
Revisiting Thailand's English language Education Landscape: A Closer Look at Thailand's Foreign Teaching Personnel Demographics

Analiza Liezl Perez-Amurao*
Mahidol University, Thailand

Abstract

Some major issues crucial to a country's education landscape involve what is taught, how lessons are taught, and who is teaching. Taking the third issue and using Thai government data, this study examines through documentary research method the demographic profile of foreign English-speaking teachers, aggregated by country of origin, sex, type of teaching license held, and rank per country of origin. Providing stakeholders with baseline information about who composes the foreign teaching force in Thailand, this paper discusses as well why English has been dubbed as the "language of the elite," making it the leading foreign language studied in Thailand. Although this study initially sought to look into the demographics of foreign English-speaking teachers in Thailand, only one major finding reveals how demographic data can point to a hierarchical practice observed in the existing types of English programs offered to Thai parents and their children.

Keywords: demographic profile; foreign English-speaking teachers; Thai education

Background

The advent of globalization has introduced humankind to a whole myriad of changes, affecting people domestically and internationally. People experience changes that are not only germane to a certain domestic context. Instead, because of globalization, these changes are facilitated and take shape both within an identified milieu and across international borders. Manifested in different forms and from various directions, globalization remains as one of the catalysts for migration, greatly impacting education on various strands. These dimensions range from what is taught, how lessons are taught and who are teaching. This study centers on the third issue, believing that much of what goes on in the classroom is heavily dependent not only on the national curricular directions of a country but also on who has been entrusted to carry out curricular content within the four corners of the classroom. As such, it is imperative that information about the teachers who have been entrusted to engineer

* *Email: analizaliezl.amu@mahidol.ac.th. Address: 999 Bhuddhamonthon Sai 4, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom.*

the country's curricular directions in the English language be made known. This paper centers on the foreign English-speaking basic education teachers in Thailand, but does not include a discussion on the foreign English-speaking teachers from the country's higher education sector.

The presence of English-speaking foreign teachers in Thailand may be viewed as a concrete response to the varying layers of reasons behind learning and using the English language on a national scale. There are those who educate the Thai students in the English language and/ or teach them another content area but are facilitated by the English language, as in the case of those teaching other foreign languages. Either way, such reason can easily be identified as the main catalyst for why the country has continually hired English-speaking foreign teachers across the different levels of education. In this regard, Alastair Pennycook's (2017) argument regarding this issue is worth exploring. He posits that to understand the importance of the global spread of English, we need to have:

detailed understandings of the ways in which English is embedded in local economies of desire. We need to evaluate the global spread of English, and the role of English language teachers as its agents, critically and carefully, in order to appreciate the ways in which demand for English is part of a larger picture of images of change, modernization, access and longing (p. xi).

Given Pennycook's view, it is imperative to understand how exactly English is used and regarded in Thailand. Where English does not hold an official status in the country, it is worth exploring how English is situated in the Thai context, particularly as English is viewed "... as the language of the elite (Baker, 2009, p. 11). Such account leads to one other point Pennycook (2017) raises which is addressed, in fact, to English teachers: "We are never just teaching something called English but rather we are involved in economic and social change, cultural renewal, people's dreams and desires" (p. xii).

Of the many points of involvement that Pennycook (2017) claims English teachers have, it is how English language learning and use is associated to "people's dreams and desires" that I will discuss further in this section. This is primarily because, taken outside of the pedagogic and classroom context under which the English language is being learned across the country, it is one that remains relevant to the manner the English language is positioned in the Thai context. In this respect, it is important to see how the language is "embedded in local economies of desire... in which demand for English is part of a larger picture of images of change, modernization, access and longing" (Pennycook, 2017, p. xi).

I argue that as the "language of the elite" (Baker, 2009, p. 11), English in Thailand is involved in fulfilling people's aspirations, "dreams and desires" (Pennycook, 2017, p. xii). Motha and Lin's (2014) contention—that "at the center of every language learning moment lies desire: desire for the language" (p. 332)—helps elucidate this thought. Said authors maintain that central in one's English language learning is the fulfillment of aspirations:

for the identities represented by particular accents and varieties of English; for capital, power, and images that are associated with English; for what it is believed to lie beyond the doors that English unlocks (p. 332).

Methodology

Using documentary research method (DSM), this study evaluated data against the four criteria John Scott (1990) suggests as bases for establishing the quality of information as “evidence on social meanings” (“Documentary research,” n.d., para. 1). The raw data included and further processed in this study—shown in the form of tables—were found to satisfy the following criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning (Scott, 1990).

