

# Research

## BEING AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF TEN FOREIGN TEACHERS IN THAILAND

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### Abstract

This study reflects upon the common narratives of ten foreign teachers relating their teaching experiences in Thailand. Thailand is often admired for its culture, people, environment and many can regard it as their second home. However, there are issues and challenges which they have to face such as, racial discrimination and prejudice, foreign teachers' high expectation toward students, teaching materials and the long teaching hours and the remunerations that they encounter. Although foreign teachers can settle happily in Thailand, there are real challenges that make up their day to day existence. In addition to those already mentioned there are problems with their visas and of course the language barrier. The complexity of involvement in the education processes in Thailand has other aspects that can be identified through the narratives in this study such as the attitude towards native and non-native teachers and perhaps more subtly the color of a teacher's skin.

**Key words:** Narratives, English language teaching, Thai institutions, racial discrimination and prejudice.

## Introduction

Teaching and traveling is one way of seeing the world, especially as an English teacher. Asking teachers to talk about their experiences and recollections is one way of getting access to these experiences and reflections.

Foreigners come to Thailand with different purposes, such as: travel, education, open a business while others may come to start a new life. In order to live in Thailand, foreigners need to have a job in order to obtain a visa. Depending on the educational background or country these people come from, there are many possibilities with regard to employment. One possibility if you have a degree is to be a teacher, especially an English teacher. There are many English institutions in Thailand which employ native and non native English speakers' teacher.

This particular study highlights the *narratives* of ten foreign English teachers of various nationalities working in Thailand.

These different narratives may help readers understand the variety of reasons why Thailand is chosen as a teaching work destination as well as underline the challenges teachers encountered while trying to live and work in a Thai context.

## Historical background study

Thailand's objective in learning English "is to facilitate communication, education, and business as it is important for the country to gain economic competitiveness in this era of globalization. ... At the same time, through learning a foreign language, it is expected that students will understand their own Thai culture better and be more able to represent Thai culture" (quoted in Darasawang, 2007: 190)

Thailand offers variety of tourist attractions to its visitors such as the natural beauty of its coastline, historical sites and unique culture. This has encouraged Thais to learn English in order to cope with changes brought by globalization (Barby, 2013). Tourism is a pillar of economy. The government of Thailand has made considerable efforts to develop and promote tourism with a parallel demand for English which is needed for communication to foreign tourists ([www.englishjobsthailand.com](http://www.englishjobsthailand.com)). The high demand of the knowledge of English has led to the rising demand of English second language (ESL) teachers in Thailand. However, this has also allowed foreigners who have no teaching qualifications to earn money while traveling and gain teaching experience in the country. Therefore, Thailand offers the

possibility to 'Travel and Teach'.

Teaching positions are available in regular Thai schools, both in the primary and high schools located in every province and town in the country. There are also several language institutes located in Bangkok and elsewhere. These can be small private language schools, international schools that follow the UK and US school curriculum and universities or institutes that provide English language training to companies. There are a number of agencies that recruit and send English language teachers to schools as well as other organizations (Barby, 2013). Normally, foreign teachers teach English with particular emphases on conversation, pronunciation, listening and reading skills and the improvement of language skills of Thai students through practical activities.

As English becoming a lingua-franca of the world, English is not in the hand of the native speakers anymore. According to Crystal (2003) about a quarter of world population are already fluent in English. So teaching English is not only for native speakers but those who are successful speakers of English. For example, teachers from the neighboring country such as, India, the Philippines, Burma, Nigeria and other countries who do not belongs to the Inner Circle as such but for those who are successful users of English can find employment within the Thai educational system.

Teachers are highly respected in Thailand and Native English speakers usually get preference over Asians (Lippi-Green (1997). If you have a specific teaching qualification such as a degree in education, teacher certification such as TEFL qualification like CELTA, then you may be better equipped to find English language teaching jobs in Thailand (Barby, 2013).

