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**The Problems of English Language Education at the Upper
Secondary Level in Thailand: The Perceptions of Thai EFL
Teachers and Students in Bangkok**

By

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**A Thesis submitted in partially fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education**

University of Warwick, Centre for Education Studies

October, 2017

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Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CV	Curriculum Vitae
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EIL	English as an International Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
ESL	English as a Second Language
FCE	First Certificate in English
GCSE	The General Certificate of Secondary Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPA	Grade Point Average
GTM	Grammar Translation Method
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
NEA	National Education Act
NEAT	National English Ability Test
NES	Native English Speaking
NNES	Non-Native English Speaking
O-NET	Ordinary National Education Test
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speaker of Other Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Acknowledgments

I would like to offer my sincerest appreciation to those who gave me the possibility to study on the Warwick Institute of Education or Centre of Education Studies at the University of Warwick, and supported me during my four-year doctoral research.

First and Foremost, I would like to give wholehearted thanks to my family, Mr. Vitoon Padermprach, Ms. Perada Ngong Padermprach, Ami, and Eri, and especially my beloved MUM in heaven for having been financially and mentally supporting my study in the United Kingdom (actually all my life), for encouraging me to successfully pursue my doctoral degree, for their unconditional love, belief and understanding, and for being my dearest persons in my life. Everything I do, I do with the hope to make them proud and I will never let them down.

Furthermore, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and respect to my supervisor, Professor David Wray for his useful guidance and kind support, constant input, direction, and motivation throughout my research and thesis. Importantly, I would like to thank him for his patience for his never-ending revision of my thesis drafts in each chapter. I have been extremely lucky to have such a wonderful, kind, and helpful supervisor. Without him, my PhD thesis would never be successful.

I also would like to thank Warwick Institute of Education or Centre of Education Studies at University of Warwick for giving an unbelievable offer for my doctoral degree, leading me to my dream career path as an EFL teacher in Thailand and also thank all examiners for my PhD upgrade, Dr. Michael Hammond, Dr. Maria Kaparou, and my PhD viva examiners, Dr. Justine Mercer and Dr. Philip Hood, programme secretary, officers for kind assistance throughout the academic years.

Importantly, I would like to express my thanks to all interviewees who voluntarily participated in my study, especially those from Satriwithaya School for sharing their teaching and learning experience and generating very useful data. My research would not be fulfilled without them.

Equally necessarily, I would like to share my thanks to all my cousins, Silapaphan family, and Baloo for their mental support, encouragement, and love, urging me to fight for the academic

achievement. Also, special thanks to Ms. Natnari Chaosakun for always being beside me no matter where I am in this world. Her love and concern really fulfil my life especially my hard time during my PhD journey.

As well, I would like to give the special thanks to Ms. Esther Jawings, my PhD classmate, who always gave me helpful guidance and full support throughout my academic year and, importantly, Ms. Keerati Pattanaseri for always listening to me, mentally supporting me, understanding me, loving me, and always being beside me during my hardest time and all my life.

Substantially, I would especially like to thank all my friends from Satriwithaya School, Chulalongkorn University, and Newcastle University for always being beside me, for cheering me up, for listening to me, for being very good listeners of all happiness and grief, and for being my forever best friends I could ever ask for throughout my life, despite being far away from me during my study time.

Crucially, I also would like to specially thank all my visitors during my stay in the UK, my friends, and my colleagues from University of Birmingham, Aston University, Birmingham City University, Warwick University, Manchester University, and Kinnaree Thai Restaurant for sharing once-in-a-lifetime experiences, best memory, and memorable moments with me, for always being beside me, for always cheering me up, for always taking care of me, for sharing tears and joy together, for cooking the best food for me, for the nice trips, and, importantly, for fulfilling my life during the toughest time in the UK. I could not have gone through all struggles without them.

I also would like to thank my previous educational institutions and all my teachers from Satriwithaya School, Chulalongkorn University (especially Assistant Professor Rongrat Dusdeesurapoj for everything), and Newcastle University for giving me the best education and I also would like to thank my colleagues and students from Satriwithaya school and Pinnacle tutorial school where I worked as an EFL teachers for three years, for inspiring and encouraging me to pursue my doctoral degree at University of Warwick

As well, I would like to thank Birmingham city and the Rotunda building where I stayed for 4 years during my study for facilitating me, comforting me, and making me feeling like cozy

home. Without the vibrant and lively city, I might have been more depressed and unhappy during the toughest time of my study.

I also would like to thank grief, disappointment, tears, discouragement, contempt, and failure for strengthening me, motivating me, pushing me and eventually becoming my strong energy, force, and drive to fight for the life achievement.

Last but not least, I would not forget to thank Manchester United football club and all players, especially Ander Herrera, Juan Mata, and David de Gea, for mentally supporting me, entertaining me, making me smile, and being one of my best and happiest parts during my study in the UK.

With Kind Regards,
Napapach Padermprach
University of Warwick

Declaration

This thesis is submitted to University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The work in this thesis was developed and conducted by the author between October 2012 and October 2017. I declare that, apart from work whose authors are explicitly acknowledged, this thesis and the materials contained in this thesis represent original work undertaken solely by the author. I confirm that this thesis has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree, diploma, or other qualifications at other university.

Date:

24th October 2017

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October 2017

1265168

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate the problems of English language education in Thailand by exploring Thai EFL teachers' and students' perceptions at the upper secondary level. Nowadays, English language education is increasingly important in Thailand in a number of domains including professional advancement, expansion of the tourist industry, and high social status. Moreover, English is expected to be an official language among ASEAN countries. Therefore, the Thai government is trying to improve English language proficiency among Thai people. However, the problem is that, on national and international English language examinations, Thai learners have very low scores despite studying English for twelve years in primary and secondary schools. Through the literature review, the importance of exploring teachers and students' perceptions was identified as crucial to an investigation of this phenomenon, together with an attempt to identify problems of English language education at various educational levels both in the global and Thai contexts. Most previous research utilised a top-down approach to explore context-specific problems and policymakers normally design top-down educational policies; however, the current research has expressly applied a bottom-up approach to investigate the problems of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand.

This research took a case study approach, comprising in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. Sixteen Thai EFL teachers had in-depth interviews whereas focus group interviews were used with 10 groups of Thai EFL students. Furthermore, to broaden the data and to gain a more detailed perspective of the issues emerging from the first interview round, second interviews were also conducted with each of the 16 teachers and with 10 individual students, each of whom was randomly selected from each focus group. The data in this study were analysed using thematic analysis. Briefly, the findings suggested that the key problematic issues having influence on many other problems were mostly related to low teacher salaries, the ineffective nature of education curriculum and policy, and the prevalence of the English language examination. However, there were also some mismatches between teachers and students' perceptions toward the problems of English language education in that teachers primarily focused on macro and micro problems whereas micro problems were mainly mentioned by students. Interestingly, apart from the expected problems which were similar to those from literature review, some problems were reported as emergent problems, which are unique in the Thai context.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Given that Thailand is a non-colonised country, Thais are not obliged to use English, since it has always been considered to be the language of outsiders or others (Watkhaolarm, 2005). Furthermore, English is used as a foreign language in Thailand; therefore, some Thais are likely to think that it is not necessary to use English in everyday life to communicate with others. As a result, it seems that English only has a relatively small claim to be a mandatory subject in schools. However, English is regarded as an important international language in Thailand. As Toh (2003) has argued, English is advantageous for those who know it and can use it efficiently to communicate with the rest of the world. It is used in a wide range of domains as a skill for professional advancement, especially in urban areas, and plays a vitally important part in the tourism industry. What is more, there are also a few English language TV networks that show TV programmes from different parts of the world, English language newspapers such as the *Bangkok Post*, English language radio stations such as Met 107 and a large number of English language films with Thai subtitles shown in the cinema (Wongsothorn *et al.*, 1996). Consequently, despite the fact that English is not an official language, a considerable number of Thais are aware of its importance.

Regarding the expansion of the tourism industry in particular, the English language is used as a medium through which to communicate with tourists from all over the world. Wirayachitra (2002) has pointed out that the tourism industry is the main source of income in Thailand. As a result, it is beneficial for Thai people to know some basic English so that foreign tourists do not struggle with language communication, and it is also a way to express a warm welcome to them.

Furthermore, knowledge of the English language can help Thai people to achieve a higher social status. Indeed, Thai students are inclined to pursue their higher education abroad rather than in Thailand with the hope of improving their English skills. According to Li and Bray (2007), pursuing higher education abroad is one of the most effective means of promoting one's social class, especially for the middle classes, in terms of financial status, social honours and power. Although financial status and power do not always elevate a person to a higher class, a

person with financial status and power is certainly well regarded and respected as having a socially high status. According to Tarry (2008), more Thai parents encourage their children to attend international schools in Thailand or a British, American or Australia University in order to study English at an early age, due to the fact that they believe their children will enhance their personal and familial, social and cultural capital.

It is also important to note that the English language plays an important role in accessing professions and careers in Thailand. People whose competence in English is outstanding will generally encounter more opportunities in their professions and careers than those who are less proficient in English.

Importantly, Wongsothorn (2000) notes that English has been a part of the school curriculum since 1921, and was considered an academic subject for the classroom. Furthermore, English, in 1996, was identified as a compulsory subject in all primary schools due to the new trend in Asia that English must be taught from a younger age. Moreover, in the 1999 Education Act and the subsequent National Education implemented in 2002, it was stated that English was at the forefront of ‘national intellectual development’ (Wongsothorn *et al.*, 2003, p.445). In addition, as stated by the National Identity Board (2000), the Thai government has continuously encouraged the development of English medium international programmes in higher education, with the hope that Thai students will be able to use English naturally.