Deemed both *authentic* and *credible*, the main data used in this study were officially obtained from The Teachers’ Council of Thailand-*Khurusapha* and the Thai Immigration Bureau. The Teachers’ Council of Thailand-*Khurusapha* serves as a “council for teachers and educational personnel, founded according to the Teachers and Educational Personnel Council Act B.E. 2546 to establish professional standards, issue and revoke Licenses for Professional Practice, and monitor and supervise practices according to the Standards and Ethics of the Profession...” (“History,” n.d.). Facilitated by this author through her school’s Office of Academic Affairs, official letters were sent to and received by the two above-mentioned Thai government agencies. In collaboration with the above-mentioned Thai government agencies, I discuss in this paper relevant demographic information detailing the composition of the foreign English-speaking basic education teaching personnel whose record from 2004 and 2007 to 2015 I aggregated based on the following dimensions: country of origin, sex, type of teaching license held, and rank based on the size of each group. The data obtained are considered *sound* and *authoritative* based on the following reasons: (1) they represent official government records inclusive of the relevant dates when they were first obtained, and (2) they are original, having been literally extracted straight from piles of official government logbooks whose entries were originally manually entered by the staff members of said government offices, and, as such, indicate relevant institutional authorship.

This study aims to provide various stakeholders with primary large-scale demographic data and analysis about the foreign English-speaking teachers in Thailand’s basic education levels in an attempt to help facilitate other related human ecology studies in the Thai education context.

Other than the use of documentary research method, I also conducted interviews with 29 Filipino teachers currently employed in Thai schools in Bangkok. The main purpose of the interviews was to provide supplementary data helping corroborate some other findings related to this study. Most of my interviewees were purposively chosen from my personal network, I interviewed a few through the snowball technique.

Subjects

My interviewees were Filipino teachers who I had constant access to mainly because they were referrals by teachers who I personally knew. They composed the biggest foreign English-speaking basic education teaching personnel as indicated in this study. They came from various Thai schools, representing the different English language-related programs offered in the country. To protect their privacy, however, their real names, distinguishing features and other information were not revealed in this study.

Review of Related Literature

Thailand's Systemic Features vis-à-vis Education Reforms

Examining Thailand's infrastructures necessitates a look at its systemic features, if only to learn more about the country's physical and organizational structures and see how they are identified with its labor-import industry, particularly in the teaching sector. Doing so provides a better perspective, helping put a specific focus on the Filipino teachers' conspicuous presence in the Thai classrooms, as said migrant group continues to be the biggest in terms size per country of origin. Another much simpler way of exploring this issue is to briefly examine the country's other features such as its national language policy. Doing so does not exactly mean making a claim that enacting it has led to the foreign teachers' presence in the country. It can be linked instead to the country's efforts to examine its national education system in sync with the growing need for English language that is felt both domestically and internationally.

In the field of education, significant systemic features are reflected through the changes made to the Thai National Curriculum that took place at various times such as the followings: in 1921, through the First Primary Education Act (Sangnapaboworn, 2007); in 1932, 1936, 1951, 1960 and 1966, through the sprawled-out National Education Plans (Sangnapaboworn, 2007); in 1977, which took place after the October 1973 student revolution; in 1980, via The National Primary Education Act; and through the 1999 National Education Act (NEA), which "prompted a major re-think in the education sector in terms of both teaching and learning methods, as well as in learning environments ("Towards a learning society," n.d., p. 10).

The "major rethink" in 1999, which was to be implemented in 2002, but was, in fact, finally promulgated on July 7, 2013 via the National Education Curriculum (Pongwat & Mounier, 2010) placed English "at the forefront of national intellectual development" (Wongsothorn, as cited in Baker, 2008). Locating English as a "language of wider communication" (LWC), the National Language Policy of Thailand (n.d.) maintains that it should be "duly reinforced in the 'Global Village of Our Braver and Newer World' today." In a nutshell, the 2010-approved NLP, although yet to be officially implemented, as of March 2016, supports the 1999 NEA by stating that there is a need for Thailand "to work effectively and harmoniously

hand-in-hand with speakers of other principal languages in the context of a world economy (e.g. English)” (p. 1). This statement surfaces as part of a landmark policy that is reflected in the now-revamped national curriculum.

Although, as of this date, there has been a dearth of scholarly studies that have attempted to look into the possible connection between the country’s education reforms and the increasing number of English-speaking educator-migrants to the country, Sciortino and Punpuing (2009) demonstrate that from 1997 to 2007, the population of the English-speaking migrant community possessing Thai work permits continued to rise. More specifically, as already earlier introduced, Philippine nationals have been found to be the biggest in terms of work permit possession in the “Professionals” category. Additionally, this current study noted that Filipino educators have been found to be the leading migrant teaching group, both from among those who possess a five-year teaching license and those who hold two-year provisional permits.