English is important because it is the only language that truly links the whole world together. In Thailand, English is considered a required subject in schools from primary to tertiary levels. Kanoksilapadham stated that The Ministry of Education has included it in the *Basic Education Curriculum* since 1895 (cited in Siriphotchanaorn, 2005: 1). Besides learning English language in the classroom, most Thai learners attempt to improve their English skills at language institutes that provide *English conversation, Business English, Writing, TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC* courses, etc. In addition to all this the emerging ASEAN Community, English language is becoming very important.

The learning English for Thai students has become particularly crucial because of its' language limitations, especially in English. So, with the opening for ASEAN, Thailand might lag behind the competitive world of

business, education, science and technology if the learning of English is not improved. That is the reason why the government encourages Thai students to improve their English so they can compete with neighboring countries.

In 2011, the Nation newspaper published an article about the Thai education system. It stated, Thai educational system had planned to hire native English speaking teachers. The Office of the *Basic Education Commission* (OBEC) sought 350-million baht budget to hire 300 native English-speaking teachers for its primary and secondary schools to solve the problem of the shortage of English teachers. According to the proposal, each native speaker teacher would receive a salary of 83,000 baht per month. Comparing with Thais who are teaching English, who have a salary range of 9,000- 15,000. OBEC Chief Chinaphat Phumirat declared that foreign teachers would be from the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, India and the Philippines. OBEC secondary schools currently have only 25,000 Thai teachers who have graduated in the English language, while primary schools have 5,000. He said the move in 2010 to employ 3,000 Thais who had graduated in the English language to teach primary schools had boosted the students' academic results. This was the reason why OBEC wanted to encourage and consider employing more native speakers to teach at its schools. Chinaphat also said "OBEC was coordinating with the Foreign Ministry to recruit the native English-speakers, possibly retired teachers or teaching graduates in their fourth year of study who wanted to get experience in Thailand. They would be given annual contracts and would teach at district-level schools" (*The Nation*, 29 March 2011). So, to develop the English skills of Thai learners, the government and Education Ministry has employed many native and non-native English teachers. There is an explicit belief in the Thai educational system that learning English with foreign English teachers will produce a more effective outcome in raising the standard of English ([www.bic.moe.go.th](http://www.bic.moe.go.th)).

This focus on English pushes the majority of English course in Thailand to have native English teachers (NETs) as commercial instruments to attract Thai's students and English learners, as part of the process of commodification, (Wilkinson, 2014). However, as pointed out by Kubota & Lin (2006), there is a silence when the topic of discrimination is raised in academia.. However, not all native English speakers' teachers find it easy to get an English language teaching position in Thailand, as Thai learners prefer native speakers and indeed foreign teachers with fair skin. So it is not about how they speak or where they come from but about physical appearance as well. (Amin, 1997, Braine, 1999).

According to the study conducted by Phothongsunan and Suwanarak (2008), NETs are favored and treated with more respect and privileged than NNETs and that the institution would try to satisfy NETs as much as possible. Various schools and institutions in Thailand have different requirements and criteria when hiring teachers. The Bangkok Post on its' interview with Matthew Hogan stated, the academic director of the school commented on the necessity of training for teachers so that they have the proper background to excel in a classroom setting.

There are other issues about native-speakerism English teachers. Phothongsunan and Suwanarak (2008) mentioned that there are native English speakers where their field of study was not related to ELT or ESL but they were hired to teach since they were native speakers of the language. This illustrates how native English speakers are valued and privileged in relation to hiring practices merely because they are 'native speakers' especially outside United States and United Kingdom where demand of native speakers teachers are in high demand (Rampton, 1996; and Canagarajah, 1999).