1.2 History of English Language in Thailand

It is believed that Thailand’s position, as one of the countries with rich agriculture production, as well as fertile natural resources, drew the attention of the European empires to make contact with the Thai King, with the hidden hope of seizing and colonising the country (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2005).

In the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851), the English language was initially promoted in Thailand by Christian missionaries, who were allowed to teach Western science and technology, as well as to preach. Although US missionaries were not successful in converting the Thai people from Buddhism to Christianity (Methitham & Chamcharatsri, 2011), they left a Western knowledge of education and modern technology, reminding King Rama III of the importance of modernisation. As a result, the King realised that learning English was essential

for higher court officials (Methitham, 2009) and administrators (Foley, 2005). Furthermore, the Burney Treaty, considered as the first Anglo-Siamese trade treaty, was signed in 1825 due to Western colonisation.

During the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1868), the English language was gradually fostered in Thailand due to King Mongkut's broad perspective; he sent his children to study at Raffles School in Singapore (Kongpetch, 2004), and sent scholars to study in Europe. Furthermore, King Rama IV himself started to learn English in order to cope with the threat of Western colonisation. Darasawang (2007) further observes that he was considered to be the first Thai king who could use English so effectively that no interpreter was hired to help. Not only did aristocrats have an opportunity to study English but a few commoners studied English. Darasawang (2007) claims that during that time, the first English textbooks and dictionaries were published in Thailand. Kepler (1996, pp.3-4) mentions that this period was 'an exciting time during which Siamese aristocrats travelled to Europe, met the members of European royal families as equals, studied in the universities, and brought back things that appealed to them'. Furthermore, Masavisut, Sukwiwat and Wongmongtha (1986) noted that English politicians who came to visit Thailand during this period found it incredible to learn that Siamese people could speak English fluently.

In the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910), English was considered the most prestigious foreign language, since there were considerable numbers of foreigners coming to Thailand, leading to the greater need for English (Darasawang, 2007). It is believed that the modernisation and development of the country induced the King to encourage Thais to study a foreign language and to be educated abroad (Cheewakaroon, 2011). According to Savage (1997, p.314), the King wished for the Thai people to become familiar with English in the hope that they could 'interact with the wider world community... [and] to take advantage of what the present-day world has to offer'. It may be clearly seen that Thais focused mainly on the importance of English. For example, Darasawang (2007, p.187) states that in a ruling issue, 'those who had completed English School's Standard Two could be exempted from military services'. In addition, the Bowring Treaty was voluntarily signed in 1885 in order to avoid British colonial rule and to remain a non-colonised country (Rujikietgumjorn, 2000). This contributed to the introduction of some Western ways into Thailand. Consequently, a more formal education system was adopted. Moreover, the Ministry of Education was established, and more schools were founded for commoners. Darasawang (2007) also shows that in 1891, standard English

was included in the curriculum, as well as in examinations, focusing on writing, reading and translation into and from English.

In the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925), the country's first university was founded, since the King wished to promote 'Western-style' education in Thailand. English language was a required subject of study after grade 4, to share modern knowledge with the Thai people (Foley, 2005). During this period, English was perceived as the highest priority for the allocation of subjects in the timetable; students had to spend seven and a half hours per week learning English, whereas only five hours were dedicated to Thai and arithmetic classes. The King also promoted the importance of English by awarding scholarships for successful learners to study abroad, and they were regarded as high ranking officials in organisations (Darasawang, 2007).

During World War II (1941-1945), the use of English was banned due to the Japanese occupation of Thailand. However, after the war ended, the English language came to play a vitally important role, especially for international communication (Darasawang, 2007). In the 1950s, a number of aids to English language teaching were implemented in the classroom. Moreover, English came to be taught more widely to Thais of all classes and occupations, not only to the elite (Wyatt, 2004). From 1980 onwards, English has been used widely in Thailand in many areas, such as employment, the tourism industry, internet communication, tertiary education abroad, advertising for global brands and business opportunities with international companies (Foley, 2005). As a result, English language teaching and learning are considered a crucial part of Thai education.

1.3 English Language Education in Thailand

English is not only considered to be a lingua franca in the ASEAN region, but is now becoming an official language (Kirkpatrick, 2010). As a result, Thailand has been continuously attempting to improve learners' English proficiency, since the government is aware that English is regarded as an important tool to increase the country's international presence, as well as competitiveness in the world (Bupphanhasamai, 2012). Kirkpatrick (2010) has found that increasing economic growth, as well as political and internal affairs among countries, causes Thailand to recognise the importance of English proficiency in communication skills. The current Thai education system primarily uses a teacher-centred approach that focuses on lectures and rote memorisation systems. There is no clear evidence that the current system is

thoroughly ineffective; however, a student-centred approach is more strongly emphasised in the education system, as stated in the Thai National Education Act of 1999:

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

(Section 22, National Education Act 1999)

Not only was a change in pedagogical approach from teacher-centred to student-centred stipulated in the National Education Act of 1999, but changes to school management systems and the legal framework of education were also advocated. This law aimed to decentralise authority, engage parental involvement in school decision making, develop a more communicative learning environment for learners and introduce information technology for learning support (Hallinger and Lee, 2011; Iemjinda, 2007; Kantamara, Hallinger & Jatiket, 2006). It is noted that the National Education Act of 1999 mainly emphasises the shift of teaching methods from teacher-centred to student-centred learning. Therefore, the law provides a recommendation for Thai educational institutions to structure the learning process as follows:

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

- (1) provide substance and arrange activities in line with the learners' interests and aptitudes, bearing in mind individual differences;*
- (2) provide training in thinking process, management, how to face various situations and application of knowledge for obviating and solving problems;*
- (3) organise activities for learners to draw from authentic experience; drill in practical work for complete mastery; enable learners to think critically and acquire reading habit and continuous thirst for knowledge;*
- (4) achieve, in all subjects, a balanced integration of subject matter, integrity, values, and desirable attributes;*
- (5) enable instructors to create the ambiance, environment, instructional media and facilities for learners to learn and be all-round persons, able to benefit from research as part of the learning process. In so doing, both learners and teachers may learn together from different types of teaching-learning media and other sources of knowledge;*

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

(Section 24, the National Education Act of 1999)

Despite the helpful advice to implement a student-centred approach in the Thai education system, however, Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) note, with regard to TESOL pedagogy in Thailand, personal, social, and contextual restrictions on Thai teachers bring about the continuation of traditional teaching methods. As identified in Chorrojprasert's (2005) findings, due to a number of limitations in employing new teaching methods, most teachers insisted on applying tradition teaching methods that did not correspond with effective policy implementation; therefore, it was advised that new teaching approaches should be better communicated to Thai teachers of English in order for them to be implemented effectively. Furthermore, Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) also investigate teachers' perceptions and implementation of the learner-centred approach to EFL classes. The findings (2006) show that most teachers were not confident about the underpinning theory; therefore, the degree of implementation of the learner-centred approach depended heavily on how the teachers applied their understanding of the theory in practice. However, McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007), in investigating the reactions of teachers and learners to a learner-centred approach in EFL course, found that the approach was believed to enable learners to be more independent, as well as to meet real world needs. Therefore, this approach could be effectively implemented as well.

Apart from the major concern regarding the shift from the teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach to improve English language proficiency in communication among Thai learners from the National Educational Act of 1999, the Thai government also urged Thai learners to be fluent in English by setting the year 2012 as the 'English-Speaking Year' Regarding ASEAN language policy, English is expected to be an official language among the ASEAN countries in which more employment opportunities across countries are provided; thus, the Thai government is attempting to improve English language proficiency among the Thai people by encouraging them to have the same proficiency level as other ASEAN countries (Bupphanhasamai, 2012).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Conducting research into English language education interests me since, having three years of experience in teaching English at the upper-secondary level at a state school in Bangkok, I have found it challenging to investigate the problems of English language education by teachers and, importantly, learners themselves. Recently, the English language education issue has been problematic, since Thai students study English for twelve years in primary and secondary schools (Noom-ura, 2013). However, the results of a number of English tests of Thai students are considered low. For instance, in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Thailand ranked 116th out of 163 countries. The report showed that the international average score was 80; however, Thailand's average score was 75. Moreover, a 2011 report showed that the Thai average score was still relatively low (76) compared to neighbouring countries such as Vietnam, Burma and Malaysia (Test and Score Data Summary for TOEFL, 2011-2012). Moreover, in the O-NET (Ordinary National Education Test), a national test through which all students demonstrate proficiency in all taught subjects, including English, approximately 350,000 upper-secondary students completed the test in 2009-2012. The English language average scores were 30.68, 23.98, and 19.22 out of 100, respectively. This shows that despite having studied English for a number of years, Thai learners' English language proficiency is regarded as very low. The average scores of O-Net and TOEFL tests will be presented in the following charts:

This chart below illustrates the average scores out of 100 of Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET) of Thai students in three subjects, including Thai, English, and Science in academic year 2009, 2010, 2011:

Subject/ Year	2009	2010	2011
Thai	46.47	42.61	41.88
English	29.08	19.22	21.80
Science	28.56	30.96	27.90

Figure 1.4.1 Average scores of O-Net examination in Thailand

The chart below shows the average score out of 120 of Test Of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) of Thai learners and international learners, taken in year 2010-2011.

Year	Thai learners	International mean
2010	75	80
2011	76	80

Figure 1.4.2 Average scores of TOEFL of Thai learners and international learners

1.5 Significance of the Study

Despite studying English for twelve years, according to the scores of national and international English subject examination, Thai learners had very low scores in English, as noted in section 1.4. Arguably, other studies have investigated the problems in English language education in Thailand; however, most of these utilise a top-down approach to explore context-specific problems, and the use of a bottom-up approach is still ignored in this research area. Owing to the fact that policymakers normally design top-down educational policies, this research expressly applies a bottom-up approach to investigate the problems of English language education in Thailand.

