1990) suggests that a *habitus*, and the practices and dispositions that help to form it, are built up over time and are context-dependent, therefore, a more complete picture of what is happening in the social field can be ascertained by investigating it. To do this, however, he warns that:

‘practices cannot be deduced either from the present conditions which may seem to have provoked them or from the past conditions which have produced the habitus.... They can therefore only be accounted for by relating the social conditions in which the habitus that generated them was constituted’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 56).

In other words, research that only looks at classroom practices suffers from a lack of depth as it sees them as an objective, neutral construct rather than something constructed from the past that has also been affected by political, economic, social and cultural influences. This social constructionist view put forward by Bourdieu is also infused with criticality in order to better understand that these influences are often representations of past (or present) dominant cultures or histories. Therefore, by exploring some of the reasons, or dispositions, that the teachers apply to their practices, as well as investigating some of the historical and contextual issues that lie behind them, this study has attempted to go beyond a simple description of practices in order to discover more about the social field of English language teaching in this particular area of northeastern Thailand. Furthermore, following Hayes (2009, p. 9), this study hopes to illuminate the context in order to improve the ‘understanding of local practices.’ In order to do this, the main aim of this study has been to answer three research questions. The first two of these questions focused on the teaching practices and dispositions (or beliefs) of a group of Thai English language teachers, which produced the following main findings:

A combination of teaching approaches can be seen to be in operation among the participants in the region, which can be explained by their histories and contexts. Some of them base their teaching style on how they have been taught or how they learned the language. Contextual issues such as class size, student and parent motivation about the English language, as well as the impact of the language policy

and the national exam also affect the construction of the teachers' approaches to teaching. These histories and contexts also play a role in how teachers evaluate their students and prepare materials. Overall, however, it should be noted there was a lack of communicative teaching amongst the cohort, with many of the teachers adopting the grammar-translation approach or P-P-P style, despite policy guidelines suggesting otherwise.

Another main feature of the English language policy in Thailand, indeed, of the overall educational policy, is the idea of student-centred learning. Although almost all of the teachers were aware of this concept, there were very few examples of this style of learning to be seen from the observations, which some teachers suggested might have been due to the fact that Thai students are not prepared for an approach that encourages questioning and criticality. The majority of the observed practices tended to focus on ways in which teachers might be able to help their students in their learning and in particular their reading, vocabulary, listening and pronunciation. It seems that teachers feel the need to transmit knowledge to their students because they see the forms of language or topics to be learned as being too difficult.

The third research question focused on the way that the teachers' practices and beliefs related to the current English language policy in Thailand. In spite of the fact that many of the teachers thought otherwise, the role of English in the region was mainly restricted to that of a subject to be learned rather than a communicative tool, while parents and students were generally more concerned with the influence of the national examination than engaging in communication. This influence included forcing some of the teachers to change their teaching style, adapting their materials and to ignore many of the guidelines set out in the language policy concerning student-centred learning and teaching in a more communicative fashion (see section 2.5.5) in order to help students practise for the national examinations. There was, however, an interesting response to the idea of teaching English at primary school level with many of the teachers in this cohort suggesting it would have a positive influence on the levels of English if students started learning at an earlier age.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

It is important to address some of the difficulties or weaknesses involved in this study,

not least because of recommendations by Bourdieu to adopt a sense of reflexivity (Grenfell, 2008b). For instance, one issue concerns Bourdieu's conceptual tools (Rawolle & Lingard, 2008), particularly as the concept of *habitus* is not an easy one to define, while finding a clear delineation of what a field actually comprises is also difficult; where, for instance, does one end and another begin, particularly as they are so flexible and constantly evolving? It is not simply a case of choosing a field to study but rather investigating the fields that influence this area: the teachers' histories, the educational context in which they work and the role of the policy. Another limitation connected to this includes the choice of research plan, which due to its interpretive nature does not allow for generalisations to be made. Furthermore, though Jeffery and Troman (2004) suggest that limited time frames of ethnography can take place, this study could have possibly benefited from a longer time in the field. Despite the fact that this might have been problematical with 14 teachers, a smaller number, maybe only one or two teachers in a case study could have given more depth to this kind of research.

I am not from Thailand and I do not speak Thai very well, which meant I often had to rely on translations and interpretations of others in order to comprehend what was going on. The teachers in the study speak English, though as can be seen from the data in chapter five a variety of levels exist among them, which meant that sometimes there were breakdowns in communication. This lack of Thai also meant I could not communicate with other members of staff, directors of the school or parents, which may suggest that I was probably unable to access the teachers' *habitus* as much as I had wanted. Another possible limitation of the study concerns the construct of teachers' dispositions and whether or not I actually accessed them, or at least as much as I thought. Although multiple methods were adopted in this study, the fact that I only observed two classes per teacher meant that I may not have been able to gain anything more than a 'snapshot' of that teacher's working life. Despite these limitations some important implications and recommendations can be determined from this study.

7.3 Implications

On the surface, the main implication from this study appears to be the fact that as the teachers in this region have generally not adopted the main characteristics of the

English language policy in Thailand into their teaching environment, then either more professional development and training is needed for these teachers (Thongsri, *et al.*, 2006), or that the policy itself needs to be questioned (Hayes, 2010). However, while this thesis does not disagree with the recommendations for improved professional development, after all professional development can be viewed as something positive, there are other issues that need to be taken into consideration: Firstly, there is a clear gap between policy goals and the practical concerns that teachers have, particularly with respect to the national examinations. In addition, there is also a gap between those with and those without access to the language, which can be seen from the bilingual programmes that exist in the country. Finally, there is a lack of criticality concerning the policy itself as it seems to have been accepted by all involved as something of a given (Hayes, 2010; Toh, 2003).

7.4 Recommendations

7.4.1 The National Examination

Perhaps the most obvious suggestion would be to change the format of this examination so that it might reflect the policy's communicative goals. This might involve introducing a listening or speaking component to the examination, or at least offering a more authentic version that closes the gap between 'the tests of language proficiency and real-life language performance' (Ingram, 2004, p.330). Further, it might be useful to lessen the dominance of English in these examinations and instead allow learners the possibility of taking a test in or about another language or indeed to opt out of taking the language component of the test. Students could have a wider choice of subjects to choose from in the examination, each of which would carry the same weight or value as English.

7.4.2 Materials and Review of Teaching Approaches

Though guidelines and indicators currently exist, the current policy encourages teachers to be flexible in their choice and usage of materials. In principle this is an interesting idea as it allows for increased creativity but it also causes difficulties for teachers, as they do not have time to produce new materials for their context or even the required knowledge. Therefore, the Ministry of Education needs to create a set of core materials that reflect both the main curricular goals, as well as the main aspects of the national examinations. This would allow for some level of equality in accessing

materials, as well as reducing some of the pressure on teachers' work.

Currently the teaching approaches that are being promoted have been imported from overseas. There needs to be more criticality concerning these so that they may better suit local contexts and conditions. This criticality could begin during pre-service training in order for teachers to have a better understanding of these approaches. In addition, it should be ongoing throughout teachers' professional lives, with in-session courses that do not simply transmit knowledge in a top-down fashion to teachers but instead allow those working with the policy to inform decisions from grounded experiences. This would not only help to strengthen the policy but it would possibly allow the policy to have a better chance of achieving success as teachers would be more closely involved with its formulation, implementation and evaluation.

7.4.3. The Role of English in Thailand

The value of the English language in the region is extremely high as governments promote it in order to create knowledge-based societies that will hopefully bring economic and social improvements to the country. However, this obsession with English may be impeding the development of other forms of knowledge. The Thai Ministry of Education also needs to be clear on when students should begin learning the language and in what format, while particular help is needed for teachers of these young learners. The Thai government also needs to review whether or not everyone in the country needs to learn the language and if not, then what other options may be offered.