## **Using Narrative: A theoretical framework**

According to Lightfoot (2004), 'Narrative' is a study of any text or discourse used with any text used within a context of a mode of inquiry with a specific focus on the stories told by individuals. This can be applied and understood as spoken or written text giving account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected (cited in Creswell, 2007). So this study is focusing on the narrative of a group of foreign English teachers teaching in Thailand using Chase (2005) approach, 'narrative analysis' in which the researcher collects the stories and interviews of the participants and organize them into a story using a plot line.

Although, 'narrative' normally describes the story from the past but in this study, the plot or story line employs Clandinin and Connelley (2000) three dimensional narrative inquiry: space, that is the personal and social (the interaction), the past present and future (continuity) and the place (situation). These include the setting or context of the participants' experiences (cited in Creswell, 2007). The narrative is based on ten different teachers who are living and working in Thailand as to how individuals are 'enabled and constrained' by social resources and socially challenge by their environments. The participants (teachers) are from UK, U.S.A, the Philippines, Myanmar, India and Iran.

## **Methodology**

The main objective in this study is to identify the common narratives of foreign English teachers about the Thai education system, Thai people and Thai culture.

### **Research Question**

- What are the common narratives found in foreign teachers' story and interviews?

### **Data Collection**

The researcher asked the 10 participants to write a short story concerning their living and teaching experience in Thailand. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted. All questions posed to ten participants were similar. The interviews were recorded and transcribed as the basis for the analysis in addition to the written narratives.

## **Participants**

### **1. British**

Teacher 1 is a 70 years British teacher living in Thailand for 12 years. He used to be an English teacher in government school in Bangkok for 7 years. He decided to move to Hua – Hin and continued his teaching at private English institution to the present. Teacher no. 1 has no teaching qualification and no teaching experience before coming to Thailand.

### **2. British**

Teacher 2 is a 37 years old British but grew up in Kenya. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology. He taught at a Catholic school for 5 years in Thailand and decided to continue his Master's Degree in ELT at Assumption University. At the time of the interview, he was a full time teacher at Assumption University undergraduate program.

### **3. American**

Teacher 3 is a 30 years old American living in Thailand for 5 years. He came to Thailand to complete his Bachelor's degree studying at Assumption University, majoring in public speaking. He decided to look for an English teaching position to support his study. He applied to different schools and institutions but rejected because he of his dark complexion.

#### **4. Filipino**

Teacher 4 is a 22 years old Filipino teacher living in Thailand for two years. She moved to Thailand after graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Communication Arts, major is in Speech Communication. She graduated at the University of the Philippines Los Banos. She came to Thailand not to work but for a holiday. She said it was her cousin who encouraged her to apply for a teaching position at Assumption University.

#### **5. Iranian**

Teacher 5 is a 23 year- old Iranian teacher. She came to Thailand when she was 18 years old to study for a bachelor's degree. She worked as a part time model and as an English teacher. She taught in an International School for 4 years.

#### **6. Indian**

Teacher 6 is a 50 year- old Indian teacher. He came to Thailand in 2002 to study Master degree at Assumption University. The difficulty of obtaining working permit when he was working in one of the Software Companies in Thailand made him change his career path and become an English teacher. He teaches at Assumption University in Computer Department at present.

#### **7. Burmese**

Teacher 7 is a 27 year-old Burmese teacher. She moved to Thailand to study a Master's degree at Assumption University. She enjoyed teaching that was the reason why she decided to become an English teacher. She teaches at Assumption University.

#### **8. Burmese**

Teacher 8 is a 40 years old Burmese teacher. She came to Thailand to study Bachelor's degree at Assumption University. After graduation, she got the job as a Marketing lecturer in Assumption University.

#### **9. Filipino**

Teacher 9 is a 28 years old Filipino teacher. She moved to Thailand when she was 16 years old and finished her Bachelor's degree at Assumption University. She taught at Wall Street Institution as a private tutor for 2 years. When the institution changed the rule that English should be taught by native speakers, she resigned her position. Now, she teaches English to Thai employees in various companies and owns a private language center.