Furthermore, this research mainly focuses on the perceptions of Thai EFL teachers and learners and the comparison of their perceptions, since teachers act as implementers of the policy and education system, and learners are beneficiaries of curriculum design and are directly related to their teachers and classroom environment, so each group might view the problems of English language education from different perspectives. Previous studies primarily focused on either the teachers' or the learners' perception. However, very few presented both groups' comparative views. Moreover, their mismatch of perception could possibly cause the failure of English language education in Thailand; therefore, the comparison of teachers' and learners' perceptions is worth investigating.

The main contribution of this thesis is that the findings help to identify useful information on the current problems of English language education in Thailand by exploring Thai EFL teachers and learners at the upper-secondary level from various state schools in Bangkok. This research aims to contribute to the improved quality of English language education in Thailand.

1.6 Research Purpose and Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the problems of English language education as perceived by Thai EFL teachers and learners from various state schools in Bangkok at upper-secondary level. The results obtained will reveal insights into the problems of English language education in Thailand from teachers' and learners' perceptions from their experience and prior knowledge with the hope that the information is used as a useful guideline for government, policymakers, school principals and teachers to improve the quality of English language education in Thailand. In order to explore problem together with some appropriate solutions or suggestions, this study will attempt to answer the following three research questions:

- 1: What are the problems of English language education in Thailand perceived by Thai EFL teachers at the upper-secondary level in Bangkok?
- 2: What are the problems of English language education in Thailand perceived by Thai EFL learners at the upper-secondary level in Bangkok?
- 3: How do these groups compare in terms of their perceptions of problems of English language education in Thailand?

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis consists of six chapters:

Chapter 1 starts with the status and the importance of English language in Thailand, followed by brief information about the history of the English language in Thailand, as well as English language education in Thailand. A statement of problems in this study is then identified. The significance of the study is further explained, followed by the research aims and research questions.

Chapter 2 charts/delineates the development of current issues by presenting a detailed analysis of the importance of perceptions, discussing the definition, the importance of teachers' and learners' perceptions and the comparison of their perceptions. This section also reviews the previous literature in terms of the perceptions of teachers and learners with regard to English language issues in the global and Thai contexts. Lastly, the problems of English language education in the global and Thai contexts as perceived by teachers and learners at all levels are further summarised and presented in individual sections.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodological approach used in this study, a qualitative study using the guiding principles of interpretivism. This section also describes the ontology, epistemology and methodological assumptions underpinning interpretivism, followed by qualitative phenomenology research method and a case study according to the research design. Subsequently, the data collection process is further explained, including in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. This is followed by a pilot study and a discussion of the validity and reliability of the research methodology. The criteria for participant selection are then presented. This chapter ends with ethical consideration.

Chapter 4 presents the findings for the research questions derived from the interview data. The chapter starts with a summary of the research aims and research questions. Subsequently, thematic analysis is further described as a method for data analysis, followed by the explanation of NVIVO, used as a tool to assist with the analysis in this study, and the stages of thematic analysis. Lastly, the findings of the study are presented after illustrating the data analysis process.

Chapter 5 brings together the findings of this research and discusses their possible meanings and implications. This chapter mainly focuses on the findings from Chapter 4 and the comparisons with those derived from previous literature in Chapter 2. Also, data is used to address the research aims and answer research questions. This section also presents emergent issues from this study.

Chapter 6 begins with a summary of the key research findings, and also outlines the research contribution and the implications of my findings, together with recommendation for future research. This chapter ends with the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction and overview of the chapter

This chapter focuses on a review of the literature and provides a theoretical framework in order to locate the present investigation in the global context of previous research. This chapter will start with the definition of perceptions and the importance of teachers and learners' perceptions as well as their comparative perceptions with regard to English language teaching and learning. Subsequently, each issue of English language teaching and learning will also be reviewed through an exploration of a range of international studies and will also highlight English language teaching and learning problems in Thailand. The issues will be classified into five major themes, including policy concerning English language education; teachers; teaching methods and materials; culture, beliefs, and values; linguistic context. Due to the huge amount of research into aspects of English language education, the following section will outline the procedures adopted to select material to include in the review

2.1.1 Methods of selection of literature

There has been a great deal of research exploring problems of English language education in both the global and the Thai context, and the main aim of this chapter is to explore, critique and attempt to synthesise the research in this area which has focused on these problems as they have been experienced and articulated by EFL teachers and students in a range of countries. A number of studies have been identified from various databases; however, it will be the case that, despite best efforts, an exhaustive search is not always possible and there may be gaps in any search strategy.

Initially, multiple sources including databases such as ERIC, search engines such as Google Scholar, websites and citations were scanned using key search terms, such as 'problems of English language education', 'teachers' perceptions of English language education', and 'student's perception of ELT in Thailand'. Further keywords were examined using information gleaned from the studies found initially. This process was supplemented by hand-searching of a wide range of scholarly journals such as TESOL Quarterly, International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World, and the Asian EFL Journal. Subsequently, potentially relevant studies and journals were carefully assessed based on a range of criteria, including

- studies' research design and data collection: since the main aim of the current research was to inquire into teachers' and students' perceptions, the main focus was on research applying interviews and questionnaire to collect data.
- sample size: the main focus was on studies involving at least 10 participants
- educational level: the main focus was on secondary level.
- whether the primary focus was on the specific problems of English language education as perceived by teachers and students
- a variety of countries: the main focus was on EFL countries where English was used as an international language
- published year: the main focus was on research published from the year 2000 onwards
- type of sources: journals, books, articles in books, and the main focus was high quality journal articles

Therefore, from the criteria mentioned above, some studies were eliminated since they did not meet the inclusion criteria. However, some research which did not meet the criteria has also been included in the review if it was likely to have a great impact on the field of study. For example, some Masters and PhD theses (eg. Cheewakaroon, 2011; Methitham, 2009; Pawapatcharaudom, 2007; Pongsiriwet, 2002) have been included in the literature since they are specific to the Thai context and have had an influence in specific areas: therefore, it seemed important to consider them in this review.

2.1.2 Perceptions, Attitudes, and Beliefs

Due the fact that this research aims to investigate teachers and learners' opinions, ideas or viewpoints, the terms 'perception', 'attitude', and 'belief' are three of the most used terms in educational research to investigate participants' point of view. In this section, the three terms will be briefly defined to differentiate them from one another:

Perception:

Perception is defined as the process whereby humans receive information about the world we see, understand and interpret from prior experience and knowledge (Gibson & Spelke, 1983). Moreover, Edwards (1999) argues that humans do not react to things around them merely based on sensory input; however, they respond according to how they perceive things. Therefore,

according to Edwards (1999), perception is defined as a filter through which sensory data are strained, and this filter is unique to each individual, enabling one person to perceive the world differently from others. Perception can also be defined as a part of the overall process involving humans interpreting their sensory impressions, aiming to give meaning to their environment (Robbins, 2005).

Attitude:

Gardner (1985) views attitudes as an evaluative reaction to a referent object made on the basis of the complex framework of an individual's beliefs. Attitudes have also been defined as the sum total of an individual's feelings, including prejudice, preconceived knowledge, fears, threats, and convictions about particular context (Thurstone, 1928, cited in Gardner, 1980). Similarly, attitude is also defined as a "predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given attitude object," (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005, p.9). Moreover, according to Wenden (1998), attitudes consist of three interrelated components, including cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The cognitive component is related to the beliefs or opinions or viewpoints about the object of the attitude. The affective components involve feeling and emotion, creating likes or dislikes. The behavioural refers to the way an individual tends to adopt particular behaviours vis a vis a phenomenon. Importantly, with regard to the educational perspective, Gardner (1985) views attitudes as a component of motivation in language learning.

Belief:

Some pioneer researchers in studies of belief (Horwitz, 1985; Pajares, 1992; Wenden, 1998) have found it rather difficult to define the term '*belief*' due to the distinction between beliefs and knowledge (Pajares, 1992). Some consider belief and knowledge similar whereas others view differences between them. However, Pajares (1992) defines belief as based on evaluation and judgment, whereas knowledge is based on an objective fact. Belief is also defined as "a set of conceptual representations which signify to its holder a reality or given state of affairs of sufficient validity, truth or trustworthiness to warrant reliance upon it as a guide to personal thought and action," (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000). Equally importantly, with regard to beliefs about language learning, Horwitz (1985) does not use the term *belief about language learning*. Instead, due to the confusion regarding its definition, 'belief' has been replaced by preconceptions, preconceived ideas, preconceived notion in her studies without giving definite descriptions of the construct.

The definitions of perception, attitude, and belief share some similarities to a point. However, this present study has chosen to explore the ‘perceptions’ of participants to investigate the problems of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand since the researcher aims to explore what participants carry away from their experiences. Furthermore, I interpret perception as personal knowledge based on individuals’ evaluation and judgment about these issues. Moreover, I primarily focus on the issues and causes of each problem, but little attention is paid to each individual’s preferences and behaviour related to an attitude.