7.5 Further Research

Hayes (2009, p. 9) calls for research that needs to 'acknowledge a richer and more varied picture of classroom life than one sanctioned by official curricula', which is something that this study has, in some small way, aimed to do. It has also added to the body of work on how non-native English teachers make sense of an English language policy in an EFL context. Nevertheless there still remains a wide range of topics to be researched in this area, including research that should originate from local teachers themselves. For instance, by working alongside those who implement and disseminate the policy, local practitioners would be able to offer grounded input to the debate on the best way to teach and learn the language (*ibid.*).

With English strongly associated with modernity and a better future, more critical research on the actual effects the language has on various contexts needs to be conducted. This may result in more informed decisions being made on whether or not it is actually beneficial for the country to invest in the language, for instance, resources spent on learning English could be better spent elsewhere within education, particularly as language levels in the country remain low (Kosonen, 2008). Connected with this are the issues of bilingual programmes and the language of instruction in schools. The Ministry of Education in Thailand is encouraging the expansion of these forms of courses but research needs to be carried out that demonstrates that they work at the level of both content and language. The impact that pre- and in-service training have on teachers, as well as the role that classroom materials play are also areas that would benefit from further research. In addition, research on the effect that the exam has on the teaching styles and language learning approaches should also be conducted in order to investigate the possible wash back effect on local teachers' teaching.

This thesis has suggested that there exists a gap between those who have access to English and those who do not, with those who do have access to English having better opportunities to enter university, which in turn means better jobs and salaries. Therefore, comparative studies on this rural-urban divide with respect to access to the English language could be conducted in order to narrow the gap between the haves and have-nots. The importance of English in the region is huge and there are many commonalities between many of the countries there. Therefore, Thailand can become a leader in this region with respect to material and test development, as well as research. Thus, by conducting comparative studies with other countries in the region, particularly EFL ones, for instance, Japan or Vietnam, would be useful.

7.6 Conclusion

This small-scale study has focused on how a group of English-language teachers from the northeastern part of Thailand make sense of the English language policy there. To do this, the teachers' practices and the dispositions that underlie these practices have been explored in order to discover more about how the teachers understand the policy. Despite huge financial investment in the learning of English, language levels remain low which has generally been blamed upon the teachers' lack of understanding about

the new approaches to teaching, as well as their poor levels of English. This thesis suggests, however, that the reasons for this failure are much more complex. There has been little criticality of the policy itself but instead there seems to be an acceptance of its aims and goals, particularly with respect to imported teaching and learning methodologies. However, rather than focusing solely on the teachers' perceived weaknesses concerning the policy, other areas need to be examined in order to better understand the *habitus* of English language learning in Thailand.

Thus, from an historical perspective, it can be seen that the elite, rather than the majority of the people in the country, have always been closely associated with English, something that has not radically changed in contemporary times. This may be due to the fact that this section of the community is aware of the value of learning the language as they form part of the dominant group that has helped to create this knowledge. The fact that it is difficult to access good quality English language facilities in rural or low socio-economic areas of the country means that there is a widening gap between those with English skills and those without. Thus, despite claims from the Ministry of Education that education is providing equal access for all its citizens this may not be the case with respect to English, due to historical and socio-economical factors. Indeed, it could be argued that the language may act as a barrier for many of Thailand's citizens as not everyone has the same access to the materials or forms of knowledge that have been constructed by the dominant groups in society. Therefore, if the Thai government truly wants to transform the English language policy of its country then it needs to ensure that participation is open to everyone and not just those from the elite. By exploring the *habitus* of a group of English-language teachers in an under-developed region of the country, this study has attempted to investigate reasons for the gap that exists between policy and practice. If this gap is to be narrowed then the Thai Ministry of Education (and by extension, other Ministries in the region) need to take into consideration contextual, social as well as historical perspectives before the introduction of new policy guidelines.

7.7 Final Comment

One of the most common questions I receive about this study concerns why I chose Thailand. After all, I have not worked there, I do not speak or read the language very well and, until a few years ago, knew very little about the education system in the country. The main reason, apart from the logistical factors involved, is that Thailand is typical of many countries in the region that have invested heavily in the English language and I wished to know some of the reasons why. When I first travelled to Thailand, I went to help local teachers gain access to ‘new’ ideas such as student-centred learning and communicative teaching, I thought I was going to aid their understanding about modern teaching practices so that they could improve the levels of English in a ‘poor’ country. However, over time, including during this study, I realised that substituting one form of teaching approach for another is difficult for without any understanding of local context meant that my own perspective could be seen as clumsy or even worse as a form of imperialism. Since I started work on this study, I have become much more interested in the power structures of the English language world. In Thailand I have noticed that families from the towns and cities have far more access to the ‘language of globalization’ than those in rural or low socio-economic areas. They have a chance to participate in the globalised world whereas their rural counterparts often do not.

Despite the fact that the learning of English is often viewed as a democratising force, it can also act as a divisive one. I can see this from my own working environment where English also functions as a form of gatekeeping with respect to qualifications and future job prospects. I currently work at the English Language Centre at King’s College London where I teach EAP courses to extremely motivated students who need to pass this course so that they can enter a Master’s course the following year. All of these students are paying vast sums of money to improve their English levels, which of course is not a problem (not least for the ‘ELT industry’ and UK universities) but it does mean that those with access to money gain access to English, which of course mirrors the current study’s findings. For me, this is an important area for future research.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Key sections from the National Education Act (NEA) of B. E. 2542* (1999)

Below is a list of key sections of the NEA (1999) that are referenced throughout this thesis (*Sections 7; 9; 22; 23; 24; 26; 27; 28 and 30*)

Section 7

The learning process shall aim at inculcating sound awareness of politics; democratic system of government under a constitutional monarchy; ability to protect and promote their rights, responsibilities, freedom, respect of the rule of law, equality, and human dignity; pride in Thai identity; ability to protect public and national interests; promotion of religion, art, national culture, sports, local wisdom, Thai wisdom and universal knowledge; inculcating ability to preserve natural resources and the environment; ability to earn a living; self-reliance; creativity; acquiring thirst for knowledge and capability of self-learning on a continuous basis.

Section 9

- (1) Unity in policy and diversity in implementation;
- (2) Decentralization of authority to educational service areas, educational institutions and local administration organizations;
- (3) Setting of educational standards and implementing system of quality assurance for all levels and all types of education;
- (4) Raising the professional standards of teachers, faculty staff and educational personnel, who shall be developed on a continuous basis

Section 22

Education shall be based on the principle that all learners are capable of learning and self-development, and are regarded as being most important. The teaching-learning process shall aim at enabling the learners to develop themselves at their own pace and to the best of their potentiality.

Section 23

Education through formal, non-formal, and informal approaches shall give emphases to knowledge, morality, learning process, and integration of the following, depending on the appropriateness of each level of education:

- (1) Knowledge about oneself and the relationship between oneself and society, namely: family, community, nation, and world community; as well as knowledge about the historical development of the Thai society and matters relating to politics and democratic system of government under a constitutional monarchy;
- (2) Scientific and technological knowledge and skills, as well as knowledge, understanding and experience in management, conservation, and utilization of natural resources and the environment in a balanced and sustainable manner;
- (3) Knowledge about religion, art, culture, sports, Thai wisdom, and the application of wisdom;
- (4) Knowledge and skills in mathematics and languages, with emphasis on proper use of the Thai language;
- (5) Knowledge and skills in pursuing one's career and capability of leading a happy life.