## 10. Burmese

Teacher 10 is a 40 years old Burmese teacher. He came to Thailand in 1999 to study for a bachelor's degree. And after graduation in 2003, he started to work with E-commerce Company for 8 years. In 2011, he changed his career to work as an E-commerce lecturer Information Technology at Assumption University.

## Analysis and Findings

These are the narratives found in the foreign English teachers' stories and interviews. The majority of the teachers found that Thailand is a very nice country and its people are polite and friendly. Not only that, the majority of the participants easily adapts to Thai ways (culture) and love Thai food. However, there are issues and challenges which are commonly mentioned that might affect the way foreign teachers view Thailand and Thai education as a whole. Some of these issues for example can be in terms of teachers' qualification, teaching materials, etc. These are illustrated through the excerpt taken from the stories and interviews.

### Issues

#### *Racial discrimination and prejudice*

Racial discrimination was found as the common narrative in this study. Based on the story and interviews, the color of a teacher's skin and race are highly sought when applying for a teaching job position in Thailand. This means, a teacher is likely to be employed if his/her skin color is light and or if they are native speakers. Some of the statements from the interviews and their stories are as follows:

**Teacher 1:** *"that it's not about education, it's about the colour of your skin and how you speak. Teaching qualifications or experience is of secondary importance. My papers were not examined and my teaching history was not requested. I was white and I spoke clear English - that was enough."*

Although, this might not be the case for all schools but this statement is supported by Phothongsunan and Suwaranak's (2002) study. They mentioned, "some native English speakers field of studies were not related to ELT or ESL at all, some of them even do not have a degree but they were hired to teach since they were native speakers of the language. Similar experience happened with teacher 2 who is also native speaker.



**Teacher 2:** *"I came to Thailand fairly confident of being able to get a job. Research told me that the key qualifications (if they can be called that) were, firstly, being a native speaker of English, and secondly, being young (I was twenty-eight) and well presented. Even though I had only been in Thailand for a few weeks I already knew how important appearance was, and the obsession with white skin. So I knew that I had 'the look' that was wanted especially for the private language schools the branded themselves with a certain image."*

Most of the school and English Institutions prefer to use teacher with white skin as their presenter to enhance their reputation. Teachers **1** and **2** have not encountered any racial discrimination as they are *native speakers* with 'white' (fair) skin. They were offered the teaching job right after they applied for it. However, teachers **9** and **5** have experienced problems because they have dark skin, and labeled as "black". According to them, they faced prejudice and appearance issues, not only from the school but from the parents that contributed to their problem of getting a teaching job.

**Teacher 9:** *"Sometimes, there are some Wall Street applicants who are non-native speakers and Non-Caucasians who have a higher qualification degree in education and teaching experience however, they didn't get the job. Instead, it was the Caucasians get the job not because they are English or Americans but because of the color of their skin. And that's why I resigned because I knew I didn't have a chance at Wall Street."*

**Teacher 2:** *"places like Wall St operate based on image, and normally will only employ young, good-looking and White native speakers to be teachers. This is the image it wants to attract students."*

**Teacher 5:** *"I had talked to the teachers many times and was going to start soon but they learned that I was black and I lost the job." And "because I have darker skin many parents won't think I am a native speaker when they see me."*

Teacher **5** worked for 6 months but after the first meeting with his director, he was dismissed and replaced by a native speaker teacher with fair skin. Note that teacher **5** is a native speaker (American) but has dark skin. In short, his dismissal might not be attributed to his race or teaching performance but the color of his skin.

In addition, Caucasians dark skinned teachers are not the only teachers faced this kind of issue, Asian teachers have the same problems. Teacher 4 and 9 who are Filipinos encountered the same issue in a workplace. Unlike native speaker teachers, they face remuneration issue compared with their Caucasian counterpart when it comes to wages. This is supported by Phothongsunan and Suwanak's study in 2008. These teachers stress the differences of being a native speaker and a Filipino.