Overview of the chapter

2.2 Perceptions

2.3 Issues with regard to English language policy

2.4 Issues with regard to teachers

2.5 Issues with regard to teaching methods and materials

2.6 Issues with regard to culture, beliefs and values

2.7 Issues with regard to linguistic differences and language interference

2.8 Summary

2.2 Perceptions

Exploring perceptions is one of the most widely used approaches to investigate issues in English language education. It might be claimed that other practical research approaches could also be applied to investigate problems in educational research, such as classroom observation (Cheewakaroon, 2011) and document analysis (Wong, 2009). However, the statement of the problem in this research is that despite having been studying English in classrooms for a number of years, Thai learners have had very low scores in English subject in both national and international examinations; consequently, it seems that problems exist in English language education in Thailand. The aim of this research is therefore to investigate the problems in English language education at the upper secondary level in Bangkok. As the researcher, I chose the approach of exploring this issue through the perceptions of Thai teachers and learners, as I believed the problems might to some extent have been exacerbated by the fact that the policymakers had not involved or listened to teachers’ and learners’ perceptions when designing the curriculum. As pointed out by Kennedy et al. (2011), failure of implementation is not only because of technical problems but because of the issue of different values and understanding, of meanings, as well as interpretation. Therefore, it was thought useful to

consider the perceptions of teachers and learners, and the ways these might potentially improve the benefits of educational policies.

2.2.1 The nature of perception

The previous section presented some brief definitions of perception from some pioneer researchers in the field. This section will explore the definitions of perception from many researchers, since it is the major focus in this study and a clear understanding is essential.

Some phenomenologists believe that perceptions are the subjects of cognition and the only things which can be accessible in terms of how humans conceptualise the world. Moreover, Démuth (2013) argues that human assumptions are behind perceptions and influence these in a relatively consistent way. Perceptions are regarded as objects that form the “content and diversity of the world” and as “the source of sensual and intellectual cognition” will form the subject of human thoughts (Démuth, 2013, p.13).

The importance of perception has been identified in many studies. According to Adediwura and Bada (2007), perception is regarded as vitally important, as it influences the information that enters working memory. Background knowledge in the form of schemas has an effect on perception and subsequent learning. Thus, perception is linked to long-term memory, and could influence the learning experience (Flores, 2014). Furthermore, perception is regarded as significant in understanding human behaviour, as individuals might perceive the world differently; therefore, exploring perceptions could help to understand phenomena in the social context.

2.2.2 The importance of perceptions of teachers and learners

From the definitions provided, it seems clear that it would be useful to take into consideration teachers’ and learners’ perceptions, as well as their comparative perceptions, in the planning and implementation of educational and curriculum policy, and a deeper understanding of this is the major aim of the current study.

Although the perceptions of teachers and learners are beneficial to use for investigating certain issues in educational research, relatively few studies have explored the comparative perceptions of teachers and learners. This might be due to the difficulty of focusing on both teachers and learners in one research topic, and researchers may have found it too complicated

to control the messiness of the conflict between teachers' and learners' perceptions. Thus, it might be more convenient for them to explore either teachers' or learners' perceptions. Whatever the reasons it appears that research investigating the comparative perceptions of teachers and learners is still generally under-represented. It is said that one source of the failure of education rests upon the fact that educational policies and curriculum were designed based on the theoretical principles by people who had little knowledge about what happened in the actual classroom (Li, 2010); this therefore suggests that policymakers did not include teachers' and learners' perceptions in the curriculum design process, which may have hindered the success of English language education in many countries. A number of previous studies have investigated the perceptions of teachers or learners regarding certain issues in English language education (e.g. Tarry, 2008; Noom-Ura, 2013). Nevertheless, very few studies have explored the similarities and differences in teachers' and learners' perceptions. This study will explore the perceptions of Thai EFL teachers and learners of the English language in the upper secondary level; therefore, it needs to be established that the teachers and learners' perceptions and their comparative perceptions are worth investigating. The purpose of the following section is to explore this claim.

It can be argued that it is crucially important to know and understand how teachers feel about the issues in English language teaching (Kitjaroonchai, 2013) and to understand how teachers make sense of teaching and learning (Hajizadeh and Salahshour, 2014), as teachers' perceptions can give feedback, provide information about what happens in actual classrooms, and provide guidance to policymakers about whether or not the curriculum has been appropriately designed. Teachers' perceptions are tools for gaining a deeper understanding of their values in teaching. Policymakers who design the curriculum might not listen to teachers' perceptions, as it is possible that teachers' perceptions could be biased and that teachers might share negative perceptions instead of pointing out what is appropriate to language teaching and learning. As argued by Vaish et al. (2008), people tend to focus primarily on negative information, rather than positive information; therefore, negative views could predominate when participants are asked for their thoughts about curriculum. Even so, it can be argued that policymakers need to be aware of teachers' perceptions, however, as successful reform depends on the implementation of these teachers (Wanchai, 2012). Furthermore, Li (2010) notes that it might be useful for policymakers if teachers provided data from their actual classroom situations in schools as inputs for policy, on the basis that teachers believed that such data was needed as the basis for policy-making activities in order to ensure that a reform meets the

majority of learners' needs. Many researchers have suggested that teachers' perceptions significantly affect their teaching practices in the classroom, and influence how teachers cope with shortcomings in their teaching situations. Importantly, teaching behaviour might be led by thought; therefore, teachers' perceptions could have an effect on their teaching behaviour and decision making in the classroom (Pederson and Liu, 2003; Srakang and Jansem, 2012).

In addition to teacher's perceptions, it appears that students' perceptions are also worth investigating, not least because understanding learners' perceptions is an asset to quality teaching (Amara, 2015), because the intention clearly is that learners should be learning what teachers are teaching them in the classroom; therefore, their feedback could usefully feed into teachers' adaptations of their teaching practice. It might also be highly useful for policy makers to involve learners' perceptions in the curriculum design process. According to Rudd et al. (2007), learners' perceptions should be taken into consideration, as they might provide appropriate ways of showing learners' concerns, interests and needs to create educational experiences better suited to each learner. Moreover, learners' perceptions may serve to provide feedback on the teaching practices and classroom environment to their teachers. Feedback is significant in the process of learning, as it can check whether or not there is a match between teaching practice and student expectations and whether or not teaching is meeting the needs of the students (Psaltou-Joycey and Sougari, 2010). It is difficult for teachers to guarantee that they provide what their learners need. Moreover, students' feedback is regarded as a key part of the evaluation of teaching and has been used in schools as a way to help achieve school improvement (Florez and Sammons, 2013). As they are the main intended beneficiaries of curriculum design, it might be useful to listen to learners' perceptions. They are clearly influenced by curriculum and teaching practice, and it might be possible that their feedback might prove useful to teachers in developing and fine-tuning their teaching/learning processes. Importantly, learners are likely to have different perceptions from their teachers and other stakeholders (Preedy, 2001).

Nevertheless, researchers should be aware that the learners' perceptions are not always based on facts. It can be argued that people tend to have prejudices with regard to others based on their prior experiences, and it is possible that people make rapid judgments about other people and situations without meticulously processing details of these. Due to the fact that the essence of exploring the concept of perceptions lies in subjective data which is likely to be biased and inaccurate (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2004), the subjective perceptions provided by learners in this

research could potentially be prejudiced and inaccurate. It is possible, however, that learners can share what has actually happened in their classroom practice, and it might be useful for teachers and policymakers to be aware of the problems the English language learners have faced, or have felt that they faced. Therefore, policymakers and teachers could listen to learners' perceptions and, take account of these in syllabus design, for policy makers, in curriculum and educational policy process (Schulz, 1996). Learners' perceptions of their prior learning experiences may provide constructive feedback on the education system and could possibly have an influence on changing the processes and mechanisms and their learning, and thus have a direct impact on their education (Flutter and Ruddock, 2004).

Substantially, this section will present the importance of making a comparison between the perceptions of teachers and learners, as participants in this research are likely to provide both similar and different views, and may prioritise different issues owing to their prior experiences when their perceptions are explored. It seems that teachers and learners might view the problem of English language education from different perspectives. Teachers are policy implementers, so they tend to have a perception of the policies and the education system, whereas learners are the recipients of the curriculum design and they are directly influenced by their teachers and classroom environments so they are likely to have perceptions about teachers and the teaching practices they experience in the classroom. Should problems exist, however, participants may have both similar and different perceptions on certain issues. Policymakers may gain useful insights into those issues, which may help towards an improvement in and increase in effectiveness of English language teaching and learning. In this research, both teachers' and learners' perceptions will be explored, as their insights could potentially help to improve English language education in the upper secondary level in Thailand. Moreover, limited previous research has focused on a comparison of teachers and learners' perceptions of English language education; therefore, this comparative research might be very beneficial, especially for policymakers, to understand the range of views.

As a researcher who is interested in exploring perceptions, qualitative research, was carefully selected as the research approach in this study to answer the research questions. This study will therefore explore the ways participants view the problems of English language education. Considering interpretivist and constructivist epistemology, this research primarily focuses on the essential features of shared meaning and understanding where participants construct their knowledge from their prior experience and knowledge. Due to the fact that the research

explores what individuals think, not what they do, teachers' and learners' perceptions are crucially important, as they are the ones who experience the social reality and construct knowledge. The researcher must be aware, however, that these perceptions are subjective; therefore, this means that their perceptions are not always correct and unbiased. However, it might be said that the subjective reality from participants' perceptions might be quite convincing if the majority of participants repeatedly present similar issues with in-depth details. The bottom-up approach is used in this research to investigate perceptions with the hope that this approach will lead to a better understanding of issues in English language education (Abidin et al., 2012). Teachers' and learners' perceptions of English language education and its problems might be different from policymakers' perceptions, as policymakers are generally involved in top-down design of educational policies (Li, 2010). Thus, this research might be helpful for educators, including policy makers, teachers, and learners to understand the existing problems of English language education in the upper secondary level in Thailand from teachers and learners' perceptions. Further information about the research methodology will be discussed in chapter three.

2.2.3 Previous educational research exploring teachers' and students' perceptions

Teaching and learning English has been studied in many research studies based in many countries: some mention achievement in English language education, others point out some problematic issues. There are a number of studies of the problems of English language education examined by various methods such as classroom observation, and pre-test and post-test, most of which are at the university level; however, the perceptions of teachers and students and their comparative views towards issues of English language education are still under researched, especially in Thailand. Thus, this research will investigate the problems of English language education as perceived by Thai EFL teachers and students at the upper secondary level with the hope that the findings might provide insights into the value of authentic teachers' and learners' voices in English language Education in Thailand.