Section 24

In organizing the learning process, educational institutions and agencies concerned shall:

- (1) provide substance and arrange activities in line with the learners' interests and aptitudes, bearing in mind individual differences;
- (2) provide training in thinking process, management, how to face various situations and application of knowledge for obviating and solving problems;
- (3) organize activities for learners to draw from authentic experience; drill in practical work for complete mastery; enable learners to think critically and acquire reading habit and continuous thirst for knowledge;
- (4) achieve, in all subjects, a balanced integration of subject matter, integrity, values, and desirable attributes;

(5) enable instructors to create the ambiance, environment, instructional media and facilities for learners to learn and be all-round persons, able to benefit from research as part of the learning process. In so doing, both learners and teachers may learn together from different types of teaching-learning media and other sources of knowledge;

(6) enable individuals to learn at all times and in all places. Co-operation with parents, guardians, and all parties concerned in the community shall be sought to develop jointly the learners in accord with their potentiality.

Section 26

Educational institutions shall assess learners' performance through observation of their development; personal conduct; learning behaviour; participation in activities and results of the tests accompanying the teaching-learning process commensurate with the different levels and types of education.

Educational institutions shall use a variety of methods for providing opportunities for further education and shall also take into consideration results of the assessment of the learners' performance referred to in the first paragraph.

Section 27

The Basic Education Commission shall prescribe core curricula for basic education for purposes of preserving Thai identity, good citizenship, desirable way of life, livelihood, as well as for further education.

In accord with the objectives in the first paragraph, basic education institutions shall be responsible for prescribing curricular substance relating to needs of the community and the society, local wisdom and attributes of desirable members of the family, community, society, and nation.

Section 28

Curricula at all levels of education and those for the persons referred to in the second, third, and fourth paragraphs of section 10 shall be diversified and commensurate with each level, with the aim of improving the quality of life suitable for each individual's age and potentiality.

The substance of the curricula, both academic and professional, shall aim at human development with desirable balance regarding knowledge, critical thinking, capability, virtue and social responsibility.

Apart from the characteristics referred to in the first and second paragraphs, higher education curricula shall emphasize academic development, with priority given to higher professions and research for development of the bodies of knowledge and society.

Section 30

Educational institutions shall develop effective learning processes. In so doing, they shall also encourage instructors to carry out research for developing suitable learning for learners at different levels of education.

Note: * B. E. 2542 (Buddhist Era 2542 = 1999)

Appendix 2: Strands and Standards of the Foreign Language Learning Area
(Adapted from MoE, 2008, pp. 21-22)

Strand 1: Language for Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standard F1.1: Understanding of and capacity to interpret what has been heard and read from various types of media, and ability to express opinions with proper reasoning• Standard F1.2: Endowment with language communication skills for exchange of data and information; efficient expression of feelings and opinions• Standard F1.3: Ability to present data, information, concepts and views about various matters through speaking and writing
Strand 2: Language and Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standard F2.1: Appreciation of the relationship between language and culture of native speakers and capacity for use of language appropriate to occasions and places• Standard F2.2: Appreciation of similarities and differences between language and culture of native and Thai speakers, and capacity for accurate and appropriate use of language
Strand 3: Language and Relationship with Other Learning Areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standard F3.1: Usage of foreign languages to link knowledge with other learning areas, as foundation for further development and to seek knowledge and widen one's world view
Strand 4: Language and Relationship with Community and the World
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standard F4.1: Ability to use foreign languages in various situations in school, community and society• Standard F4.2: Usage of foreign languages as basic tools for further education, livelihood and exchange of learning with the world community

Appendix 3: Example of *Prathom 3* (grade 3) indicators

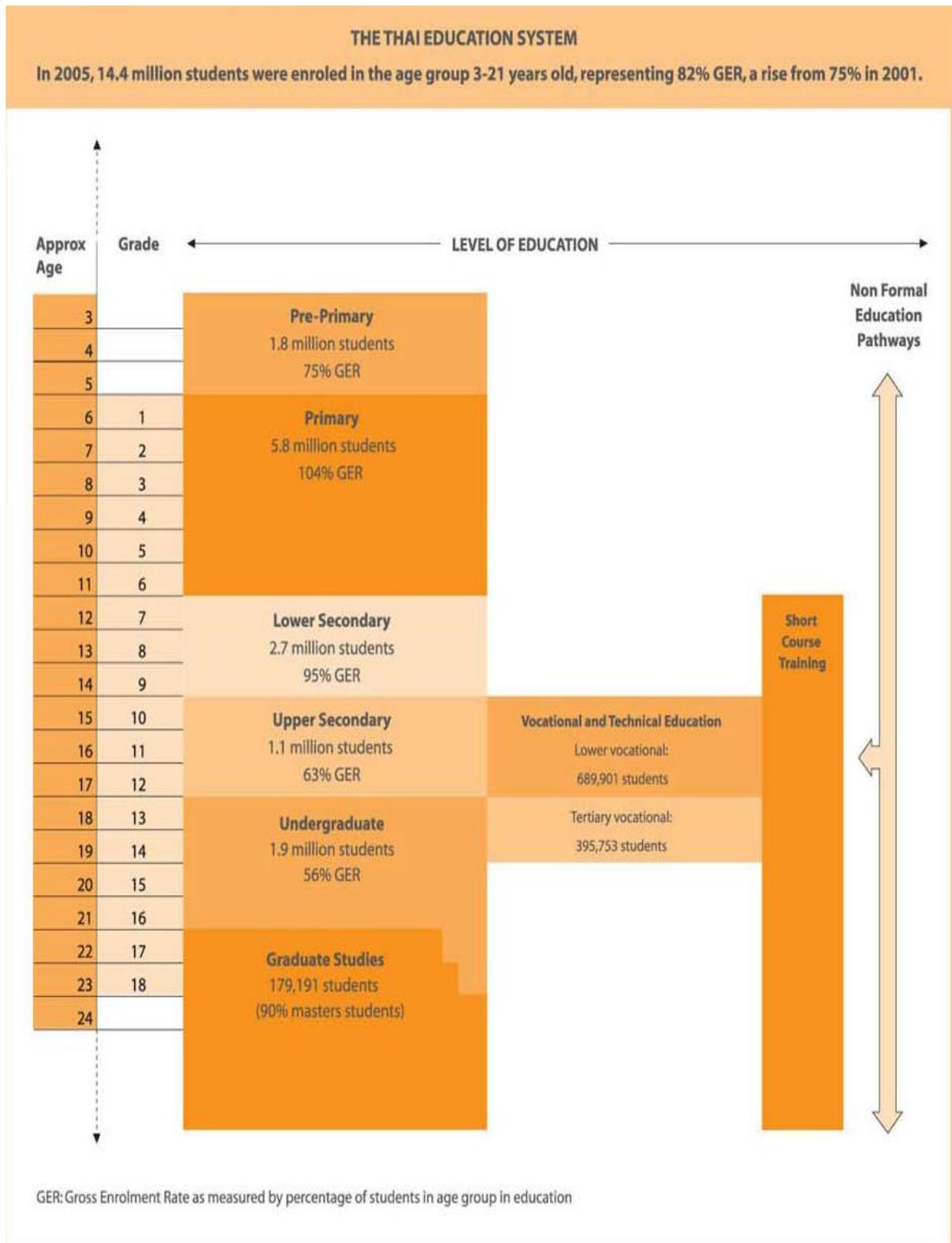
(Ministry of Education, 2008)

Grade 3 graduates

- Act in compliance with the orders and requests heard; pronounce the alphabet, words, groups of words, simple sentences and simple chants by observing the principles of pronunciation; accurately tell the meanings of the word and groups of words heard; answer questions from listening to or reading sentences, dialogues or simple tales
- Engage in interpersonal communication using short and simple words by following the models heard; use simple orders and requests; tell their needs in simple words; request and give data about themselves and their friends; tell their own feelings about various objects around them or various activities by following the models heard
- Verbally provide data about themselves and matters around them; categorise words according to the types of persons, animals and objects about which they have heard or read
- Speak and make accompanying gestures by observing social manners/culture of native speakers; tell the names and simple terms about festivals/important days/celebrations and lifestyles of native speakers; participate in language and cultural activities suitable to their age levels
- Tell differences concerning sounds of the alphabet, words, groups of words and simple sentences in foreign languages and those in Thai language
- Tell the terms related to other learning areas
- Listen/speak in simple situations in the classroom
- Use foreign languages to collect relevant terms around them
- Are skilful in using foreign languages (with emphasis on listening and speaking) to communicate about themselves, their families, schools, the surrounding environment, foods, beverages and free time and recreation with a vocabulary of around 300-450 words (concrete words)
- Use one-word sentences and simple sentences in conversations as required for situations in daily life

Appendix 4: The Thai Education System (2005)

Ministry of Education (2007b)



Appendix 5: Certificate of ethical research approval form

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).

DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Damian Fitzpatrick

Your student no: 550000377

Degree/Programme of Study: EdD Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Salah Troudi

Your email address: damianf@mac.com / Damian.Fitzpatrick@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 0208 5398171

Title of your project: The effects of the current English language policy on schools in Thailand: a critical ethnographic investigation

Brief description of your research project:

This study will investigate some of the issues and problems that have emerged due to the implementation of the new language policy in Thailand. These include the gaps that exist between those that set the policy and those that deal with the policy, as well as those that benefit from the policy and those that do not. Further motivation for the study includes the fact that there has been little critical or grounded research carried out in this area. Using a multi-faceted and grounded approach to research, this study will investigate this issue through a critical lens featuring a mixed methods approach that uses qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis in order to gain more of an insight into how the policy works.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

I hope to interview ministry officials, teacher trainers and teachers. Some of the observations may involve Primary school teachers meaning the students in those classes would be from the final two years of primary education – between the ages of 10 and 12 though they would not be involved directly in the study. Other observations will involve secondary school teachers, which will involve students from the ages of 13 to 17. Again, students will not be directly involved – no interviews at all. The study has not been finalised yet and will depend on accessibility and permission from the Ministry of Education in Thailand. I would also ask for permission from the local educational boards and schools involved.

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

Naturally all information will be anonymous and confidential which will be made clear to all participants before they take part in the study. I will use the consent form and will translate where necessary. If children were to take part then parent and teacher consent would be sought before having them participate.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

As I am interested in a multiple approach to the data collection and analysis, I would like to employ an ethnographic methodology in order to ensure the study is grounded. Therefore, I would probably use classroom observations, interviews with teachers, teacher trainers and Ministry officials. There may also be some form of questionnaire involved, which would be translated if necessary.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

All data would be securely stored respecting the anonymity of those involved.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

Dealing with the Ministry of Education some ideological problems may surface with respect to how the study is carried out and what outcomes emerge, though this should not affect the participants as their anonymity will be protected throughout.

*This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.*

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: Danial Fitepatich date: 20 March 2009

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: April 2009

until: July 2009

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): Sabli Troni date: 25/03/2009

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference: 2108/09/42

Signed: Sabli Troni date: 25/03/2009
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from
<http://www.education.ex.ac.uk/students/index.php> then click on On-line documents.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
last updated: September 2007

Appendix 6: Sample Research Request to School Director

XXXXXX Road
XXXXXX
London XXXX
UK

March 9th 2009

Attn: Director of XXXX School

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: Research request

My name is Damian Fitzpatrick and I am writing to ask if it would be possible to carry out some research in your school. I am currently studying for a Doctorate in the field of language policy from the University of Exeter in the UK and I am interested in discovering more about the effects of the English curriculum on teachers in your area.

The reason I chose (Province Name) is that I have previously worked there on teacher development programmes with a group called XXXX and know many of the teachers in the region, including (Teacher's Name) from your English Department. She has said she is willing to help with the research.

If it is possible I would like to start when the new term begins in May and to observe and interview some of the English teachers at (School Name) on 3 or 4 occasions during the next term. I would also be able to help out in any way for your school while I am there.

I hope to hear from you in the near future.

Sincerely

Damian Fitzpatrick

Appendix 7: University of Exeter Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information which I give may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

(Signature of participant) (Date)

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s):

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

.....
OR
.....

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Appendix 8: Example of Field Notes: School A - Observation 1

DATE _____

Mass. _____
Ange T-T.

Almost all sts. use local language (not Thai) 4-6 grade
 75% do not continue study No computer here
 About 45% don't come during harvest time
 Most study by through TV teacher.

3 classes. 8:30 - 11:30 11:00 on Sat. Only seen in school for 1 week

P6 25 students. TV on writing in Thai Distance Ed. instructions v. fairly open.

① Greeting → stood up Why? ② Mostly in Thai
Their tradition ⑤ Why?

② Intro topic ③ Before?
 Personal information - sts. have info. written on class? P6 P6/2.

None Why? Mattaler Review Why?
Surname, last name Full name 3 classes ahead
chord Why? 1 wa a week

③ Thai → St. I am 12 years old because that's not what they are taught
 ④ (chord) 50 years old. chord repetition found it.

What day is today? (x2) Then in Thai.
 How do you spell Thai? chord.
④ Why? In Thai v. good praise

What is the date today? (x2) Thai.
 What month?

②

⑥ Went there to understand the meaning.

DATE

Write on board I
Asked for Thai translation for class
Then wrote Thai translation under Eng.

1. Name
2. Surname / L. name
3. ~~Write~~ Full name
4. Nickname.
5. age
6. old
7. year

st. wished
help

Constantly checked meaning in Thai

How old are you? ~~to read~~
Choral Answer "I am 12 yrs old" all sts. did this.
to write in board.

He / he (in Thai)

His / his - Asked what → sts did not know. pronunciation

⑤ check ~~understand~~ by class
Wrote on board by class
class not understood why
Note: to write by st. they have checked these words before so to help the room.
close a st. (why?)
"stand - p"
What's your name?
How old are you?
How old is he?
Then to class How old is he?
Explained in Thai

He is 12 yrs old
Explained in Thai
Asked other st.
"He is 12 yrs old"

⑨

T: Good!
Engan class.

Then explanation in Thai
then wrote on the board
How old is he?
He is 12 yrs old

(Some sts. picked up quickly & practicing by themselves)

Then did 'she (translated)
Her/her

How old is she?

Asked sts → corrected how old are x
how old is she?

to write that
on board.

Got them to answer: She is 12 yrs old
Then choral practise (reading from board)

explained
checking/helping
accuracy.

T: Review ~~What?~~

cleared board.

address → spelled it out -

→ Asked for this - why?

(11) not so
important.

then individ. of (translate) ~~pronunciation~~
practiced address chorally (some difficulty)

technique to
remember word.

F: How you spell

Number why? (12) Address:

1, 2 - ... 10. (choral repetition) sts count
taught number & year.

then nos. till 20.

sing numbers.

↳ say say → individual
taught say

why say?

make up

(13)

went thru breaks then write

not say

come with me count the number

be some activities

T → say a line

sb → repeated

Then asked sts, to count off nos. i.e. individ. pron. number.

Repeated say

Got sts. to sing say.

DATE _____

MATERIALS

Where? why? this habit

Come back to

Address

What is your address?
Write about it.

He explained pronunciation
Then wrote answer 65/2

My address is 65/2
Asked what is my address?

14) pronoun that's diff but need

into it's explained

Explained in this

use the E.g. body

He asked write it down in notebooks
then checked indiv. st. (X)
St. asked how to say st. in E.g.