**Teacher 4:** *"... there is a racial hierarchy in terms of compensation and benefits. Native speakers and Westerners get the best deals as if merely coming from a specific race or country guarantees that they would be better teachers than the so called non-native speakers of the English language. They get higher salaries as compared to non-native speakers who have the same level of education and even get free housing".*

**Teacher 2:** *They also employed Filipino English teacher as cover or substitute teachers who took your classes if you were sick, although I know that they were paid little more than half of what the native speaker teachers got.*

Teacher 3 added, Asian teachers do not only face discrimination from the institution but also from Thai students. "Another obstacle to overcome is the general mentality of Thai students to foreign teachers." This statement is supported by teacher 4, 7 and 8 who encountered the same issue. They narrated that most of the time students did not pay attention and showed little respect to non-native teachers. Additionally, some students even challenged the teachers by questioning their teaching qualification. According to teacher 7 and 10 who are both Burmese, "Some smart students even challenged me by asking all kinds of questions to see if I am really good or not ... not only the racial problem but also the historical national stigma... Burmese in the old days were bad, and Thai and Burmese could not get along much because of the history. One of the Burmese teachers recalled the differences between his times as a student in Thai schools to the present. He narrated, "When I was a student all of my classmates are nice. They are funny, friendly and helpful. But when I became a teacher, they seem irrational and childish especially during the class." However, another Burmese teacher did not find the issue as discriminating. He put it in a way that students are just a curious learner. Perhaps, it is a positive way of looking students' side.

**Teacher 10:** *“Students are bit curious they want to know where I am from but sometimes for me it’s a bit hard for me to say that I am from Myanmar because Myanmar is not as good as Thailand and I don’t want to feel any discrimination. I think most of Thai students, they are not discriminating - I believe – they like to know. Still, for me, it’s hard for me to say that I am from Myanmar so some students from other countries they don’t like much if I say I am from Myanmar. Their attitude has happened to change a bit regarding they do the class work and all but Thai students are ok. Just some other students from the west, they don’t appreciate much.”*

In general, teachers are being respected especially in the context of Thailand but perhaps Burmese teachers found that, respect is in the surface only. As they stated, students questioned their ability by challenging their knowledge by posing different questions and so on. This might be because of Thais’ perception towards Burmese people in general and the history of the country. This idea perhaps influence the way students perceive them. Teachers from other Asian countries like the Philippine and India, however, although it is not often that they encountered challenges in terms of their teaching ability, they are considered as the second option because of the color of their skin and wages.

### *High expectations toward Thai students*

Perhaps, because some teachers come from the countries where English is their first or second language, their expectation about Thai learners tends to be based on their own experience. However, when these teachers face the real situation of Thai students they feel disappointed. According to teacher 4 she had gone through difficult time teaching students with such low levels as her expectations were quite high.

**Teacher 4:** *“I got frustrated because I’m not used to their level so my freedom to teach in the manner that I really want to, got curtailed in a way. I was used to an education system that was so intense and so severe that I felt like all I do here is spoon-feeding.”*

**Teacher 7:** *“... they had not grown up. They were still very young and unmotivated, expecting to be carried along by the teacher (especially the boys) with only minimal effort on their own part.”*

**Teacher 8:** *"I sometimes found the student who can write the paper but cannot communicate. They are good in writing not speaking"*

**Teacher 10:** *"In my first semester I had some difficulties in controlling the class. I was nervous for the whole semester and I did not perform well. Some students did not like me much. One of my computer lab classes had 55 first year students. More than half of them did not understand English well and did not pay attention. Because of being an Asian I think and being the first time, some westerners did not pay a respect much. I felt very stressful".*

Some teachers might find Thai students as 'irrational and childish' but the majority of the Thai students according to other teachers are 'humble and hard working'.