There has neither been a study that forthrightly claims that English-speaking foreign teachers in Thailand decide to work in the country due to their first-hand knowledge of the national education reforms, requiring instruction in English, nor do the informants of this study claim that their migrant work in the country has been a direct result of their knowledge of the Kingdom’s education acts. Nevertheless, some studies assert that Thailand’s need for qualified teachers has eventually created a gap over the years, one that the prominent presence of English-speaking foreign teachers in the Thai classrooms tries to fill.

Punthumasen (2007) discusses in her paper that the two major issues that Thailand continues to face concerning English language education have to do with the “quality of teachers teaching English language as well as teachers using English as a medium of instruction” (p. 1). With regard the first issue, Education Ministry’s Permanent Secretary Khunying Kasama Varavarn Na Ayutthaya released a statement that was publicized by the Bangkok Post in October 2006 specifically addressing it. She maintains that this shortage does not always mean having to hire native-speaking teachers (Nimkannon, 2006).

We don’t always have to hire native-speaking teachers. As long as we can select those who are competent in teaching, has good English language skills, and possess qualified academic knowledge in their areas. Filipino teachers are very good in primary schools because they are experts in introducing students to many learning activities, while Indian teachers are good at teaching science (para. 13-14)

Khunying Kasama Varavarn Na Ayutthaya’s stand on the matter, although generally unknown to the Filipino teaching community in the Kingdom, and therefore never cited by said migrant group as their prompt for their teaching applications in the country, is deemed instrumental.

The second issue Punthumasen (2007) cites concerns the need for teachers who speak the English language, as the education reforms require that English be used as a medium of instruction. With English used as the Philippines’ official language, Filipino being the other, Philippine nationals are deemed to easily fit into

the category, if only to consider intra-regional migration of skilled labor. Exposed to the language via their formal schooling, from kindergarten all the way to the graduate school levels, due to the country's colonial history with the US, the Filipinos' use of English generally goes beyond knowledge of grammar rules per se and extends instead to its practical use in a communicative setting.

A third corollary issue, however, that I bring up in this study concerns the demand for English-speaking teachers in Thailand, irrespective of the country's recent education reforms and enactment of the national language policy. It is one discussion I will come back to in a little while, dovetailed with a discussion on of the significance of English language education in the Kingdom that views English as "the language of the elite" (Baker, 2009, p. 11).

The Neoliberalization of Thai Education

Mounier and Tangchuang (2010) argue that the historical approach to understanding a country's education objectives reveals relevant major social objectives, such as those with political and economic implications. An examination of the political and economic strands helps one understand how they have become part of the systemic features within Thailand's education sector. Political traditions in the country demonstrate how education has been instrumental towards nation-state building, thus creating a "strong state." On the other hand, Mounier and Tangchuang (2010) maintain as well that Thailand's economic development helps situate itself as another significant systemic feature "with neo-liberal policies, globalization and global economic competition driving education towards vocationalism and the delivery of productive skills. Education is shaped to serve corporate economic interests in the name of sustaining economic growth", thus creating a "strong society" (p. 53). Neo-liberalism in the education sector promotes ceasing the participation of the state, introducing competition among schools as it was touted as the single best method to heighten professionalism. The situation has allowed parents to freely choose schools for their children (Pongwat & Mounier, 2010). Because of this, Pongwat and Mounier (2010) argue that the country's 1999 education reform was believed to have intended

to undermine education as a public good, transforming it into a commodity to be bought and sold on an education market and supplied by profit-driven educational institutions. The widespread use of cost-efficiency criteria promotes a utilitarian concept of education whereby the economy is in command and economic needs and rationales are the only ones that matter. The liberal strand of political tradition in Thailand is supported by businessmen and the urban middle class who have also espoused the neo-liberal stance on education (p. 73-74).

With English as one of the mandatory subjects for Grade 5 students and above since the implementation of the 1921 Education Act, it has become one of the preferred subjects among Thai students (Pongwat & Mounier, 2010). English has continued to be a part of the curriculum thereby requiring the services of foreign English-speaking teaching personnel. Under the Privatization Act, schools recognized the value of the increasing demand for English language education so much so that both public and private educational institutions started offering English programs (Keyuravong, as

cited in Darasawang & Watson Todd, 2012). “Although more expensive than mainstream schooling, the success of these programmes means that English is starting to take on the role of the language of education by default” (Darasawang & Watson Todd, 2012, p. 6). This strong preference for English among other foreign languages is reflected in the Ministry of Education’s standards.