The following section will review the problems of English language education both in a global and a Thai context as perceived by teachers and students, including the major problems of policy in English language education, teachers, teaching methods and materials, the influence of culture, belief, and value, and linguistic difference and language interference. Due to a considerable number of source studies, each topic will be prioritised by the number of times it was identified in various studies and will be grouped into each major category.

2.3 Issues with regard to English language education policy

With regard to education, a policy maker has an important role in education system since every component in the system is implemented on the basis of their decisions so the policy maker is in the position to influence the direction and scope of education change (Li, 2010). Presently, there are a number of problems in English language education with regard to English language education policy. This section will discuss the issues of English language education policy including class size and English language examination both globally and in the Thai context.

2.3.1 Class size

Various studies have investigated the problems of class size and its effect on students' performance at different levels in many countries (Khanarat & Nomura, 2008; Dhanasobhon, 2006). Some studies detail the factors and methods to cope with an overcrowded class (Benlow et al., 2007). It has been suggested that there is no absolute definition of class size, or the most effective size, due to the various perceptions of people which vary from context to context (Hayes, 1997). In order to judge whether a certain class size is large or too large depends on a variety of factors, including different contexts or cultures, and the purposes of the class being taught, the teacher's teaching experience, the learners' ages, and the size of the classroom (Todd, 2012). Interestingly, the problem of large class size is rather difficult to solve because schools need money to increase the budget of the school and this money is obtained from the enrolment fees paid by learners; therefore, school will rarely wish to decrease the number of students, as noted in Qiang & Ning (2011). Consequently, it might be difficult for some schools to reach the required standards in education (Khanarat & Nomura, 2008) as they suffer from the competing priorities of income generation and provision of teaching quality.

In Thailand, the approximate number of students in a class is 50 in most state schools, causing EFL teachers to face numerous problems in the effective management of classroom practice (Khanarat & Nomura, 2008; Kitjaroonchai, 2013). With regard to large class sizes, there are a number of studies pointing out the issues arising from the problem of class size both in global and Thai contexts. The effect of large class size on teachers could be increased challenges, including classroom management, pupil control, and assessment. Furthermore, as opposed to in a large class, it has been argued that language learning tends to be more effective in a small class size (Locastro, 2001) since teachers then get an opportunity to engage with all students

in the classroom activities, either individually or in groups and learners get more opportunity to practice communicative skills.

Several studies report the difficulties involved in large class sizes, including classroom management problems such as maintaining discipline and lesson planning, practical concerns such as noise disturbance (Dhanasobhon, 2006), instructional ineffectiveness such as limited chances for students to speak individually owing to time constraints, feedback problems such as guiding individual students (Todd, 1999 cited in Todd, 2012), and affective factors such as difficulty in developing good relationships with students (Dhanasobhon, 2006).

Interestingly, it is important to note that there is no absolute agreement whether a small class size is better than a large in terms of the influence on students' performance (Bahanshal, 2013). Hattie (2009) reports the outcomes of meta analyses of the effect of class size and its influence on learning in many different countries and the findings suggested little impact of a small class size on a child's quality of education. Despite the fact that this work does not entirely relate to English language education and encompasses various educational levels, it does represent one of the most thorough attempts to understand the effects of class size on student learning. Consequently, it cannot be argued that having small class size will always mean a more effective classroom for learning. It has been suggested that having highly qualified and high performing teachers might have a greater effect on achievement than creating smaller classes without such highly qualified teachers (Walberg, 2006).

Although many teachers will prefer having smaller classes, research studies have produced contradictory findings on the effects of small class size. Ur (2000), for example, claims that the influence of a large class size could be positive since large classes can provide more opportunities for creativity and co-students' interaction and more opinions than smaller classes. Even so, a large class is claimed to be one of the key problems of English language education for language teachers (Wilhelm and Pei, 2008), with regard to the effectiveness of language learning, teaching practice and the influence on achievement as shown in some studies, indicating the negative influence of large class size on students' performance. Khanarat and Nomura's (2008) study highlights the negative effect of a large class size on teaching practice. This study suggests that paying attention to students' performance should be a vital part of the learning process and notes that students rarely seem to have a chance to practice communicative skills, especially those who sit in the back rows, because they are likely to face

hearing difficulty and thus cause distractions no matter how hard the teacher might try to pay attention to all the students in the class. Lack of communicative practice might hinder the improvement of student's communicative competence (Harmer, 2001). Interestingly, the study of Harfitt (2012) has found out that smaller class can help reduce the language learning anxiety since it facilitated the student's participation in classroom. Additionally, there are many studies that suggest the effect of class size on student performance (Arias and Walker, 2004; Todd, 2012). These studies support the idea that class size negatively affects student performance in English language lessons, and that the correlation between class size and grade is significant: students in large classes normally get low grades. Arguably, as Todd (2006a) claims, it may be that grades reflect learning less than they do performance. It may be the case that teachers unconsciously award high marks to students they are familiar with, whereas students who hardly show their attention in class are likely to get low grades in the performance area.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that these problems cannot be solved. Language teachers have strategies open to them to help them try to remember as many students' names as possible in order to be familiar with them, as well as facilitate project-based activities or cooperative learning so that all students have an opportunity to engage in these activities and brainstorm with their classmates, as noted in McDonough (2002) and Bahanshal (2013).

2.3.2 English language examinations

In an academic setting, the results of the tests conducted on students are used to assess their learning through the process called examination (Khatoon and Parveen, 2009). Examination also plays an important role in the implementation of language policies and practice (Paran, 2010), and it also has an effect on classroom practice, including teaching and learning (Chapman and Sydner, 2000).

Alderson and Wall (1993) point out the influence of examinations on what and how teachers teach; what and how learners learn; the rate, sequence, degree, and the depth of teaching and learning. The impact or influence can be considered as the washback effect in English language learning. Washback has been defined as the influence of a test on teaching and learning in the classroom, together with the educational system, policies, and stakeholders in the education process (Alderson and Wall, 1993). According to Bailey (1996), this influence could affect the perceptions and reactions of teachers, students, and other stakeholders. Washback can have

both a positive and negative effect, depending on the context and content of the test and the means of implementation of examinations (Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011).

Studies have highlighted the negative influences of examinations. Some have explored the policy arguments and key assumptions underlying a pedagogical approach to investigate the washback effects of examinations (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011) while some studies have focused on the weak points and have explored suggestions for overcoming the problems of washback (Jianrattanapong, 2011).

Chin-Min (2007) suggests that there are five areas of learning influenced by the examination. The washback model of students' learning includes the content of learning, the total time of learning, learning strategies, learning motivation, and test anxiety. Positive washback happens when the test helps both teachers and learners to work towards the test collaboratively (Cheng and Curtis, 2004). Furthermore, Taylor (2005) suggests that positive washback can motivate learners to work harder to achieve their learning. In other words, positive washback encourages good teaching and learning practices.

There are a lot of studies showing negative washback, which contributes to poor quality of teaching and learning practices since it primarily encourages a focus on passing the examination rather than on learning in the classroom, tending to promote memorisation rather than general understanding (e.g. Cheng and Curtis, 2004; Pan, 2009).

According to Chin-Min's model (2007), the content of learning consists of contents, skills, and materials for learning. Regarding the content of English language learning, teachers mainly highlight the importance of grammar and translation of reading texts (Dueraman, 2013); therefore, students might have little chance to improve their listening and speaking skills or develop communicative competence. A number of negative washbacks in terms of content of learning have been explored. For example, Tsagari (2011) investigates the influence of the First Certificate in English (FCE) examination on teachers' classroom practices. The findings suggest that teachers primarily focus only on the topic and skills expected to be in the examination owing to the pressure on their students to achieve good results. Al-Jamal and Ghadi (2008) examine the perceptions of teachers regarding the impact of the GSCE examination, showing that due to the focus on grammar in this examination, teachers applied only a Grammar translation method in the classroom; therefore, learners tended to lack

communicative skills. This study is particularly useful since it reports on the outcomes of the administration of a questionnaire to all 112 secondary English language teachers in 78 schools in Jordan, from various parts of country. The Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET), a national university entrance examination, has a major effect on Thai learners in Thailand. Having high scores in English language is considered very important for learners to pass the entrance examinations for entry into prestigious universities since English is the required subject in the National University Entrance Examination and all programmes in university level requires an English subject score to be a part of overall marks (Jianrattanapong, 2011; Bupphanhasamai, 2012). Thus, learners tend to primarily focus on the results of exams rather than the wide range of other language skills such as listening and speaking, both of which are not included in most English exams in the Thai context (Todd, 2008). It seems that Thai students are likely to pay more attention to their examination grades rather than their learning with high scores merely reflecting the learner's performance rather than competence.

With regard to learning strategies, Chin-Min (2007)'s model also includes techniques to promote learning, rote memorisation, test-taking strategies, and self-learning. Various studies reveal the negative washback of such learning strategies. Todd (2008) explores the impact of the evaluation of ELT in Thailand, pointing out the negative effect of multiple-choice questions, which seem much less effective in promoting productive skills as well as higher-level thinking skills, both of which are explicit objectives of the secondary school curriculum. Moreover, there is also a further negative washback effect arising from this multiple-choice style, which seems to promote rote learning of simplistic and non-transferable knowledge.

