

Teaching EFL in Thailand: A bilingual study

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VOLUME I
Chapters 1 - 7

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Certificate

I certify that this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being submitted as part of a candidature for any other degree.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me, and that any help received in preparing this work, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

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Abstract

The majority of the world's learners and teachers of English are located in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts such as Thailand, but related academia, teacher training and textbooks remain for the most part located in English-speaking countries of the Centre. Key assumptions of the latter have been that students wish to enter into the target culture and to work towards native speaker competence; classrooms have consequently reified the native speaking teacher and excluded students' first language. But in fact, for most EFL contexts such as Thailand, neither those goals nor their associated methods are relevant.

This study takes as fundamental to the Thai EFL context the presence of a first language shared by teacher and students, and explores how Thai teachers' use of both L1 and L2 creates a distinctive bilingual pedagogy.

The research takes an ethnographic approach which comprises the observation of ten English classes at a provincial Thai university and interviews with nine teachers on site. The framework for analysis is grounded in systemic-functional linguistics, and integrates this theory of 'language in use' with a socio-cultural theory of mind, elements of SLA, and trans-disciplinary perspectives. The study thus seeks to engage with Thai teachers' voices both as they are heard in the classroom and in dialogue with the researcher. To date, there exist in English no published studies of Thai EFL which have conducted this kind of enquiry.

The study produces new ways of describing Thai EFL classrooms. It discusses how L1 contributes to students' capacity to 'make meaning' in L2; how L2 constructs different possibilities of speaker 'performance' as well as of speaker 'reticence'; and how bilingual teachers deal with textbooks which appear exclusively in L1. The study demonstrates that Thai EFL is quite distinct from the ESL domain in which it is usually subsumed, and that on the contrary, it is strongly affiliated with Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) in almost every feature of curriculum, methodology, student participation and teacher bilinguality.

Notes on Terminology

Each of the nine teachers in this study was asked to select a pseudonym for her or himself; the university itself has also been allocated a pseudonym.

Following Thai convention, I refer to teachers by the title *ajarn* (lecturer), together with first name; for example *Ajarn Laksana*.