Sermsonswad and Tantipongsanuruk (2015) note that together with the 2002 implementation of the National Education Curriculum was the move to focus on the English language as a communication tool. This was in contrast to the earlier use of English as an academic area that people simply studied. Said authors also cite how educational institutions, in 2005, were prompted to put up what is now popularly known as bilingual programs, requiring English to be the medium of instruction in core courses. It was also the same period when the intensive English programs (IEP) were first conceptualized and offered.

Along with the English language curriculum revamps—making English a mandatory subject in 1996 for all primary (*prathom*) students starting from Grade 1—internationalization [observed mostly in the private sector] and the attendant need for English language skills became some of the major issues (Methitam & Chamcharatsri, 2011, p. 62; See also Atagi, 2011). Very recently, The Tenth National Economic and Social Development Plan for 2007-2011 shows that part of the Ministry of Education’s teaching and learning reforms includes “Transforming Language Learning,” placing great emphasis on learning English (“Towards a learning society,” n.d.):

Transforming and developing the teaching and learning of languages, using authentic materials and learning situations; including the English Programme (EP) aimed at providing full or partial Thai national curriculum subjects in English (p. 10).

The resulting situation, leading to the need to hire qualified English-speaking teachers, did not escape the attention of Filipino professionals whose propensity for migrant work has already been high due to the Philippines’ history of global labor arbitrage. It may be noted that the early body of research on Philippine migration to Thailand failed to capture any data that was able to connect the direct influence of Thailand’s increased teaching job opportunities for English-speaking professionals and the surge of Filipino educators now teaching in the country. This could be perhaps due to the small number of Filipino teachers during the early years. Government data used in this study suggest that Thailand’s national education acts triggered a series of events. They include, but are not limited to, (1) offering English classes in various learning institutions throughout the country and (2) increasing the demand for foreign English-speaking nationals.

National Language Policy in Thailand

As underscored in the beginning of this paper, examining Thailand’s systemic features proves to be a pragmatic move as doing so helps various stakeholders not only know the country’s structural issues but also understand how organizational structural concerns can be properly dealt with. In this discussion, I posit that

Thailand's national education reforms leading to the prominence of English language education in the national curriculum and the enactment of the country's national language policy—regardless of whether they were intended to complement each other or not—are both suggestive of the country's attempts to address the growing needs for English language learning and use not only for domestic but also for global consumption. Studies show, for instance, that due to globalization people's knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of the language of commerce helps shape a country's economic growth. This is where a discussion of the country's national language policy proves relevant.

In response to the absence of an official declaration of the Thai Kingdom's national language either in the 1997 or the 2007 Constitution, then Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva formally approved on February 7, 2010 the new national language policy which was prepared by the Royal Institute of Thailand (Fry, 18 November 2013). Said national language policy does not only underscore “the status of Thai as the national language, declaring that every citizen should be fluent in it so as to enhance national unity and communication” (para. 9), but it also cites the significance of learning English, among other foreign and neighboring languages. In a much earlier Directive of the Thai Ministry of Education (MoE) pertaining to the implementation of the Basic Education Core Curriculum (OBEC 293, B.E. 2551 [A.D. 2008]), the MoE examines the necessity for learning foreign languages:

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. Foreign languages enable learners to be aware of diversity of cultures and viewpoints in the world community, conducive to friendship and cooperation with various countries. They contribute to learners' development by giving learners better understanding of themselves and others. The learners are thus able to learn and understand differences of languages and cultures, customs and traditions, thinking, society, economy, politics and administration. They will be able to use foreign languages for communication as well as for easier and wider access to bodies of knowledge, and will have vision in leading their lives (p. 252).

While various educational organizations in Thailand are left with their discretion as to which foreign language they prefer to use in their own curriculum, the Directive (OBEC 293, B.E. 2551 [A.D. 2008]), specifically prescribes English for the country's entire basic education core curriculum with language content focal points on the following: “language for communication, language and culture, language and relationship with other learning areas, and language and relationship with [the] community and the world” (p. 253). The making of Thailand's National Language Policy started in December 2006 when The Royal Institute created the Committee to Draft the National Language Policy (CDNLP) whose main function was to study the language situation in the country, resulting eventually in a policy for the benefit of both the State and its people (Warotamasikkhadit & Person, 2011).

Understanding the English Language Education Landscape

In the Thai context, English language learning and use is often, if not always, marketed to both the parents and the students as a tool “for upward social mobility” (See Abdul Rahman, as cited in Sagoo, McLellan and Wood, 2015, p. 11). It is not surprising therefore to find ads for language schools that carry this motif. One language school, for instance, offers its services to the Thai market by running the following ad on its own website: “[Name of the language school] is a high-end “boutique” language school. What you want and what you need are always at the center of everything we do for you. No other school can deliver the same kind of personalized, high-quality content that we are famous for” (“Five languages,” n.d.).