Learning motivation is also one of the five areas that is influenced by the examination (Chin-Min, 2007). Ozmen's (2011) study reports the washback effect of the Inter-University Foreign Language Examination on the learners' motivation, with the result that although learners studied harder to achieve high scores in the examination, their primary aim was only to obtain high scores, not to be proficient in English, an attitude which is likely to negatively affect longer term language learning. Although this study focuses on graduate level students, it is reported here since the findings show unanimous reactions of all the participating interviewees concerning the detrimental impact of the examination on them. One of the aims of the current study is to explore whether similar pressures are affecting secondary students.

Vitaly importantly, according to Chin-Min's (2007) model, is the aspect of test anxiety and its negative effects, including anxiety, worries, and mental blocking. For example, Kirkpatrick and Zang (2011), in exploring the negative influences of exam-oriented education on Chinese high school students, reveal the psychological pressure caused by the examination process. Students were likely to be so worried about their low performance that some of them attempted to cheat on the examinations, a highly negative effect of exam-oriented education. Moreover, Xiao et al.'s (2011) study of the impact of the National Matriculation English test on Chinese student's learning, reports that students felt very stressed and worried about low scores and potential failure in the test, contributing to their high anxiety.

Equally importantly, it is also possible that there may be no particular influence of the examination on some teachers and learners. For example, Shohamy et al. (1996) reports no significant examination effect on teachers changing their methodology.

2.4 Issues with regard to teachers

In English language education, the teacher is regarded as the most powerful individual in the class, who enables and influences interaction in the appropriate direction in the class (Wichadee, 2011). Classroom interaction consists of a combination of a number of related factors. For example, creating a friendly and relaxed classroom atmosphere is likely to enable learners to progress in language learning, according to Richards (2007). "In a well-managed class, discipline problems are few, and learners are actively engaged in learning tasks and activities; this contributes to high motivation and expectations for success" (p.14).

Regarding the unique characteristics of the subject of English language, Wichadee (2011) concludes that foreign language teachers typically need specialised skills, as well as professional development, so that they can successfully provide a relaxed atmosphere in class, encouraging learners to attend and engage with the class. In this section, I will explore issues with regard to both native English speaking teachers and non-native English speaking teachers. Given the importance of the English teachers' role in English language learning, the following issues connected with teachers emerge from a range of studies carried out in a number of global context: the effectiveness of teachers, their accents, the influence of shadow education, teachers' characteristics and lesson delivery, and professional development.

2.4.1 Native and non-native English speaking teachers

This section will start with a brief definition of what it is to be a native speaker. Bloomfield (1993) states that the very first language a person learns to speak is called their native language; that person is regarded a native speaker of his or her language. Meanwhile, Cook (2001) also defines native speakers as people who know the language without necessarily being able to verbalise their knowledge.

With regard to language teachers, there are a number of studies that have examined the differences between native English and non-native English speaking teachers. A native English speaking teacher (NEST) is defined as one who was brought up in an English speaking environment, understands English perfectly and produces English fluently and spontaneously (Medgyes, 1994). A native English speaker teacher can be regarded as a representative of the Western culture from which English and English teaching originates. Medgyes, however, (2001) defines a non-native English speaking teacher (NNEST) as a person who speaks English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL), works in an English as a Foreign Language environment, has the same native language as his or her learners, and teaches monolingual groups of learners. It might be vitally important to distinguish between native and non-native English speaking teachers, since their differences represent their strengths and weaknesses. Medgyes (2001) suggests some hypotheses about these teachers. Firstly, they can be differentiated by their proficiency in the English language. Secondly, they can be regarded differently in terms of their teaching behaviour. Thirdly, the differences in language proficiency account for most of the differences found in the teaching behaviour of native and non-native English speaking teachers. In this respect, Widdowson (1994) suggests that the native English speaker teacher is in a better position to understand linguistic appropriateness in contexts of language use whereas the non-native English speaker teacher may be in a better position to know what is appropriate in the context of language learning. However, it can be argued that being a non-native English speaking teacher does not automatically mean lower proficiency or a lower quality of teaching behaviour than a native English speaking teacher (Ulate, 2011). Instead, proficiency seems to relate to levels of professional preparation to perform the demanding tasks of teaching others; therefore, non-native English speaking teachers can be high quality teachers on their own terms (Medgyes, 2001).

In order to enhance learners' motivation and positive attitudes towards their learning, language teachers can play a substantial role in their learners' achievement of all skills (Al-Nawrasy,

2013). There has thus been a wide range of research about the problems of native and non-native English speaking teachers.

2.4.1.1 Non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST)

Globally, it has been estimated that non-native English speaking teachers account for 80 percent of English teachers worldwide (Braine, 2010). Being a non-native English teacher is not an easy job, as it involves teaching learners to know and understand the skills required to speak English. Thus, non-native speaking teachers of English might need to put much effort and do hard work to teach students effectively, since they not only have to teach through English, the language in which they may not possess native-like competency, but they also often have to compete for positions with native English speaking teachers; thus, they have to work hard to prove themselves in front of their learners (Amin, 2001). However, there is no absolute agreement about who makes better English language teachers. Both native and non-native English speaking teachers can both be successful as ESL or EFL teachers depending on their distinctive strengths.

The problems of non-native English speaking teachers include issues of pronunciation, oral fluency, and vocabulary (Llurda and Huguet, 2003; Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005; Ma, 2012). Each of these studies suggests a lack of fluency and accuracy in speaking and pronunciation mistakes. Because of such weaknesses, it is possible that NNEST teachers suffer from insecurity and inferiority in speaking skills and pronunciation, as noted in Klanrit and Sroinam (2012), and feel that they are not ideal models of fluent English use. Moreover, inadequate knowledge of Western culture and lack of self-confidence can also cause non-native speakers to encounter difficulties in foreign language communication. Ma (2012) suggests that non-native English teachers' lack of confidence is one of the important issues prone to bring about a lack of both fluency and accuracy in English language teaching. Furthermore, the use of first languages in the classroom has been regarded as a weakness by some, especially for learners who are eager to practice their communicative skills in class. If non-native English teachers frequently use their first language in the classroom, it is possible that learners may lack motivation to use English in the classroom (Turnbull, 2001), and that learners' opportunities to practice the target language in the classroom are impeded. It seems important that non-native English speaking teachers provide as much opportunity as possible to their learners to use the target language in the classroom, although it may not be sensible to completely restrict the use of first language in the English classroom, since insisting on English only usage could increase learners' anxiety

about language learning, especially those who have low proficiency in speaking (Al-Nawrasy, 2013)

Because of the problems with regard to NNES teachers, it might be thought that the ideal NES teacher might be a person who has also achieved a high level of proficiency in the learners' native language (Medgyes, 1992). However, this does not always mean that native speaker teachers will offer better language teaching. Native speakers of a language may not explicitly possess full knowledge about the language they speak; native speakers may be good role models for language learners (Llurda, 2004; Cook, 2005), but this does not necessarily make them good teachers. NES teachers of English language may also have problems.

2.4.1.2 Native English speaking teacher (NEST)

Most students might regard NES teachers as more effective than NNES teachers but nevertheless these teachers tend to have their own problems. Unlike NNES teachers, NES teachers often have inadequate knowledge of their learners' culture as well as the language of host country (Ma, 2012); thus most students are likely to feel less comfortable to talk to them, and they may therefore find it difficult to build up a good rapport with their learners. According to Ma (2012), native English speaking teachers may also lack knowledge of their host country's education system, as well as their students' particular needs and their difficulties in learning English. Therefore, they may struggle to adapt to the exam-oriented systems used in most EFL countries such as China, Vietnam, and Thailand. Furthermore, NES teachers may find it difficult to explain grammatical rules, especially if they do not have the proper qualifications, despite the fact that they may have intuitive knowledge of how to use grammar accurately (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005). Implicit knowledge of a language does not always mean a teacher has sufficient explicit knowledge to be able to explain grammatical rules, etc. Arva and Medgyes (2000) suggest that NES teachers can sometimes feel frustrated when they cannot explain their lessons to beginners. Consequently, students with low proficiency in English tend not to prefer studying with NES teachers, primarily due to their lack of understanding of the language they are learning. The above issues are compounded when a NES teacher is monolingual, as it means they cannot translate words to their learners where necessary (Luk and Lin, 2007; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005). As a result, they may actually end up discouraging their learners (Medgyes, 2001). It is vitally important for NES teachers to be aware that one of their responsibilities is to cope with learners' negative attitudes, and to try to make them feel positive about learning English, which can be difficult if the teacher is

monolingual (Moore, 2001). Many native English speaking teachers may also struggle to solve problems in the classroom (Benke and Medgyes, 2005). If students cannot easily understand English, and the teacher can speak no other language, then behaviour management can be somewhat tricky.

The previous section stresses strengths, weaknesses, and the differences between native and non-native English speaker teachers. The following section will discuss the situation of their employment in English language education.

2.4.1.3 The employment of NNES and NES teachers

Nowadays, an increasing number of native English speaking teachers are recruited all over the world to work in non-English speaking institutions, primarily owing to their language competency (Clark & Paran, 2007). Furthermore, the broad acceptance that native speakers are the best teachers and ideal role models for language learners means that non-native teachers are sometimes perceived as second-class citizens in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL) (Ellis, 2002; Rajagopalan, 2005). There are clear signs of discrimination against non-native English speaking teachers in the market for English language teaching jobs (Ma, 2012). However, it is now widely accepted that being proficient in a language does not always mean that a native English speaker will be a more successful language teacher (Sahin, 2005). Skill in teaching is also essential.

