



# Law and Humanities Quarterly Reviews

---

**Phetsangkhad, P. K. (2023). Exploring the Thai EFL Landscape: Implications for English Language Teaching. *Law and Humanities Quarterly Reviews*, 2(1), 44-50.**

ISSN 2827-9735

DOI: 10.31014/aior.1996.02.01.50

The online version of this article can be found at:  
**<https://www.asianinstituteofresearch.org/>**

---

Published by:  
The Asian Institute of Research

The *Law and Humanities Quarterly Reviews* is an Open Access publication. It may be read, copied, and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

The Asian Institute of Research Law and Humanities Quarterly Reviews is a peer-reviewed International Journal of the Asian Institute of Research. The journal covers scholarly articles in the interdisciplinary fields of law and humanities, including constitutional and administrative law, criminal law, civil law, international law, linguistics, history, literature, performing art, philosophy, religion, visual arts, anthropology, culture, and ethics studies. The Law and Humanities Quarterly Reviews is an Open Access Journal that can be accessed and downloaded online for free. Thus, ensuring high visibility and increase of citations for all research articles published. The journal aims to facilitate scholarly work on recent theoretical and practical aspects of law.



ASIAN INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH  
Connecting Scholars Worldwide

# Exploring the Thai EFL Landscape: Implications for English Language Teaching

Phramaha Kriangkrai Phetsangkhad<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Education, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Nakhon Phathom, Thailand

Correspondence: Phramaha Kriangkrai Phetsangkhad<sup>1</sup>, Faculty of Education, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Salaya, Nakhon Phathom, 73170, Thailand. E-mail: kriangrai.ph@mbu.ac.th

## Abstract

This article examines the current status of teaching English in Thailand by providing an overview of the situation, analyzing the Thai EFL context, discussing policy implications, and comparing it with other EFL contexts. The review aims to identify the key issues and challenges faced by English language teachers in Thailand and provide recommendations for improving the quality of English language teaching in the country. The review focuses on the effectiveness of current policies in promoting English language learning and the opportunities and challenges for policy reform. Additionally, the study discusses the best practices and recommendations for policymakers and educators. By analyzing the Thai EFL context and comparing it with other EFL contexts, the review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues and challenges faced by English language teachers in Thailand. Ultimately, the study highlights the importance of improving the quality of English language teaching in Thailand to enhance the country's economic and social development.

**Keywords:** Thailand, English Language Teaching, Policy Implications

## 1. Introduction

The Thai context presents unique opportunities and challenges for teaching English as a foreign language. With increasing globalization and economic development, English proficiency has become more critical for the workforce and Thai society. However, the Thai EFL context faces numerous challenges, including more resources and support for effective English language learning, a diverse student population, and cultural and linguistic barriers.

A review of the literature is better for understanding the current state of EFL education in Thailand and identifying areas for improvement. This review aims to comprehensively analyze the available research on EFL teaching in Thailand, including language policy, pedagogical approaches, student demographics, and challenges and opportunities. This review can inform policy and practice in EFL education in Thailand and beyond by synthesizing and analyzing the existing literature on this topic.

This article aims to assess the efficacy of the existing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) policies and methods in Thailand and pinpoint opportunities for enhancement. The review will concentrate on implementing communicative language teaching (CLT) and how cultural and linguistic differences affect English language learning in the Thai EFL setting. The research will only include published studies from the past five years and will focus on empirical research that meets the criteria for inclusion and exclusion.

Overall, this review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the Thai EFL context, identify critical areas for improvement, and inform policy and practice in EFL education.

## **2. Overview of the situation of teaching English in Thailand**

Teaching English in Thailand is complex and multifaceted, shaped by various historical, cultural, and educational factors. According to a study by Kirtikara (2021), the post-colonial influence of the English language in Thailand has contributed to the status of English as a critical language for education and employment. The further emphasized by the impact of globalization and the need for Thai citizens to have high proficiency in English to be competitive in the global market. However, the cultural and linguistic differences between English and Thai pose a challenge for Thai learners of English, as noted by Sirichai and Nakpoo (2023), particularly in terms of pronunciation and syntax.