Knowing that the Thai market for English language learning is inclined to using knowledge of the language as a ticket to eventually fulfill people’s life expectations, various English language schools are very well adept at catering to said needs. Another language school even makes the connection between one’s English language skills and becoming “global citizens of the world” saying that “...English is an important language in today’s globalized world and now is the right age for them to get their basics right” (“Our Philosophy,” n.d.).

One other language school attempts at accommodating people’s dreams by connecting learners to other like-minded individuals from other parts of the world “so you can learn different cultures and make new friends,” clearly a move that is meant only for those who can afford such a service (“Our courses,” n.d.).

In sum, it is particularly noteworthy to keep in mind Pennycook’s (2017) view of this situation:

The promotion, use and teaching of English in contexts of economic development [among others]... have to be understood in relation to the meanings English is expected to carry, as a language of progress... economic development, advanced knowledge... and much more. These connections are by no means coincidental—they are a product of the roles English comes to play in the world” (p. 32).

Foley (2005) asserts that despite the absence of a statement on the country’s official second language, having English as a mandatory subject to study in Thai schools is of significance. Noting that the use of English is no longer relegated to classroom activities, Foley asserts that it has become a tool with social and practical value.

Thailand is realizing that a good knowledge of English is no longer a luxury but a necessity and ELT will have to be given more prominence in the education system. There is little doubt that there is a growing realization that if tomorrow’s Thailand wants to be part of a global economy it will have to have substantial sectors that have command of more than one language. Thai will be one and English is a likely candidate to be the other. (p. 223).

Baker (2009) puts forward related, if not similar, observations stating that consistent with the 1999 NEA, the use of English, either as a second language or as a foreign language, in Thailand is widely observed. This is seen in transactions involving both the native and non-native speakers for “There is an overall perception of English as an essential part of Thailand’s development and as a *lingua franca* to connect culturally,

intellectually and commercially with the rest of the world (p. 12; See also Foley, 2005).

Baker (2012) also notes that because other foreign languages in the country do not enjoy the same status as English does, it has become, in effect, the Thais' second language by default. It has become a teaching-learning tool in programs that boast of international orientation and "as the language of international organisations and conferences (including ASEAN and ASEAN +3), for international business transactions, tourism, the internet, global advertising, scientific and technology transfer, media (including imported films and music), international safety and international law" (pp. 2-3; See also Foley, 2005). Simpson and Thammasathien (2007, as cited in Baker, 2012) posit that this spread of English language use has made it not only a skill to possess but also an indicator of one's wealth or social or professional status highly desired by the middle class metropolitans.

Hengsadeekul, Hengsadeekul, Koul, and Kaewkuekool (n.d.) state as well that English is used for various purposes and not only for academic and career advancements. The authors assert that university graduates who possess the right English language skills get better chances at being hired as the country aims to progress economically. This helps explain why Thailand's relevant government agencies have put efforts to improve the country's educational system.

Sermsongswad and Tantipongsanuruk (2015) acknowledge the assistance extended by the Thai government, arguing how talks about English language education in the country remains an issue among various groups. The authors note as well that the country is cognizant of the gains it can enjoy should its own people become more proficient users of the language.

Findings and Discussion

I discuss demographics of migrant workers who were either teaching (at the time of the interview) or indicated employment in the teaching profession within some given years. The data provided by the Thai Immigration Bureau are only inclusive of 2012-2014 records, whereas the information from the Teachers' Council of Thailand (*Khurusapha*) includes a 10-year data from 2004 to a partial record extending to the early but incomplete part of 2016, although exclusive of 2005-2006, as records for said period do not exist.

Table 1 below reveals three-year findings relating to the foreign English-speaking teaching population in general, aggregated by gender and the type of sectors they taught in, as recorded by the Thai Immigration Bureau. In 2012, a total of 7,939 English-speaking foreign nationals filed applications with said government agency, stating their teaching jobs as the main reason for wanting to stay in the Kingdom. There were 4,201 male applicants at 52.91% in contrast to 3,738 or 47.09% female applicants. In 2013, the total number increased by 16.86% as 1,300 more applied to stay longer in the country. The male applicants had the population of 4,835 or 51.66%, while there were 4,524 (48.34%) female applicants. The number grew much

bigger in 2014 reaching a total of 10,053 applicants—5,146 or 51.18% were male, while 4,907 or 48.82% were female.