Talking about the school's point of view toward non-native teachers, it was found, that four non-native teachers in this research got teaching job positions without any problem. Others have good a good opinion towards some institutions. Like teacher 8 who was recruited by the university despite her nervousness and education background. She said, "I still worried about my education related masters or teaching qualification but since the director like me and they not worry about my degree at all so I didn't apply for teaching job but they recruited me in". This can be a good indicator but it can have a negative connotation in that this might implied that teaching position can have a 'who you know basis' as well, but others may be contribute it on their lack and qualification on getting a teaching position.

### ***Teaching materials***

Teaching materials are another issue although teaching materials help teachers organize and lighten their work load, however, if teaching materials could not support the needs of the student it would not deliver good result to students thus causing frustration to teachers. Participants said that most of their students are learning by rote learning and students did not care about the knowledge they retain. They learnt just to pass exams. For teachers who know how to judge good or bad teaching materials this can be a big issue. In teachers' narrative there are teachers who were disappointed with teaching materials they used.

**Teacher 2:** *"...I was disappointed at the standards maintained by the department I was employed... The books we have to teach are what they are, basically practice for the exams. The students only care about*

*passing the course rather than actually learning anything (with some exceptions). They are all told that English is really important for their future ... they want to 'improve their English skills' which may be true but only in a very abstract way. The course design does not help with motivation by teaching English as a content subject that can be memorized."*

**Teacher 2:** *"I mean everyone has sat there but it was all kind of learning by rote learning - memorizing information. There's no really any thinking involved or opinions given or anything like that. Yes."*

**Teacher4:** *"in some cases there are bible story references and that kind of stuff, they are not gonna get that because it's not their religion and from what I see is that some thai students are not globally aware of what's happening so it's also hard to throw away some examples that are from global scene."*

**Teacher 5:** *"as their conversation classes and then they have Thai teachers who teach them grammar or whatever theories like writing English so I think it confuses them a lot pretty much and sometimes I saw that teacher taught them in Thai."*

### ***Teaching workload***

Many of teachers are complaining how to control their students not because of their behavior but because of the number of students in one session. Also, teachers' and students workloads are another issue this includes teaching in different subjects and big classrooms to add to the overtime and students assignment.

**Teacher 3:** *"Workloads teaching in Thai schools. The teachers really have big workloads. The students have really big workloads, especially if you're a good teacher then you're supposed to carry the weight of the other teachers that aren't so good, you know the ones who aren't so efficient. "I'm not so good at math – but I have to check their math homework to make sure their English is correct in their math homework ... I have to check the other teacher's work, I have to proof read speeches and assignments, curriculum kind of things and stuff like that for the administration such as principals or directors. Often times I have to write their speech for them and then change whatever they*

*want or add content to it. I do exams for teachers who are on vacation or whatever and when I add content, they want a lot of content.”*

**Teacher 7:** *“... I have 60 students in the class, I have to really control the class really well - some students are really naughty. But now I learn that I have to, instead of punishing them, I should just do positively enforcement just to encourage them but mostly it’s challenging when we happen to see some naughty students. Some students they just go in and go out or use phone in the class but anyway it’s kind of challenging that we kind of have to encourage them positively.”*

## Challenges

Foreign teachers encountered other external issues while living and working in Thailand.

### *Immigration Visa*

The majority of foreigners coming to are required to obtain a visa in order to enter Thailand. Foreign nationals who intend to remain in Thailand to work or conduct business must comply with visa requirements in addition to obtaining a work permit. Other foreign teachers found these regulations a challenge especially for those who plan to make Thailand as their permanent home.