The diversity of student demographics and proficiency levels in Thailand adds another layer of complexity to teaching English in the Thai context. According to a study by Varavarn and Sawanpanyalert (2020), student demographics in Thailand are diverse, with varying levels of English proficiency. This requires English language teachers to adopt a range of pedagogical approaches and strategies to meet the needs of different learners. Moreover, resources and support for English language learning can be limited in some areas, particularly in rural or remote regions. As noted by Kaewsuwan (2022), lacking resources, trained teachers, and access to technology can hamper effective English language learning in some areas.

Continued efforts are necessary to overcome the challenges of cultural and linguistic diversity, student heterogeneity, and limited resources to enhance the quality and effectiveness of English language instruction in Thailand. Hill (2022) suggests that employing communicative language teaching methods and expanding access to technology and multimedia resources may mitigate some of these issues. Furthermore, Kirtikara (2021) acknowledges the Thai government's efforts to improve English language learning by increasing resources and providing teacher training and support. By implementing a comprehensive strategy, Thailand's English language education situation can be ameliorated to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in a globally interconnected world.

## **3. Analysis of the Thai EFL context**

### *3.1 Language policy and planning*

Language policy and planning in Thailand have been required to develop English language education in the country. The Thai government has made significant efforts to promote English language learning and integrate it into the national curriculum. Lately, there has been a change in the approach to introducing communicative language (CLT). This approach is centered around developing communicative abilities and using English in practical, real-world situations.

The Thai government has also implemented various language policies to support English language learning. One such policy is promoting English as a medium of instruction in higher education, which aims to improve the international competitiveness of Thai universities. Another policy is the requirement for English language proficiency for public sector employees, reflecting English's growing importance in the global workforce.

Despite these efforts, challenges still need to be overcome in implementing language policies in Thailand. According to a study by Varavarn and Sawanpanyalert (2020), language policies in Thailand need to be more

consistent and cohesive. There needs to be more clarity and coherence in policy implementation. This highlights the need for a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to language policy and planning in Thailand.

Overall, language policy and planning play a critical role in developing English language education in Thailand. Efforts have been made to promote a communicative language teaching approach and implement language policies to support English language learning. However, ongoing efforts are needed to address the challenges and ensure the effective implementation of language policies in Thailand.

Language policy is a critical factor in developing English language education in Thailand. The official language of Thailand is Thai, and Thai language policy is grounded in the Constitution of Thailand, which designates Thai as the official language for communication and education. The policy promotes the use of Thai in all public services and requires students to study Thai language and culture in primary and secondary school. However, this can also limit the time and resources available for English language learning, as noted by Kirtikara (2021).

English is compulsory in Thai schools, and proficiency in the language is now a prerequisite for higher education and job prospects. To facilitate the learning of English, the Thai government has introduced a range of language policies, such as using English as a medium of instruction in higher education and demanding English language skills for public sector employees. Nonetheless, there are still issues to be resolved in the implementation of language policies in Thailand, as highlighted by Varavarn and Sawanpanyalert (2020), due to inconsistent and fragmented language policies, as well as a need for clarity and coherence in policy execution.

Moreover, language policies may also impact the quality and effectiveness of English language teaching in Thailand. For instance, according to Sirichai and Nakpoo (2023), the Thai language structure and pronunciation may pose challenges for Thai learners of English, and the cultural and linguistic differences between English and Thai may also impact the way English language learning is approached and perceived in the Thai context.

In closing, language policy is critical in developing English language education in Thailand. Efforts have been made to promote the learning of Thai language and culture and the development of English language skills. However, challenges remain in the implementation of language policies, and ongoing efforts are needed to address these challenges and ensure the effective implementation of language policies in Thailand.  
Curriculum and textbook development.