Table 1

Foreign English-speaking Population in Bangkok Applying to Stay in Thailand Due to Employment as Teachers

Year	Public Institutions		Private Institutions		Grand Total
	Gender	No. of Applicants	Gender	No. of Applicants	
2012 (2555 B. E.)	Male	901	Male	3300	4201
	Female	628	Female	3110	3738
	Total	1529	Total	6410	7939
2013 (2556 B. E.)	Male	935	Male	3900	4835
	Female	714	Female	3810	4524
	Total	1649	Total	7710	9359
2014 (2557 B. E.)	Male	1046	Male	4100	5146
	Female	738	Female	4169	4907
	Total	1784	Total	8269	10053

Source: Thailand Immigration Bureau; Unpublished raw data

Tables 2-A and 2-B below contain data aggregated by rank, country of origin, gender, and size, illustrating the foreign workers' population holding a five-year teaching license within a ten-year period from 2004 and then 2007-2015. There were no recorded data from 2005 to 2006 mainly because the Teachers' Council of Thailand – *Khurusapha* processed requests for the five-year teaching license all at once in 2004, putting an end to applications between 2004 and 2005. There were no requests sent either for the two-year provisional permit in 2005-2006 because the policy on issuing provisional permits was yet to be implemented in 2007. Nevertheless, when provisional permits were initially allowed in 2007, only one request for it and only six for the five-year teaching license were processed. It was not until 2008 when requests for both types started picking up.

Table 2-A
Top Ten Foreign English-Speaking Teaching Personnel Holding Five-Year Teaching License Aggregated by Rank, Country of Origin, Sex, and Population per Year (2004, 2007-2010)

RANK	COUNTRY	2004			2007			2008			2009			2010		
		F	M	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL
1	PH	217	63	280	3	1	4	318	100	418	550	193	743	486	203	689
2	GB	107	192	299	0	0	0	11	23	34	82	136	218	92	114	206
3	US	79	155	234	0	0	0	7	23	30	111	157	268	49	90	139
4	CA	17	37	54	0	0	0	3	5	8	25	39	64	16	18	34
5	AU	17	54	71	0	0	0	2	8	10	26	23	49	29	28	57
6	CN	23	9	32	0	0	0	8	7	15	20	7	27	21	15	36
7	IN	48	48	96	0	0	0	10	8	18	17	7	24	23	19	42
8	JP	17	12	29	0	0	0	5	2	7	30	27	57	23	8	31
9	NZ	14	23	37	0	0	0	1	2	3	8	15	23	12	9	21
10	FR	11	16	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	5	3	4	7

Source: The Teachers' Council of Thailand-*Khurusapha*; Unpublished raw data

To achieve accuracy, Tables 2-A and 2-B show data on a yearly basis only and have purposely not been summed up to avoid possible duplication of record. With the exclusion of 2005 to 2006 data, Tables 2-A and 2-B show figures from 2004 and 2007-2015, indicating that on the average, teachers from the Philippines compose the biggest group, followed by Great Britain and the US, which are the second and third largest groups of foreign teachers holding a five-year Thai teaching license, respectively. Other countries that occupy the fourth to the tenth biggest groups are Canada, Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, and France, respectively.

Table 2-B

Top Ten Foreign English-Speaking Teaching Personnel Holding Five-Year Teaching License Aggregated by Rank, Country of Origin, Sex, and Population per Year (2011-2015)

RANK	COUNTRY	2011			2012			2013			2014			2015		
		F	M	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL	F	M	TOTAL
1	PH	374	174	548	306	163	469	238	133	371	383	230	613	139	59	198
2	GB	104	159	263	72	87	159	71	85	156	34	62	96	26	25	51
3	US	62	72	134	127	101	228	45	55	100	20	44	64	10	14	24
4	CA	20	29	49	27	26	53	20	17	37	10	20	30	5	6	11
5	AU	13	24	37	21	24	45	14	16	30	7	14	21	2	5	7
6	CN	19	17	36	27	20	47	21	14	35	32	29	61	8	10	18
7	IN	9	4	13	12	10	22	4	9	13	9	9	18	4	4	8
8	JP	26	10	36	20	3	23	20	6	26	7	1	8	2	1	3
9	NZ	8	13	21	9	3	12	6	7	13	3	4	7	5	2	7
10	FR	7	10	17	15	16	31	3	6	9	5	9	14	0	0	0

Source: The Teachers' Council of Thailand-*Khurusapha*; Unpublished raw data

Tables 2-A and 2-B further show that teachers from Asia are predominantly women, whereas teachers from the West are by and large men. Except for India that has an equal proportion of men and women teachers, those from the Philippines, China, and Japan are predominantly women. Teachers from Great Britain, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and France, on the other hand, are mostly men. This finding confirms earlier reports about the gender composition of western teachers in the country; that is, that there is a greater portion of male teachers from the West than their female counterparts. Overall, however, the population of non-Thai women teachers holding a five-year Thai teaching license poses to be bigger than that of non-Thai men.