What? why?

headed out paper

Plan sts. read out paper
Helped them in marks/pron.

checked 60 - 80 - 100 - 100 - 200 (220)

Head sts

on board 26/1

asked for pron then wrote
When sts. did well clipped

hardout like why? tentative don't

checked 2 answers 3. 825

then got sts. to turn over + speak to other? checked? why?
Then headed out paper (2)

had sts. write + fill in list sheet then checked answers

Appendix 9: Example of Post-observation: first interview (Nattaporn)

School: A	Teacher: Nattaporn
Date: May28th 2009	Time: 1:00 – 2:00
Number of Students: 25	Grade: Prathom 6

School

- Almost all students use local language (Suay) as their first language.
- 75% of the students leaving the school do not go onto high school – mostly due to the parents not wanting them to (they need them to work in fields). This means 45% of them do not come during harvest time.
- About 270 students in total

Room

- The room had a white board, TV, fan and rows of desks.

Teacher

- She has been at the school since the start of term (only a couple of weeks)
- She is the English teacher for the whole school. Each class has three English classes a week (3 x hours).
- The teacher's English level was fine though at times she struggled for the right word and I did have to re-formulate questions on a couple of occasions.
- Mostly stood at the front but some times moved around

Materials

- She used two handouts: a) One a glossary with numbers on (written as figure, then English, then Thai meaning, then Thai pronunciation) b) An exercise for students to practise writing the numbers

Instructions

- Mostly in Thai but she would always begin by using English (usually twice)

Homework

- No homework

Comments

- This was only the second week that she had worked with the class but it was clear that there was a very positive atmosphere.
- Students did not speak too much English apart from some choral work
- Reviewed some of the previous class work

Interview

- The interview took place soon after the class. It was the final class of the day and we sat outside.
- Sometimes students passed by greeting the teacher but this did not affect the interview.
- The interview was carried out in a jovial atmosphere with lots of laughter.

Questions to ask

1. How do you think the students did in this class?
2. Was the lesson reviewed in the next class?
3. Why was this lesson done?

Transcript

DF: The first thing you did was a greeting... hello ... and all the students stood up.

What happened?

Nattaporn: It ... is Thai tradition, if someone comes to the class we give them the honour.

DF: So every time?

Nattaporn: Every time.

D: And then the first topic that you spoke about was personal information, so, why are you doing personal information?

Nattaporn: (Uses a Thai word) A little confused.

DF: So, did you study this topic before, last week?

Nattaporn: I taught last week.

DF: The same?

Nattaporn: For them? Last class I teach them about name, surname, nickname, full name and age.

DF: So the beginning of today's class was a review?

Nattaporn: Review, yes.

DF: Why do you do a review at the beginning of the class?

Nattaporn: Because I think teachers don't teach them about personal information when they were in P5. In my email I told you about that...

DF: So, you practised surname, full name, nickname and age. You asked the students together to practise, choral practise. Why did you use this?

Nattaporn: I want to evaluate them – do they understand what I teach them, to test them by analyse them.

DF: Then, you introduced 'I am 12 years old'. You said it in English twice then you said it in Thai. Why did you use it in Thai?

Nattaporn: Because I want them to listen to English more than Thai so I use English twice and Thai only once.

DF: Next you did what day is it today in English and then Thai, how do you spell this.

Why did you ask the students to spell? Why?

Nattaporn: I want them to recall how and want to know them do they remember.

DF: To help them remember. Then you said the date and the month and the same thing ... English by 2 then Thai.

Break

DF: So, you use a lot of explanations in Thai. Why do you do this in Thai?

Nattaporn: Why do I speak in Thai?

DF: Yes

Nattaporn: Because I am not good at English

DF: What about your students, do you think they need to hear in Thai?

Nattaporn: They need to ... some ... I think most of them like to hear in Thai and in English – the two languages, Two languages is good for them.

DF: Then on the board, you sometimes ... then you asked the students to translate the words to Thai, why translate into Thai?

Nattaporn: I want them to understand in a short time.

DF: So you think if you show a word in English and then you say in Thai this, you can check their understanding?

Nattaporn: Yes

DF: Sometimes you wrote Thai on the blackboard...

Nattaporn: To check them. To check them and to make them understand, to help them understand.

DF: Then you wrote on the board ‘he/his; she...’ The first one (he) the students were okay but the second one (his) were a little difficult to understand, what did you do when the students couldn’t understand the first time? What did you do to help them?

Nattaporn: At that time, when they don’t understand what I say, you mean?

DF: So, the students said ‘he is 12 years old’. Then you wrote down his and the students were ... ‘he ...’ and you asked them again and then you explained in Thai and then you wrote it in Thai, why? To help understanding?

Nattaporn: The words he/she; his/her they have learned from P1-5 but they can’t remember anything, so only review.

DF: Sometimes you walked around the class, why do you do this?

Nattaporn: When I walk around the class I can check their understanding and help them or try to motivate them ... acting... or make them active when they are in English class... so when the teacher comes they say ‘Thai’ (the teacher is coming’ ...) To wake them up.

DF: I understand. So one student you asked a student to stand up and then asked her; what’s your name, how old are you?’ Why did you choose one student?

Nattaporn: Because some students ... I don’t know if he understands ...

DF: Checking understanding...Many times in English and in Thai you said ‘Good, very good’ and some times clapping, why?

Nattaporn: Clapping – it makes me sure that they understand what I say, what I teach them, what I want them to know. And clap your hands – to cheer them up. Admire them.

(Encourage?)

DF: You asked the students to say ‘ how old is she...?’ and the students started to say ‘how old are you?’ and you went ‘No, how old is she?’ How can you help them to be correct?

Nattaporn: I write Thai after English word He – *Kao* ... She... I you want to ask anyone you not use only ‘How old are you?’ You must say ‘how old is she / he?’

DF: Checking and helping understanding. Then you practised everyone together again, on the blackboard – you used the blackboard a lot, do you always use the blackboard?

Nattaporn: Do you know my arm hurts from using it. Now, I ask my director for a computer and it’s damaged.

DF: So, you have computers but you can’t use them?

Nattaporn: I can use a computer but I have no computer here because I have just come here and my director said we have a damaged unused computer. If I want to... I need to replace it.

DF: Are you going to use the computer?

Nattaporn: I want to.

DF: Then you said, review and you cleaned the board. Address and you asked the students to say it in Thai and they said it in Thai to check their understanding and then everybody pronounced ‘address, address, so, when all the students practise pronunciation together, this is important?

Nattaporn: Important. I think it’s not important. It is only my technique to want them to remember this word.

DF: OK, then you talked about numbers, why?

Nattaporn: Because addresses use the numbers

DF: So, a connection with address. You taught the numbers zero and oh – was this the first time they saw this number?

Nattaporn: I think they know because they have studied for a long time... they can’t remember. They know...

DF: Then you practised until 20. Thirty no? Only twenty. Because of the song? Why did you do the song?

Nattaporn: To wake them up. I don’t want to make them bored.. I can help them be more active.

DF: So be more active. Then you did more choral practice with address, name, etc. Pronunciation practice then your address... then what is my address? Your address is ... So you practised my/your/it. Difficult for students?

Nattaporn: When I am , when I ... begin to be a teacher, I think it's very difficult for them but now ... you taught me ... many techniques for teaching E I copied your technique used to teach them so I think it's not difficult for them if I use Thai, English, body language and everything that ... it can help them understand and make a difficult lesson easier.

DF: You gave out papers... what is this paper? Practising numbers and addresses. Then, what's this?

Nattaporn: The next class and exercise.

DF: Did you talk about this today?