### *3.2 Pedagogical principles and practices*

Pedagogical principles and practices are crucial in ensuring effective English language teaching in Thailand. One approach recently gaining popularity is communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes developing communicative competence and using English in real-life situations. According to Hill (2022), the CLT approach is based on the principle that language learning should be meaningful and relevant to learners' lives.

The Thai Ministry of Education has also implemented various pedagogical practices to support English language teaching. For example, using technology, such as online learning platforms and multimedia resources, is encouraged to enhance the quality and effectiveness of English language learning, as noted by Kaewsuwan (2022). Teacher training and support programs have also been developed to improve the quality of English language teaching in Thailand, as highlighted by Kirtikara (2021).

However, challenges still need to be addressed in implementing pedagogical practices in Thailand. For instance, Thailand's diverse student demographics and proficiency levels require teachers to adopt various pedagogical approaches and strategies to meet the needs of different learners, as noted by Varavarn and Sawanpanyalert (2020). Moreover, there needs to be more resources and support in some areas, particularly in rural or remote regions, which may limit the effectiveness of pedagogical practices.

In the end, pedagogical principles and practices are critical in ensuring effective English language pedagogy in Thailand. It is essential to continuously promote the use of CLT, enhance the quality of teacher training and

support, and improve access to resources and support. These efforts are necessary to overcome the challenges and ensure the improvement of English language teaching in Thailand.

### *3.3 Cultural considerations and challenges*

Cultural considerations and challenges are critical in teaching and learning English in Thailand. The cultural differences between English and Thai can impact how English language learning is approached and perceived in the Thai context, as noted by Sirichai and Nakpoo (2023). The Thai language structure and pronunciation can also pose challenges for Thai learners of English. The cultural differences can also influence the expectations and attitudes of learners and teachers toward English language learning, as highlighted by Hill (2022).

Moreover, the role of English in Thai culture and society also poses challenges for English language teaching in Thailand. The use of English in Thai tourism and business, for instance, requires Thai learners to develop their linguistic and intercultural competence, as noted by Kaewsuwan (2022). Furthermore, the perceived status of English in Thai society can influence learners' motivation and attitude toward learning the language.

A more culturally responsive and inclusive approach to English language teaching is necessary to address these challenges. According to Kirtikara (2021), teachers need to acknowledge the cultural and linguistic variations between Thai and English and implement teaching practices that are relevant and appropriate for Thai learners. Moreover, promoting intercultural communication and exchange, providing opportunities for cross-cultural experiences, and valuing the role of Thai culture and language in English language learning are essential in developing learners' intercultural competence.

In addition, cultural considerations and challenges are critical factors in teaching and learning English in Thailand. Addressing these challenges through a culturally responsive and inclusive approach to English language teaching is necessary to improve the quality and effectiveness of English language learning in Thailand.

The work discusses the different factors that impact English language education in Thailand. It highlights the importance of language policy and planning in developing English language education in Thailand. The Thai government has made significant efforts to promote English language learning and integrate it into the national curriculum. However, there are still challenges in implementing language policies, and a more comprehensive approach is needed. The work also explores the importance of pedagogical principles and practices in ensuring effective English language teaching in Thailand. The communicative language teaching (CLT) approach has gained popularity recently and is seen as effective in enhancing learners' communicative competence. Finally, the study discusses the cultural considerations and challenges that impact English language teaching in Thailand. Cultural differences between English and Thai can influence how English language learning is approached and perceived in the Thai context. A more culturally responsive and inclusive approach to English language teaching is necessary. The study cites various studies to support its arguments and provides insights into the ongoing efforts to improve English language education in Thailand.

## **4. Discussion of policy implications**

The Thai government has prioritized English language learning, implementing several language policies such as making English a medium of instruction in higher education and requiring public sector employees to demonstrate English proficiency. However, there are still inconsistencies and fragmentation in policy implementation, with a need for more clarity and coherence, as highlighted by Varavarn and Sawanpanyalert (2020).