In Thailand, the desire to study English with native English speaking teachers has existed for generations. In modern times, Thailand has continuously supported an international educational programme. In Thailand, both public and private universities provide approximately 588 fields of study in 727 international programmes where English is used as a medium of instruction (Khanarat and Nomura, 2008). One of the major reasons why international programmes have flourished is that international education helps provide learners with better career opportunities, and it is believed that talking with foreigners is highly beneficial in improving skills in speaking English (Phothongsunan, 2006). Therefore, schools at all levels, from kindergarten to university, generally hire native English speaking teachers, as well as other foreigners, to teach English on the basis that it will help improve learners' English proficiency. According to Vanichakorn (2009), Thai teachers of English may have low English proficiency due to a number of barriers to professional development and that it is thus

often impossible to use only English in the classroom. As a result, there is great demand for native English speaking teachers, especially in Thailand's private schools and universities.

Equally importantly, teachers' appearance and complexion is also considered significant when employing NES and NNES teachers. Some learners even believe that non-white teachers are less capable of teaching English than those with white complexions (Braine, 2005), an attitude which betrays deep seated prejudice regarding the respective abilities of native and non-native English speaking teachers. Racial prejudice is also noted as a concern in the work of Dasgupta et al. (2000), who claim that learners perceive teachers from an African background as more likely to possess negative traits, whereas teachers from Europe are seen more positively. It can be assumed that negative attitudes towards black teachers are probably related to broader negative social prejudices regarding black people (McConnell and Leibold, 2001). Inexperienced European-born teachers have more chance of being chosen as language teachers than experienced teachers with the appearance of being a non-native English speaker, such as Japanese, Thai, Chinese, and Filipino teachers, due to the fact that institutions focus more on looks than qualifications. All of the above contributes to why non-native English speaker teachers can find it difficult to find jobs as language teachers (Sahin, 2005).

Many native English speakers have greater opportunities to find jobs due to their accuracy and fluency in their mother tongue, regardless of whether they are skilful language teachers or not (Braine, 2010). Teachers, however, are individuals rather than representatives of prejudicial categories (Todd and Pojanapunya, 2009) and it seems sensible to judge them as such. It is also vitally important to note that the learners' preferences towards their teachers tends to depend on their previous experiences with teachers, whether this is positive or negative; therefore, mere appearance cannot be the key element to judging teachers (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005).

2.4.2 The accents of English language teachers

Studies (Lev-Ari and Keysar, 2010; Crystal, 2010) confirm that there are various accents of English around the world including Standard English, American, Australian, and many more. From previous studies, there are a number of aspects with regard to English language teachers' accents such as the linguistic distinction between accent and dialect (Freeborn et al. 1993) and the evaluation of speakers with foreign-accented speech (Tsurutani, 2012). Many issues have been raised with regard to which accents should be prioritised as models for English

language education (Jindapitak and Teo, 2013). In order to explore this issue, it is worth considering Kachru (1985)'s three circles of English, representing three different environments in which English is acquired.

2.4.2.1 *The Three Circles Model of English*

Crystal (2010, p.3) argues that a “language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognised in every country.” This refers to the idea that a language has to be spoken in other countries around the world in order for it to achieve the status of being a global language. English clearly meets this criterion, and is currently being used in many international domains, such as politics, international communication, entertainment, business, the media, providing safety information, and, importantly, education.

Kachru (1985), an American linguist, has suggested that the spread of English around the world can be conceived using three concentric circles. These three circles represent the three different zones and situations in which English language has been acquired and used in the world. Crystal (2010) does argue that some countries may not neatly fit this model, nevertheless, the three circles have been widely regarded as a very helpful tool.

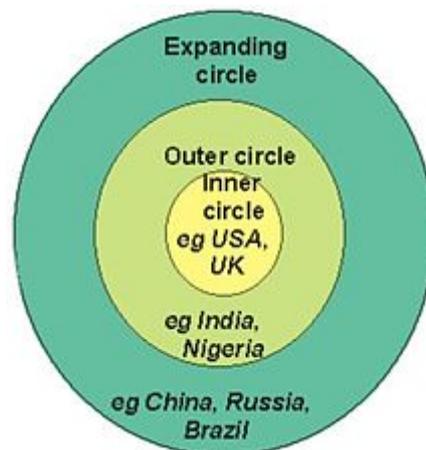


Figure 2.4.2.: The three circles of English, as conceived by Kachru (1985)

Kachru's model of English use consists of an inner circle, an outer circle, and an expanding circle. The number of speakers in the inner and outer circles totals approximately 700 million around the world, whereas 750-1000 million speakers belong to expanding circle (Graddol,

2006). The inner circle represents the traditional bases of English; places where English is considered as the primary language. The United Kingdom, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are the example countries in this circle (Crystal, 2010). In these countries, English is widely used as a first language.

The outer or extended circle, meanwhile, consists of countries in which English has become widespread, but in which it is still considered a non-native language. It therefore includes colonised countries in which English is used as the second language (ESL), in particular when it is used in domains such as a country's chief institutions and government (Kilickaya, 2009). The examples of countries in this circle include Singapore, India, Nigeria, and South Africa.

Finally, the expanding circle includes countries in which English is regarded as a highly important international language, primarily in order to be able to communicate with those from the inner and outer circles (Mollin, 2006). Countries in the expanding circle are not countries which have been colonised by England, nor have they given "English any special administrative status" (Crystal, 2010, p.60). This includes countries such as China, Japan, and Thailand among others. It may be said that English is used as a foreign language (EFL) in these countries.

Kachru's model of English speaking across the world is widely recognised; however, there are also some drawbacks to this model, and it is still problematic in some aspects. Bruthiaux (2003) argues that the model does not directly say what it is trying to categorise, as it refers variously to nations, types of speakers, and functions of English. For example, the model differentiates native speakers from non-native speakers only in terms of the circle to which they belong; thus, the only native speakers are people in the inner circle, while non-native speakers only belong to the outer and expanding circles. In reality, a number of people in the outer and expanding circles are so proficient in English that they can communicate impeccably with those in the inner circle. It is therefore inadequate to distinguish how well someone uses English only by where they are from; as Canagarajah (2006) states, the inner circle is categorised by geography, not proficiency. Due to the rise of globalisation, a considerable number of companies from inner circle countries now conduct business with outer and expanding circle countries, and this development has changed the way in which English is spoken globally. Therefore, it can be seen that language proficiency cannot be distinguished by geographical background alone.

Kachru's model of English is widely recognised and important for understanding the development and spread of the English language. English is currently widely used as a first language, second language, or foreign language in almost every part of the world. Kachru's model has raised awareness of the existence of different forms of English across the world. So although the model is slightly problematic in terms of inclusiveness and implied superiority among speakers in the three concentric circles, it has proved beneficial for linguists to have a model which takes a broad perspective of the different ways in which English is acquired and used in different places.

2.4.2.2 The Influence of Accent on Credibility

According to Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010), speakers' accents have an impact on their credibility. Most non-native English speakers claim to find it less credible to have a non-native English accent when speaking English, due to the fact that the accent can make the speech more difficult to process. Generally, people tend to believe non-native English speakers less due to the difficulty of understanding their accents.

The idea of English as an international language (EIL) involves the suggestion that English must be hybridised with other languages, not exclusively Anglicised or Americanised (Kachru & Nelson, 2000). This means it is vital that English proficiency is recognised for speakers who are able to use English to meet their purposes. Therefore, the argument goes, non-native English speakers who have their own accent should be treated impartially, with their version of English acknowledged as a legitimate variety, and not inferior (Jenkins, 2005). Thus, non-native English speakers must be aware that if they accept that flawless imitation of a native English speaker's accent is necessary to be a proficient English speaker, it also means that they are agreeing to accept native English speakers as dominant in every feature of language use. Consequently, the development of English language teaching and learning will be stifled (Buripakdi, 2008) and there is evidence of this happening.

Importantly, the image associated with using English in the same way as those from inner-circle countries is prestigious. According to this conception, the positive features of mainstream forms of English are that they are considered "expressive", "appropriate", "beautiful", "professional", and "perfect". On the other hand, non-mainstream forms of English are associated with negative traits, such as being "non-standard", "broken", and "incorrect". This social-driven linguistic judgment underpins the assumption that only inner-circle countries

possess “proper” English language (Buripakdi, 2008). This prejudice helps stabilise the spread of native varieties of English, as well as advancing the interests of native English speakers (Modiano, 2001). Therefore, compared to accents from inner-circle countries, other accents are mostly regarded as deficient, and examples of linguistic decay.

Interestingly, in Thailand, learners normally regard speakers who have native-like accents from inner-circle countries as having higher status, or belonging to elite social groups, certainly more than those who have non-native accents (Buripakdi, 2008). For Thai speakers of English, it is thus advantageous to have an accent that is similar to those from inner-circle countries. As noted by Methitham (2009), even if lacking in terms of educational background and proficiency, speakers who possess complete mastery of standard British-like or American-like English impress many Thais who would like to speak English fluently. Despite being a PhD thesis, and perhaps with limited generalisability, this study (Methitham, 2009) is significant for the current study since it focuses on English language teachers’ experiences with regard to culturally-based assumptions in Thailand, where it has had some influence in raising the issues of credibility of accent and the impact of colonisation. However, it has also been noted that only a few individuals can acquire accents equivalent to those of native English speakers (Derwing and Munro, 2005). Pronunciation and accent are not the only criteria for examining language proficiency; there are some cases of non-native English speakers who do not have perfect pronunciation, but who are still regarded as proficient users in other areas of English. Furthermore, from an economic perspective, mastery of native English accents can enhance a speaker’s professional position, as more opportunities are given for them to work for international organisations (Graddol, 2006).