Nattaporn: No

DF: So you just showed the students, so this is numbers and addresses and then the students have to write down the numbers

Nattaporn: Yes, how to read the numbers.

DF: And you gave them another paper, what's this paper? Figure, number, Thai, so they can use this page to help them?

Nattaporn: Yes, and help them read this word. . .

DF: So you have the figure, E and T and this helps the students understand?

Nattaporn: Yes

DF: So you asked the students to write down these numbers on paper 1 and then will you check them?

Nattaporn: I will check them ... how to read this number I want them to speak and read, not write, so that they can reply to me.

DF: So this is written in phonetically in Thai? So this is all...? Where did you get this material?

(Went to get the book)

Nattaporn: I bought it. In the former I used the style (of translation) but it does not work.

DF: Why do you think it does not work?

Nattaporn: Because my students cannot read it, only me when they read after me, yes they can but when they come back home, they cannot read anything because they cannot remember this pronunciation. I think this is an easy dictionary for them.

DF: Interesting, then you... then they handed in the papers to you. So, you correct it and give it back the next class and then you do the next class (telephone numbers). You were asking students at the end of the class and some of the students put their hands up – why?

Nattaporn: Because they want to send ...

DF: Finished?

Nattaporn: They finished this paper, just finished.

DF: Then one student said thank you... The class was over. A lot of the things you did was to help checking and understanding.

Nattaporn: To help them.

DF: By writing on the board, by writing in English and in Thai, to speak in E and then Thai...

Nattaporn: In the blackboard I don't write the pronunciation on the black board ... I only write English words and translations in Thai.

Appendix 10: Example of practices and beliefs (Nattaporn)

Practices	Reasons
Reviews the previous class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Students have not had this English in previous years
Used choral practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I want to evaluate them... to test them by analysis
Used English instructions twice then Thai	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wants them to listen to English more and to understand
Encourages students to spell words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- It helps them remember- worried about reading skills
Explains a lot in Thai	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Because I am not good in Eng!- thinks most need to hear in two languages, English and Thai
Translated on the board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wants them to understand quickly- Checked meaning
Wrote Thai on board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To check- To help them understand
Wrote grammar points on board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Help students to review
Walked around the class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To motivate- To check- To wake them up
Used an individual student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Checking understanding
Choral pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- It's not important only a technique to remember- worried about reading skills
Introduced next topic (numbers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Connected to previous work (address)
Did a song	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- to wake the students up ... to be more active
Uses a lot of different techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- To help students remember- Helps them understand- Makes a difficult lesson easier
Gave a handout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- preparation for the next class
Handout had translation/pronunciation guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Students cannot read- Acts as a simple dictionary

Used power point and TV screen	- She said that this allows her to rest her arm - And students like it
Showed a word on the screen	- Introducing the topic
Explained the topic in Thai	- Wanted students to understand - Act as a lead in to topic
Then had them repeat after her	- Pronunciation practice
She then pronounced the word slowly, and then broke it into syllables	- To help the students with quicker pronunciation
Then had them spell it out	- The students do not know how to read very well
She sits down during the class	- She has to because of the system but she does not like it
She then flashed up key words on the screen which the students wrote down in their notebooks	- For revision in the next class
She chose the words	- She thought they were important and to help students read them better
Showed the word/practised the pronunciation	- Students need practice (worried about reading / comprehension)
Used word plays in L1 to help with pronun.	- Fun - Helps students understand
Had students practice the dialogue in pairs	- Wanted them to practise pronunciation
Students also wrote down a Thai translation	-
Instructions were mostly in Thai	- Students cannot understand otherwise
Two students modelled at the front of the class	- To give those students confidence - show to the other students what the teacher wants
Gives a score for work	- motivation

Appendix 11: Bio-data questionnaire

I am interested in researching about the English language policy in Thailand and I would be very grateful if you could take some time to answer the questions below. Your responses to this questionnaire will be treated with complete confidence. Thank you for your cooperation.

A. Background Information

1. Sex: female male

2. What is your highest academic qualification? What was the main area (major) of study?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching certificate | <input type="checkbox"/> Diploma |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree | <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doctorate | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Major: _____

3. Which of the following languages do you speak?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thai | <input type="checkbox"/> English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lao | <input type="checkbox"/> Khmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

4. Which of the following languages do your students speak?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thai | <input type="checkbox"/> English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lao | <input type="checkbox"/> Khmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

5. How long have you been teaching English?

6. What level(s) are you currently teaching? What years / grades?

- Primary _____
- Secondary _____
- Combination _____
- Other _____

7. How many hours of English a week do your students receive?

8. How long have you been teaching at your current school?

9. Have you ever participated in professional development / training courses before?

- Yes No

10. If so, explain what kind of courses they were.

Appendix 12: Example of Semi-structured interview with Nattaporn (N)

DF: How would you describe your teaching style? How is your approach to teaching?

N: Again, one more time

DF: Some teachers like to practise grammar and translation with my students, other teachers like to present the information, practise the information, produce the information, P-P-P. Other teachers like to be more communicative, they like to have the students communicate a lot with the language, some teachers mix everything, what do you think you are, what kind of teacher are you?

N: I think it's good and I need to do ...

DF: Which one?

N: Speaking

DF: Do more?

N: Do more speaking and listening and after that reading

DF: Why do you think that speaking and listening are important for students?

N: For my students I think they ... reading is difficult for them but when I ask them or I try them to speak they can speak and understand what I say but if I give my handout or a book to them they can't communicate.

DF: Really?

N: Yes

DF: So you think speaking and listening help the students to communicate and you think these are important skills?

N: These are very important skills for the students in my school

DF: Do you do a lot of speaking activities in your class?

N: I think I try a lot to let them speak and listen. I think in each class I can I cannot use English every time but I try a lot. Sometimes I use the TV to help my students with listening or the VCD

DF: Do students like this kind of ... do they like listening and speaking in English?

N: By my observing I think it's okay... they like it.

DF: OK, so for example, speaking activities, can you think of an example of a speaking activity that sometimes you use?

N: Speaking activity?

DF: Yes, for example?

N: When I let them to speak I think ... hmmm, it's very little

DF: OK, so student-centred teaching or child-centred learning... what does it mean for you?

N: Child-centred learning for me ... I think if the student can do by themselves or thinking themselves that is child centred.

DF: Do you think it's a good thing, do you think it's possible in your school to do child-centred learning activities?

N: This is the first semester and their background for English is I think not good and this is like a basic... basic English for them. After they can understand English, they can read, they can speak and understand what I try them to do I think child-centred is not so far

DF: So you think the first step is to give them a base and then child-centred learning comes afterwards?

N: I think so

DF: In primary school now the students are receiving input, a base?

N: Yes

DF: OK. Do you ever ... last class I saw you we were talking about health, so you integrate other subjects in your class?

N: Integrate?

DF: Integrate, so bring other subjects, such as maths or science or local culture, do you use them?

N: For this school, just now, integrate no but only every day life

DF: You try to connect?

N: Try to connect everything around my students

DF: For example, food...

N: Food, house, home family

DF: So there is a connection for the students?

N: Yes

DF: Do you think the students like this?

N: They like... like this

DF: Can it help them learn more do you think?

N: Can it help hem learn more? I am not sure

(She asks a student the question)

I am not sure but my students say they like it

DF: You are in primary school ... the curriculum, could you tell me a little about the curriculum here?

N: I mean the curriculum is good but for the students who learn English from P1 and P2 and then P3 and continue.

DF: So the curriculum is a good curriculum if students start from P1?

N: From P1

DF: But in your case you are teaching students from P5 and P6 who didn't study P1-P4 so they have trouble?

N: Very hard to teach.

DF: What kind of things can they not do? What can they do? What can they not do?