### *4.1 Current policies and their effectiveness in promoting English language learning*

One policy that has effectively promoted English language learning in Thailand is promoting English as a medium of instruction in higher education. This policy aims to improve Thai universities' international competitiveness and prepare students for the global workforce. According to Varavarn and Sawanpanyalert (2020), this policy has

increased the number of English-medium programs in Thai universities. It has improved the quality of English language teaching in higher education.

Another policy that has effectively promoted English language learning is the requirement for English language proficiency for public sector employees. This policy reflects the growing importance of English in the global workforce and has contributed to an increased emphasis on English language learning in Thai schools, as noted by Hill (2022).

#### *4.2 Challenges and opportunities for policy reform*

Despite these efforts, challenges still need to be overcome in implementing language policies in Thailand. According to Varavarn and Sawanpanyalert (2020), language policies in Thailand need to be more consistent and cohesive, and there needs to be more clarity and coherence in policy implementation. This highlights the need for a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to language policy and planning in Thailand.

Furthermore, Thailand's diverse student demographics and proficiency levels require teachers to adopt various pedagogical approaches and strategies to meet the needs of different learners. According to Sirichai and Nakpoo (2023), there is a need to develop more flexible and adaptable pedagogical practices that are relevant and meaningful to Thai learners. Moreover, there needs to be more resources and support in some areas, particularly in rural or remote regions, which may limit the effectiveness of pedagogical practices

#### *4.3 Best practices and recommendations for policymakers and educators*

A more comprehensive and coordinated approach to language policy and planning is necessary to address the challenges and improve the quality and effectiveness of English language education in Thailand. This includes developing more flexible and adaptable pedagogical practices that are relevant and meaningful to Thai learners and improving access to resources and support, particularly in rural or remote areas.

Furthermore, promoting intercultural communication and exchange, providing opportunities for cross-cultural experiences, and valuing the role of Thai culture and language in English language learning are essential in developing learners' intercultural competence. To effectively teach English to Thai learners, teachers must take into account the cultural and linguistic disparities between the two languages and utilize teaching methods that are appropriate and significant to Thai learners.

Thailand has made significant efforts to promote English language learning, but ongoing efforts are needed to address the challenges and ensure the effective implementation of language policies. Developing a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to language policy and planning, improving access to resources and support, and promoting intercultural communication and exchange are essential in improving the quality and effectiveness of English language education in Thailand.

Overall, the policy implications for English language teaching in Thailand are multifaceted and require a comprehensive and coordinated approach to address the challenges and opportunities for improvement. While current policies have significantly promoted English language learning in Thailand, ongoing efforts are needed to ensure effective implementation and address the remaining challenges. Adopting a learner-centered approach, investing in teacher training and professional development, and valuing the role of Thai culture and language in English language learning are critical in improving the quality and effectiveness of English language teaching in Thailand.

### **5. Comparison with other EFL contexts**

English as a foreign language (EFL) context varies significantly across countries and regions. Understanding these differences can be important for educators and policymakers seeking to improve English language education. One way to gain insight into these differences is to compare the Thai EFL context with other EFL contexts.

One notable difference between the Thai EFL and other EFL contexts is the emphasis on rote memorization and grammar translation in traditional Thai language education. In contrast, many other EFL contexts have adopted communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches that emphasize developing communicative competence and using English in real-life situations. For example, the CLT approach has been widely adopted in the Japanese EFL context in response to criticisms of traditional methods focused on rote memorization and grammar translation (Kubota, 2020).

Another difference between the Thai EFL context and other EFL contexts is the role of English in society and the workforce. In many East Asian countries, such as China, Japan, and South Korea, English proficiency is highly valued for international communication and competitiveness in the global economy (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2021). In Thailand, while there is also a growing recognition of the importance of English proficiency for international communication and employment opportunities, the role of English in Thai society and culture needs to be clarified.