What is worth clarifying at this point is the composition of foreign English-speaking teachers seen in various Thai classrooms. Tables 2-A and 2-B show that foreign nationals hired as teachers in Thailand do not all hail from countries that use English as a native language. More specifically, countries such as the Philippines, China, India, Japan, and France have their own native language. From the top ten

sending countries shown above, only those from Great Britain, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are from, what Braj Kachru (1985) calls as, the inner circle or norm-providing countries. Meaning, these are the countries that use English as their native language. Within the context of this study, they are considered as foreign English-speaking teachers who teach their own content areas, such as the Chinese language for Chinese nationals or the Japanese language for Japanese nationals. Given the general understanding, however, that these languages are categorized as “foreign language” in the Thai classroom, these nationals are referred to as foreign English-speaking teachers who teach Chinese or Japanese, for that matter, but seek the facilitatory function of the English language to help them teach Thai students who are generally at the beginner’s level. In the context of this study, these foreign nationals, although English-speaking at some points in their classroom teaching, are not to be considered teachers teaching English as a content area.

Ethnographic observations, interviews with this study’s informants, and current literature all point to the fact that at this time of writing English as an academic subject is well in place not only in the Thai national curriculum but also in the classrooms (Daraswang & Watson Todd, 2012; Sermsongswad & Tantipongsanuruk, 2015). The schools were asked to provide students with the option to enroll in intensive English language programs, now more popularly known as the Intensive English Program or IEP. It has been observed, however, that the implementation of this particular policy has been subject to individual decisions of schools. As such, although various schools now hold classes using English as the main communication tool, program details vary from one institution to another. Some schools have been observed to offer bilingual programs that teach core subjects in both Thai and English. Others offer both bilingual and mini-bilingual programs. In the mini-bilingual program, 70% of what students learn is in Thai while the remaining 30% is in English. Still others offer all the three—bilingual, mini-bilingual, and IEP. To attract more students for relatively lower tuition costs compared to what international schools charge, some schools have opted for “more appealing” program names, such that intensive English program are now known as International Education Program.

Given the observations on how English is being “packaged and marketed” in different “creative” ways to those who are interested, various learning institutions in the country, for instance, have different ways of attracting both parents and students to enroll in their programs. Different schemes depend on how much of English they want the students to learn and how much families are willing to pay. A large chain of Thai private schools with campuses both in Metropolitan Bangkok and various provinces in the country, for example, offers the following schemes.

Table 3

Types of Programs a Large Chain of Thai Private Schools Offers in Thailand

TYPE OF PROGRAM	FEATURES	CONTENT AREAS	COST PER YEAR
OPTION 1: International English Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All classes are conducted in English. Content area teachers are from the West. Homeroom teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) are from the Philippines. 	<p>Taught in English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mathematics Science Social Studies English Language Health Ed Reading & Writing PE Computer Language Program: Phonetics/ Phonics Foreign Language (Chinese/ Japanese) <p>Taught in Thai:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thai History Thai Language 	THB 120, 000.00 (Excluding books and uniform)
OPTION 2: Bilingual Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half of the classes are conducted in English while the other half are conducted in Thai. Content area teachers are from the Philippines or the West or combined. Homeroom teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) are from Thailand. 	<p>Taught in English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Studies Reading & Writing PE Computer Language Program: Phonetics/ Phonics Foreign Language (Chinese/ Japanese) Mathematics* Science* English * Language* Health Ed* <p>Taught in Thai:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thai History Thai Language <p>* Taught by either a western or Filipino teacher but assisted by a Thai teacher who translates the lesson.</p>	THB 65, 500.00 (Excluding books and uniform)
OPTION 3: Mini-Bilingual Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About three of the classes are conducted in English while the rest are conducted in Thai. Content area teachers may be from the Philippines or the West or combined. Homeroom teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) may be both from Thailand and the Philippines. 	<p>Taught in English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mathematics Science Social Studies Health Ed Chinese <p>Taught in Thai</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thai Language Thai Grammar Thai History PE Reading & Writing Art 	THB 25, 260.00 (Excluding books and uniform)

Table 3 above demonstrates the following issues:

1. Unlike the traditional curricular direction Thai schools used to have, students and parents are now provided a number of options in terms of which program to study determined by the language of instruction used and the cost.
2. The different options position teachers hierarchically, depending on the type of English program they are a part of and the cost of program the students and parents are willing to pay.
3. The content areas students learn speak of how Thai schools have started to view English language education in the country as a commodity that can be packaged with corresponding degrees of access to the target language.