N: What can they do? What can they not do? They cannot speak and a little understand what I say or understand listening... but for reading and writing it's only copying, read after the teacher

DF: So they cannot do it themselves?

N: Yes

DF: Do you think... you said the curriculum is good, why is it good in your opinion?

N: Because in P1 for the vocabulary it's only little for P2 it's more and P3 more, more..

DF: Every year is building

N: Yes, step by step

DF: In your teaching do you teach because of the curriculum or do you teach ... do you take from the curriculum or do you check the curriculum or do you not check it so much?

N: I try to check the curriculum and I try to help my students so you ask me how about integrate I integrate in my subject English

DF: With?

N: With English to review or to give a ... the knowledge from P1 to P5 for the students in P6, how to know them...

DF: You are helping them to catch up because they have missed all this

N: Because they missed knowledge from the last.. from the past

DF: Is this a problem with the curriculum or another problem?

N: I think he curriculum is not the problem but it's a problem due ... because of ... we don't have enough teachers

DF: You are the only teacher

N: Only me just now, only me is the English teacher in this school and for two moths ago but in the past I don't know what they learn from... the teachers in this school say and some students say they ... they saw or they learned from ETV, the second semester last year

DF: For the first time?

N: For the first time for them

DF: And that's the only English they did?

N: Only English and in the past for P1 they know only ABC, good morning, thank you, hello and ...

DF: So, but the curriculum for example has changed and now for example there are standards, yes?

N: Standards ok

DF: There are quite a lot of standards and quite a lot of teachers have said to me that there are too many standards. Some teachers said that they are very flexible, I like it and others said there was too much, now they are going to have indicators and there are fewer indicators for teachers

N: I think if the curriculum is not narrow I think maybe it's good for teachers and students but for the standards... I think it's okay.

DF: Has ... you have been teaching for 27 years, has your teaching changed in 27 years?

N: Oh, I try to improve my teaching all the time

DF: When you were starting to teach and now what are the biggest differences between then and now?

N: At the first time when I teach English, I didn't know how to teach English – step 1, step 2 and the last I don't know. I think after I ... go to the seminar, workshop, Thai TESOL and sometimes ERIC I try to observe the teachers in TV, in the seminar

DF: So from different teachers you have taken different ideas and different techniques?

N: Yes

DF: OK. But the curriculum does not change your teaching?

N: The curriculum does not change my teaching I think a little bit

DF: For example, how?

N: Because your ... I ... teach very, very hard, oh I have a lot of problems for my students, they don't know English before but they are in P6 and the space between the curriculum and the students is so wide. It's a big problem for me so I can change my style more than this

DF: You have to change your style to help your students catch up. You cannot teach the curriculum because there is a big gap between the curriculum and the student knowledge, so you have to change your teaching because of this?

N: Yes. When I teach the students who learn English before it's very fast to go so I can change my style, my teaching style. But if my students cannot go along with me I try to help them and use my old style.

DF: Old style for example, more grammar, more translation?

N: Yes, yes

DF: Teacher-centred?

N: Yes

DF: Older, more traditional?

N: Yes

DF: That's interesting. If you could change the curriculum, what kind of changes would you make? If you could change the curriculum now.

N: Change the curriculum... oh, it's very big

DF: Not a small question!

N: I want to change it so it's very wide

DF: Wider? Make it wider?

N: No, I want to make it narrow and the teacher in P1 or the government should give English teachers for each school

DF: To give more English teachers?

N: To give more English teachers. I think it's better

DF: You are working in primary school, do you think it's a good idea for students to learn English in primary school?

N: For me when I was young, I started to learn English when I was in P5 and I can understand

DF: You think this is okay?

N: Uh huh

DF: P1 is okay? Or is it too early?

N: I think it's early or so young for the students, for Thai students

DF: So too young?

N: Too young

DF: Because they are not ready?

N: They cannot read Thai.

DF: OK

N: They learn Thai, they learn English but in the city it's okay but for the village I think they should start in P5 or P6

DF: That's interesting. Now you mentioned the city and the village do the students here in this school do they understand why English is important? Do they know why?

N: No they know only to go to the test and play games, play computer games, for test...

DF: OK, the test is very important, no?

N: Important, yes.

DF: The national test, do you have a national test for P6?

N: National test for P6, uh huh.

DF: Your teaching to the national test, what kind of test is the national test?

N: What kind of test?

DF: Yes, is it a writing test? A grammar check? A speaking test? A listening test? A mixture?

N: Not mixture just a grammar test and writing test.

DF: Your curriculum says communicative way, speaking and listening is more important, make the students have fun but the test is very important and does not reflect or show that, so what do you do as a teacher? You have a big responsibility for the students, you want to teach this way but the test is this way. How do you do this?

N: Oh, this is very important question. Convert

DF: What do you mean?

N: In the school the students are happy when they learn listening and speaking but for the test ...

DF: They don't like it?

N: They don't like it

DF: For example, do you teach first term speaking and listening and second term the test? Do you teach special classes for the test?

N: The next month is the first test

DF: What do you do with your students? How do you prepare your students?

N: For my students just now I will test them only listening and speaking but in September I will test them by paper test.

DF: But when is the... this is your class test, what about the national test?

N: Not national test.

DF: P6 have no national test?

N: Have

DF: When?

N: At the end of January

DF: What do you do to help the students with the national test?

N: For the national test. In each class after I prepare them to read I will use my handouts and teach them try them to help themselves to do by themselves...

DF: So you are always thinking about the test?

N: Uh huh

DF: OK, if the students... how many students in the school

N: 277 students but minus kindergarten around 240

DF: Quite small. After this school where do the students study?

N: When the school finish, they go home?

DF: When they graduate from school where do they go?

N: They go to be a labourer in the ...

DF: How many ... what percentage of students from here go to junior high school?

N: A few

DF: 50%?

N: It's not 50% I think... 10 or 20%

DF: Only?

N: Only

DF: Maybe only 30 or 40 students go to junior high school?

N: Yes

DF: Amazing. So parents or families don't care about English so much?

N: They care a lot but they cannot read or write and do not understand English so they can't help their children to learn English because of their parents, the students' parents stopped the school in P2 or P3 or the highest P6... almost all of them.

DF: Materials. You use a textbook?

N: A textbook, CD power point

DF: Which textbook do you use?

N: From the Education ministry

DF: Ministry of Education. What's the name of the book?

N: In this school just this year the director uses Project Work

DF: Do you think this book is okay for the students or not?

N: P6, for P1, 2, 3,4 it's okay

DF: But 5 and 6 too difficult?

N: For P5 and P6 it's too difficult for the students who does not learn from P1 ... and it has a big problem for me

DF: You use materials from other materials yourself to help...

N: To help the students

DF: Do you have any questions?

(She wanted help from foreigners)

DF: Why do you need a 1st language speaker to help?

N: I want a native speaker to come to my school twice a year is good for my students to try to speak to them for maybe practice in the real situation. I think it's good. Only Thai teachers 'Good afternoon, good morning...' Verb to be, verb to have

DF: Students don't have a chance to speak.