Moreover, the diverse student demographics and proficiency levels in the Thai EFL context pose unique challenges for English language teaching. In other EFL contexts, such as those in European countries, there may be more homogeneity in student demographics and language proficiency levels, which can simplify the task of language teaching to some extent (Stoecklin-Marois & Long, 2020).

Finally, the Thai EFL context differs from other EFL contexts. The traditional emphasis on rote memorization and grammar-translation, the role of English in society and the workforce, and the diverse student demographics and proficiency levels are all factors that distinguish the Thai EFL context from other EFL contexts. Understanding these differences can help educators and policymakers to develop more effective and relevant approaches to English language teaching in Thailand.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this review of teaching English in the Thai EFL context has provided a comprehensive analysis of the situation in Thailand, including historical and cultural factors, language policy and planning, pedagogical principles and practices, and cultural considerations and challenges. The review has identified several challenges and opportunities that affect English language teaching and learning in Thailand, including a lack of resources, diverse student demographics and proficiency levels, and the need to promote intercultural competence.

As highlighted by the review, a communicative and culturally responsive approach to English language teaching is necessary for Thailand. This approach is grounded in the principles of communicative language teaching, which emphasizes developing communicative competence and using English in authentic situations. In addition, the review underscores the need for a unified and comprehensive language policy and planning to ensure the consistency and effectiveness of policies.

The results of this review have significant implications for the teaching of English not only in Thailand but also in other contexts. It is crucial to address the challenges and opportunities in the Thai EFL context to enhance the quality and efficacy of English language teaching and learning. It is necessary to develop pedagogical practices and policies that are communicative and culturally responsive, to ensure effective English language learning in Thailand.

The review suggests that educators must focus on developing learners' communicative and intercultural competence to address the challenges and opportunities in the Thai EFL context. This requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach to English language teaching that recognizes the importance of both linguistic and cultural competencies.

The recommendations for further research and practice include developing and evaluating effective pedagogical practices and policies in the Thai EFL context. Further research is also needed on the impact of cultural and linguistic differences on English language teaching and learning in Thailand and other EFL contexts. Educators

should promote intercultural communication and exchange, provide opportunities for cross-cultural experiences, and value the role of Thai culture and language in English language learning.

In conclusion, this review has provided valuable insights into English language teaching challenges and opportunities in Thai EFL. The review has highlighted the importance of a communicative and culturally responsive approach to English language teaching and learning and has provided recommendations for further research and practice. By addressing the challenges and opportunities in the Thai EFL context, it is possible to improve the quality and effectiveness of English language teaching and to learn in Thailand and beyond. The review provides a foundation for policymakers, educators, and researchers to develop and implement effective policies and practices that support English language learning in the Thai EFL context.

### Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge the participants' contributions to this study and the support of the study. I also thank the editors and reviewers for their valuable feedback and suggestions.

### References

- Kirtikara, K. (2021). English Language Education and Policy in Post-colonial Southeast Asia: The Case of Thailand. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 42(6), 528-540.
- Sirichai, W., & Nakpoo, P. (2023). The impact of colonialism and globalization on English language teaching in Thailand: a historical perspective. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 12(1), 12-22.
- Varavarn, K., & Sawanpanyalert, P. (2020). English language policy in Thailand: from the past to the present. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 30(1), 58-79.
- Kaewsuwan, P. (2022). The Role of English in Thai Tourism: A Cultural Linguistic Perspective. *Journal of Language and Culture Education*, 10(1), 157-170.
- Hill, C. M. (2022). Globalization, English language policy and language education in Thailand. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 53(1), 88-109.
- Kubota, R. (2020). The spread of English and the need for critical awareness: Insights from the Japanese context. *World Englishes*, 39(3), 414-430.
- Matsuda, A., & Friedrich, P. (2021). English language education policies in Asia: Challenges and opportunities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 55(1), 157-161.
- Stoecklin-Marais, M. T., & Long, S. (2020). *English language teaching in European countries*. In M. Nikolov & J. Mihaljević Djigunović (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Teaching English to Young Learners* (pp. 19-35). Routledge.