At a quick glance, Table 3 appears to reflect simply straightforward information that involves the types of programs that Thai parents can choose for their children and the features of each program contingent on the corresponding cost. However, a closer introspection demonstrates issues that are far more complex and indicative than program types and costs.

First, it is definitely apparent that beyond the course content and fees and the hierarchical values attached to the different actors in this activity, it also demonstrates that people—viewed as “customers” as demonstrated by their willingness to avail of “packages” that suit their preferences and budgets—recognize how all offerings are but inevitable channels through which their aspirations and dreams can materialize. The types of program, each with a different cost, point to English as the language of the elite. That is, those who can afford more expensive packages are given greater access to classes conducted in English. This reflects a kind of education made available to parents and students that is inherently hierarchical. It is hierarchical because the varying costs, dictated by the features of each program, by default, rank parents and students into a certain order according to their capability to pay. Those who are financially capable of affording a more expensive type of program also enjoy features that cannot be had by others of less financial stature. Implications of this set up on a number of concerns, such as quality of education, among other things, however, are not part of this study. Thus a separate research, perhaps as a corollary to this current study, would be a fitting further exploration.

Second, and one that lends itself to an interesting discussion that was not anticipated in the original conception of this study, is Table 3’s manifestation of another kind of hierarchy shaped by the types and costs of programs being offered. Each of the options shows as well how teachers, involved in the three programs, are hierarchically placed. For example, top in the ranking are teachers from the West who teach content area subjects in the International English Program (IEP), whereas Filipinos serve as homeroom teachers and teaching assistants. The hierarchical values that the three options show are indicative of how three groups of teachers—from the West, the Philippines and Thailand—are dealt with. It can be gleaned from Table 3 that teachers from the West are placed in tier 1, those from the Philippines are in tier 2 and those from Thailand are in tier 3.

Due, however, to the limitations of this study, what it can only conjecture based on the gathered data is that the presence (or absence) of teachers from both Thailand and other parts of the world creates an impact on the possible kind of education Thai school administrators can provide within the Thai labor market context. As such, they can help shape the decisions parents can make for their children's education. The kind of education referred to, however, in this study does not even attempt to make discussions related to quality, as it is a concern that is not included in the scope of this study. Additionally, while possible future discussions can be made on how the demographic profile of teachers, both foreign and local, and their actual population size can create positive or negative effects on Thai education, this study is restricted from making that kind of discourse, as the data this study was meant to gather did not include such focus.

Conclusion

As various ELT scholars suggest, Thailand's current English language education landscape reveals a rather unstable condition. Seventeen years after the 1999 NEA was enacted, following a series of amendments in the succeeding years, and six years after the 2010 NLP was made effective, the country's systemic features show that it is still trying to find the missing piece of the puzzle to make its English language education work. A fairly recent move of the Ministry of Education during the last quarter of 2015, for instance, was when it announced that it would hire British Council English specialists to place 500 Thai teachers in a language-training program (Fredrickson, 18 November 2015) in a bid to address the need for Thai teachers who are qualified to handle English-medium classes. Meantime, the Filipinos continue to look forward to getting hired as teachers in the country. Upon the commencement of an agreement between a Philippine private university and a Thai private basic education school in the west of Bangkok, some 100 Filipino education graduates were expected to join as teachers a Thai chain of private schools in 2017 (K. Pattara, personal communication, December 1, 2016).

While Thailand has already long recognized the indubitable role of English in its national economic agenda via its revamped national curriculum, in its attempt to help situate its people within the global economic map, the country's English language education systemic features have yet to produce positive results. This is to be expected as the country has made a huge investment through its various education acts and related development policies.

Regardless of whether the Filipino teachers in the country are aware of Thailand's education reforms or not—given that the Philippine migrant community is among those who have the highest propensity for overseas work globally—two dominant features in the Thai English education context remain for now. First, the country's structural shortage in the English-speaking teaching workforce will, at least for now, continue to draw foreign English-speaking teachers, such as the Filipinos, into working as educators in the Thai classroom. Second, the view of English as “the

language of the elite” will persist as it is considered as the vehicle through which people’s dreams and aspirations are attained.

Moving forward, a subsequent study that can be made from here, as cited in the Findings and Discussion section, can be one that looks into how the presence of foreign English-speaking teachers can possibly influence the quality of Thai education. Such a study may further examine what effects, positive or negative, their contributions make to the Thai education system.

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About the Author

Analiza Liezl Perez-Amurao is Asst. Prof. at Mahidol University International College (MUIC) in Thailand. She holds an MA in English Language and Literature Teaching and a PhD in Multicultural Studies. She currently serves as chair of MUIC's Humanities and Language Division. Her research interest includes ELT, applied and sociolinguistics, transnationalism, and migration studies.