**Teacher 1:** *“Immigration laws and rules are changing all the time. And I don’t feel that even though I have family here, my Thai wife and children, I have a Thai car, I have a Thai home, but I still can’t feel secure here because I feel that should immigration at any stage introduce new laws which are outside my ability to control.”*

**Teacher 2:** *“A biggest headache from the issues with Visa and all that kind of stuff but it’s kind of the same in any country. Although it’s kind of annoying in Thailand that you have to constantly keep renewing things. You can’t just be given visa and have it, you have to keep renewing it again and again. And if you change your job, you have to get a new Visa. If you lose your job, you have to leave the country within 24 hours. I know that kind of stuff so you kept kind of vulnerable in that sense. So, anytime you could find yourself not in a country to leave the country even though this is your home for a long time. That’s the main challenge.”*

**Teacher 6:** *“ We have to go for visa runs. That creates a little bit of fear among many foreigners. But many teachers who are already married from different countries who are here, so after working for many years they have to return back to their home countries. They don’t want to invest because the thing is that if they invest here, what will they do when they have to leave the country? ... there is also a criterion but that criteria is very difficult to... either you have to have a job with a salary more ... your salary is not 50,000 baht a month, you cannot apply for residence. ... This is a main concern for foreigners who come here. They work for a few years and then they go back... “we cannot get a loan so I have to take money from my country”.*

The teachers found these immigration issues challenging. According to them, many hours were wasted in visa runs, quarterly reporting and visa renewals. Participants in this research claimed that Thai immigration system made their life harder and feel unsecured. They stated that the immigration system was changing all the time, they were confused especially with residency rules. Most of the teachers in this sample wanted to stay in Thailand for the rest of their life but the uncertainty of the system made them insecure with regards to Thailand immigration system. They feel Thailand immigration system does not have equal standards when it comes to immigrants especially if a person could not comply with the salary the immigration required. Based on teacher 6, in order to get residency in Thailand a person should have at least 50,000 Baht/month wage. This figure can be difficult to achieve especially for the teachers whose salary is not based on their qualifications but based on their appearance.

### *Language barrier*

Foreign teachers’ face a language barrier as using the local language is very important especially as foreign teachers mainly teach Thai students. Foreign teachers need to learn local language as it serves as a bridge between them and their Thai students. In addition, knowing the local language serves as a vehicle to know the country you live in and its people. Therefore language is very important to create good social relations not only between students and teachers but also among Thai people in general.

**Teacher 7:** *“Because i cannot speak Thai really well so when I go out I have to use mostly English and they don’t understand and at school, most of the teachers are in just one group, talking Thai all the time.*

*it's like they don't speak English that often so communication is a challenge."*

**Teacher 9:** *"... it's the language - the communication because even though I have been living here in Thailand for 12 years, I'm still not fluent in speaking Thai so I have a lot of difficulties communicating with them. So what I usually do is I try to use body language or different ways of communicating with them and even try speak as much Thai as I could to be understood even though it is wrong. You know it's just hard because there is intonation in Thai alphabets in Thai Language but for in Tagalog there's none. So sometimes, they misunderstand what I need or what I want, what I ask for. "*

## Conclusion

The narratives recounted by the foreign English teachers illustrate a picture on how some of these English language teachers situate themselves in Thailand's educational system. As the majority of the foreign teachers interviewed in this study worked in the private schools, this study cannot be perceived as a representation of schools of the whole country especially government schools.

The majority of the participants narrated that working as an English teacher is not the reason why they are here in Thailand. There are different situations that direct them on this being an English teacher. However, even though teaching English might not be the initial reason why these foreign teachers end up teaching, their love of teaching explains why they do what they do.

Hopefully this study can highlight some of the issues: cultural adaptation, the red-tape involving immigration, the language barriers, school problems such as materials to be used and the long hours of work. To add to this is the racial discrimination and prejudices that occurs in some Thai schools and institutions.

As the story told, the majority of the foreign teachers love Thailand. They regard this country as their new home and adapted try to adapt to Thai culture and way of life.

The issues and challenges narrated in their story and interviews are part of their existence the present reality. It is hoped that slowly these educational institution might learn to see that being an English teacher is



should not be based on the color of one's skin or the country they come from but their knowledge, commitment to education.

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