Appendix 13: Process of assigning categories from the data

Stage	Notes
Document Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of the policy (for example, main aims include student-centred learning and critical thinking)
Pre-observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence of literature (for example, suggestions that Thai teachers are teacher-centred)
1 st Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial categorisation from field notes
Post-interview (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm / reject initial categories after interview ‘meaning categorization’ (Kvale, 1996)
Transcription (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start to form categories • Initial coding begins
2 nd Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further categorisation • Confirmation through observed practices
Post-interview (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further grouping of codes into categories
Transcription (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further category forming • Development of previous categories
Final Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall confirmation of practices
Transcription (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for patterns • Further categorisation
Post-study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual teacher’s practice categories • Combine the whole group’s categories
Writing up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final selection

Appendix 14: List of Observed Practices

1. Classroom Language

- L1 Usage
- L2 Usage
- Combination of L1 and L2
- Translation

2. Speaking Activities

- Choral work
- Repetition
- Pairwork practice
- Modelling in front of class
- Pronunciation practice
- Group work
- Brainstorming activity
- Uses model conversation
- Role play

3. Questions

- Asks whole class questions
- Asks individual student questions
- Allows students to reply in Thai
- Uses prompt-type questions
- Asks comprehension questions
- Class quiz
- Asks yes-no questions
- Asks true-false questions
- Asks follow-up questions

4. Topic

- Handout to introduce a topic
- Reviews topic with homework
- Reviews topic with group exercise
- Uses local topic
- Uses topic from the textbook

5. Reading and Writing Activities

- Spelling activities
- Students write in vocabulary notebook
- Error correction
- Pre-teaches vocabulary
- Grammar explanation
- Has students copy information
- Transform grammar patterns
- Vocabulary exercises
- Translates vocabulary
- Scanning exercises
- Quick reading
- Students complete chart
- Writes questions on board
- Has students use the board
- Uses student information
- Gives example answers
- Individual reading time
- Has students predict answers
- Has students translate reading

- Reads text aloud
- Writing practice for homework
- Mind mapping example
- Encourages dictionary usage
- Students rearrange the story
- Running dictation
- Free writing time (5 minutes)
- Repeats exercise

6. Classroom Management

- Moves around the class
- Clapping
- Uses media in class
- Blackboard usage
- Organises class into groups
- Sets time limits
- Students involved in teaching
- Students move around class
- Randomly calls on students
- Asks for volunteers

7. Error Correction

- Corrects spoken inaccuracy
- Points out mistake without correcting it
- Allows some mistakes
- Direct feedback on errors
- Asks students to correct wrong sentences

8. Materials

- Uses own handouts
- Uses combination of textbook and authentic materials
- Uses authentic materials

9. Evaluation

- Gives a score for work
- Does not give scores
- Reads out answers
- Does not check homework
- Walks around the class
- Asks class to confirm answers
- Matching exercise (review)
- Sets vocabulary test
- Evaluates group work
- Checks all answers on board
- Rewards students who do well
- Gives overall class feedback
- Asks students to translate
- Students give themselves a score

10. Listening Activities

- Students re-order sentences
- Uses an authentic song
- Has students research the song
- Listens to TV in class
- Comprehension questions about listening

Appendix 15: Teacher's Dispositions: Categories (An Example - Nattaporn)

A. Teaching

1. Approaches

DF: You have to change your style to help your students catch up. You cannot teach the curriculum because there is a big gap between the curriculum and the student knowledge, so you have to change your teaching because of this?

N: Yes. When I teach the students who learn English before it's very fast to go so I can change my style, my teaching style. But if my students cannot go along with me I try to help them and use my old style.

DF: Old style for example, more grammar, more translation?

N: Yes, yes

DF: Teacher-centred?

N: Yes

DF: Older, more traditional?

N: Yes

2. Materials

N: Integrate?

DF: Integrate, so bring other subjects, such as maths or science or local culture, do you use them?

N: For this school, just now, integrate no but only every day life

DF: You try to connect?

N: Try to connect everything around my students

DF: For example, food...

N: Food, house, home family

DF: So there is a connection for the students?

N: Yes

DF: Do you think the students like this?

N: They like... like this

DF: Can it help them learn more do you think?

N: Can it help hem learn more? I am not sure

(She asks a student the question)

I am not sure but my students say they like it

DF: You use a textbook?

N: A textbook, CD power point

DF: Which textbook do you use?

N: From the Education ministry

DF: Ministry of Education. What's the name of the book?

N: In this school just this year the director uses Project Work

DF: Do you think this book is okay for the students or not?

N: P6, for P1, 2, 3,4 it's okay

DF: But 5 and 6 too difficult?

N: For P5 and P6 it's too difficult for the students who does not learn from P1 ... and it has a big problem for me

DF: You use materials from other materials yourself to help...

N: To help the students

B. Learning

1. Student-centred learning

N: Child-centred learning for me ... I think if the student can do by themselves or thinking themselves that is child centred.

DF: Do you think it's a good thing, do you think it's possible in your school to do child-centred learning activities?

N: This is the first semester and their background for English is I think not good and this is like a basic...basic English for them. After they can understand English, they can read, they can speak and understand what I try them to do I think child-centred is not so far

DF: So you think the first step is to give them a base and then child-centred learning comes afterwards?

N: I think so

DF: What kind of things can they not do? What can they do? What can they not do?

N: What can they do? What can they not do? They cannot speak and a little understand what I say or understand listening... but for reading and writing it's only copying, read after the teacher

DF: So they cannot do it themselves?

2. Practices

Help students to understand:

- Classroom Language
- Reading and Vocabulary
- Pronunciation
- Listening
- Speaking

I want a native speaker to come to my school twice a year is good for my students to try to speak to them for maybe practice in the real situation. I think it's good. Only Thai teachers 'Good afternoon, good morning...' Verb to be, verb to have

C. Effect of the Policy

N: I try to check the curriculum and I try to help my students so you ask me how about integrate I integrate in my subject English

N: I think the curriculum is not the problem but it's a problem due ... because of ... we don't have enough teachers

N: I think if the curriculum is not narrow I think maybe it's good for teachers and students but for the standards... I think it's okay.

N: The curriculum does not change my teaching I think a little bit

DF: For example, how?

N: Because your ... I ... teach very, very hard, oh I have a lot of problems for my students, they don't know English before but they are in P6 and the space between the curriculum and the students is so wide. It's a big problem for me so I can change my style more than this

N: I want to change it so it's very wide

DF: Wider? Make it wider?

N: No, I want to make it narrow and the teacher in P1 or the government should give English teachers for each school

DF: To give more English teachers?

N: To give more English teachers. I think it's better

D. Role of English

1. Best time to learn English

DF: You are working in primary school, do you think it's a good idea for students to learn English in primary school?

N: For me when I was young, I started to learn English when I was in P5 and I can understand

DF: You think this is okay?

N: Uh huh

DF: P1 is okay? Or is it too early?

N: I think it's early or so young for the students, for Thai students

DF: So too young?

N: Too young

DF: Because they are not ready?

N: They cannot read Thai.

DF: OK

N: They learn Thai, they learn English but in the city it's okay but for the village I think they should start in P5 or P6

2. Students' opinion

DF: That's interesting. Now you mentioned the city and the village do the students here in this school do they understand why English is important? Do they know why?

N: No they know only to go to the test and play games, play computer games, for test...

3. Parents' opinion

DF: So parents or families don't care about English so much?

N: They care a lot but they cannot read or write and do not understand English so they can't help their children to learn English because of their parents, the students' parents stopped the school in P2 or P3 or the highest P6... almost all of them.

E. National Examination

DF: OK, the test is very important, no?

N: Important, yes.

DF: The national test, do you have a national test for P6?

N: National test for P6, uh huh.

DF: Your teaching to the national test, what kind of test is the national test?

N: What kind of test?

DF: Yes, is it a writing test? A grammar check? A speaking test? A listening test? A mixture?

N: Not mixture just a grammar test and writing test.

N: Oh, this is very important question. Convert

DF: What do you mean?

N: In the school the students are happy when they learn listening and speaking but for the test ...

DF: They don't like it?

N: They don't like it

DF: What do you do to help the students with the national test?

N: For the national test. In each class after I prepare them to read I will use my handouts and teach them try them to help themselves to do by themselves...

DF: So you are always thinking about the test?

N: Uh huh