Regarding the most preferable accent for teachers and learners, some research shows a preference for British or American accents, whereas other studies identify non-native English accents as preferable in some cases. Moreover, non-native English learners might find native English accents preferable, since most of them strongly believe that inner-circle accents can enhance the language learning process since they think that pronunciation is one of the key factors in language teaching. The research of Scale et al. (2006) suggests that most international students regard the American accent as their ideal accent model, and thus most preferable accent, whereas non-native English accents such as Mexican and Chinese are seen as unintelligible. Furthermore, Thai teachers are willing to encourage their learners to use inner circle accents, as reported in Methitham’s (2009) study. Thai learners also consider inner-circle

accents as prestigious, suggesting that having a native English accent can provide a prestigious social image and high status in society. However, the work of Scale et al. (2006) is rather at odds with this, pointing out that there is no correlation between the ability to speak English with native English accent and the amount of time the participants spent in countries where English is used as the first language. Therefore, it is possible that learners who have never been to inner circle countries might also have a native English accent, probably due to their regular practice.

However, there is some research which suggests that non-native English accents are preferable. Jenkins (2005), for example, has claimed that inner-circle accents are not always appropriate, especially when non-native English speakers communicate with each other. Interestingly, some non-native English speakers, such as Japanese, Chinese, Malaysian, Thai, and French English speakers, find outer-circle and expanding-circle accents more intelligible than inner circle accents (Celce-Murcia et al., 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007). Thus, it is important to note that non-native English accents are, in many circumstances, perceived as at least as intelligible as native English accents. Buripakdi (2008) also offers a reason for why non-native English accents are sometimes preferable, in that having a non-native English accent reflects the uniqueness of the socio-cultural aspects of each nation in which English is spoken and notes that most Thai people are proud of having their Thai accent when speaking English, and indicate that they do not want to speak like foreigners.

It seems that, although it is possible that NNES teachers recognise the advantages of having an inner-circle accent, they do not think that having a native-like accent is the most important factor in teaching languages. Non-native English accents are thus also acceptable in language learning.

2.4.3 Shadow education

Previous studies show that education systems in Asia particularly have placed an increasing emphasis on shadow education, for example, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Thailand (Dang, 2007; Boonsaeng et al., 2010; Liu, 2012; Bray, 2013). Shadow education may be defined as supplementary tutoring in academic subjects provided by tutors for financial gain, in addition to the provision of mainstream schooling (Bray and Kwok, 2003). Boonsaeng et al. (2010) define the tutorial school as a school that offers special tuition. Similarly, shadow education is defined as paid educational services, specifically tutoring, that occurs outside of

mainstream schooling (Bray, 2009). Shadow education has been growing throughout most parts of the world as noted by Dang and Rogers (2008). Mori and Baker (2010) agree that supplementary tutoring has gradually entered mainstream education and is becoming a universal norm. The characteristics of shadow education tend to include an academic-oriented style, monetary transfer, and mastery of tutoring content in line with tutees' daytime schooling (Percy, 2004).

Equally importantly, a tutor in a tutorial school is defined as someone whose job is to supplement tutoring in a tutorial institution, regardless of whether he or she is a mainstream schoolteacher. There are two different classifications of a teacher: a teacher in a mainstream school and a tutor running his or her own tutorial school business or tutorial classes. Many mainstream schoolteachers in Thailand provide tutorial classes despite teaching many hours at mainstream schools, as they need to supplement their relatively low salaries (Noom-Ura, 2013). Financial gain is likely to be a major concern for tutors as suggested by Bray and Kwok (2003). Some countries, such as Japan, Korea, and China, allow teachers to earn extra income from providing private tutorial classes to students from their mainstream schools (Bray, 2013). Due to globalisation and increasingly competitive school systems, there are an increasing number of tutorial schools in many Asian countries with a centralised college admission system (Boonsaeng et al. 2010; Poovudhikul, 2013). Korea is considered the largest shadow education system in the world due to massive prevalence and extremely high expenditure on shadow education activities (Choi, 2012). Similarly, in Thailand, the number of tutoring schools has quadrupled over the past two decades (Uruyos and Deera-Aumpon, 2010). According to Boonsaeng et al (2010), statistics show that there are more than 365 licensed tutorial schools in Bangkok alone. Interestingly, some Thai students are likely to skip their conventional school lessons in order to attend private tutoring classes especially for students from top public high schools (Poovudhikul, 2013).

A number of studies have sought to reveal the aims of private supplementary tutoring. With regard to learners, many mainstream schools primarily focus on reviewing content, as well as on the format of university entrance examinations and the fact learners would like to improve their test scores to gain entrance to high-ranking universities; therefore, extra knowledge is needed. Additionally, private tutoring can help learners revise their daytime lessons from mainstream schools and deepen their understanding through drilling exercises (Percy, 2004; Prapphal, 2008; Boonsaeng, et al., 2010; Choi, 2012). This situation is likely to create academic

stress, especially for learners at the upper secondary level. Apart from academic achievement, some parents believe that effective supplementary tutoring enhances overall levels of human capital in society (Bray, 2013). Furthermore, family members regard private supplementary tutoring as an educational investment for upward social mobility; therefore, most parents invest a lot of money in private tutoring (Percy, 2004). This can result in inequality in academic performance between learners in higher- and lower-income families, suggesting that this situation creates a financial burden for those from lower-income families (Percy, 2004; Dang, 2007; Choi, 2012). Despite the reported negative impact of private tutoring classes on financial inequality in countries such as Hong Kong, Vietnam and Korea, Dang (2007) presents slightly different findings in showing rural ethnic minority expenditure on private tutoring as equal to that of students in urban areas. It has been suggested, however, that families in the highest income brackets in Korea spend six times more on private tutoring than those in the lowest (Choi, 2012).

Interestingly, a number of studies have found that shadow education has both positive and negative effects. In terms of the former, private tutoring can enhance learners' abilities: most perform better at school, with less grade repetition, as well as in university entrance examinations (Dang, 2007). It seems important to consider tutors' personalities and the teaching techniques that tend to make them more effective than mainstream teachers. Oller and Glasman (2013) suggest that some typical characteristics of private tutors are desirable for learners: effective tutors can help slow-learners keep up with their classmates and also bolster their self-esteem and sense of achievement. Learners' perceptions of private tutors' preferable characteristics are described, including their being knowledgeable, funny, enthusiastic about teaching, able to deliver more appropriate teaching materials to meet learners' specific needs, to make lessons easier to memorise and understand, making greater effort, and having higher academic expectations (Choi, 2012).

On the other hand, some studies have found that private tutorial classes have a negative impact on learners' academic performance due largely to work overload (Cheo and Quah, 2005). Some mainstream teachers who conduct private tutoring after school seem to place less effort into their daytime teaching and only cover some parts of the curriculum during school hours; therefore, some learners are required to attend their teachers' private tutoring for the remainder of the curriculum, resulting in poor results in national secondary school examinations for those who do not (Bray, 2010). The effect of shadow education on students' academic performance

has actually been reported as insignificant in some studies (Baker et al., 2001; Berberoglu and Tansel, 2014). Berberoglu and Tansel (2014) report a smaller impact of private tutoring on student's competence in comparison to other factors such as student's interest, high school graduation tracks, and high school GPA. Furthermore, although some studies suggest that tutors in tutorial classes have some preferable characteristics (Choi, 2012; Oller and Glasman, 2013), negative teacher characteristics and teaching techniques are also reported in studies in that some tutors speak very fast and incoherently, thus making it difficult for some learners to understand the teaching. Moreover, some tutorial class content is not the same as that taught in mainstream schools, and some tutoring lacks teacher-learner communication, as some tutors teach through heavy use of various media formats (Boonsaeng et al., 2010).

Only a few studies seriously consider the problems of shadow education itself. Nevertheless, it seems that shadow education has been considered as the cause of major problems to mainstream education: in other words, it has negative impact in many aspects as previously mentioned. Seemingly, the more it has positive impact on students, the more it has negative impact on mainstream teachers.

2.4.4 Teachers' characteristics and lesson delivery

Studies suggest many preferred characteristics of teachers and their lesson delivery, mostly as expressed by EFL learners (Arikan et al., 2008; Chen, 2012). The current study explores both teachers' and learners' perceptions on the issue of teacher characteristics and their lesson delivery and the effects on English language education.

The characteristics of EFL teachers, especially their teaching styles, teaching skills, and personal traits may have an effect on students' motivations and attitudes to language learning (Chen, 2012). Building and maintaining a good relationship between teacher and learners in the classroom is also vital. However, Park and Lee (2006) point out that differences in the perceptions of teachers and learners regarding teachers' characteristics may contribute to the ineffectiveness of language learning. Good target language proficiency, the use of specific techniques, methods, and approaches in the classroom, good knowledge of pedagogy, and a pleasant personality are considered favourable characteristics of EFL teachers (Shishavan and Sadeghi, 2009) with mastery of the target language emerging as the most important feature. Students' preferences for teachers' characteristics are generally seen as affecting their learning. According to Chen and Lin (2009) and Chen (2012), most learners mainly focus on a teacher's

personality, the teacher-student relationship, and instructional competence. Chen and Lin (2009) also suggest that students with different academic achievement tend to share similar perceptions of preferable characteristics of EFL teachers. On the basis of the findings of Borg (2006), Chen and Lin (2009), Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009), Chen (2012), students' attitudes towards the favourable and unfavourable characteristics of EFL teachers will be outlined below. The characteristics presented will be those which all the researchers mentioned above would agree from their studies are important, although naturally individual researchers may place slightly different emphases upon particular features.

2.4.4.1 Personal Trait-related Characteristics

From the students' perspective, personal trait-related characteristics, including fairness, emotion, kindness, and responsibility are important in an EFL teacher.

Fairness refers to equality, as well as impartiality. Students view fairness as one of the most important characteristics in a teacher. To be highly effective, EFL teachers, the students feel, should pay attention to all students in their classes, regardless of the students' seating arrangements. Students prefer EFL teachers who treat all students equally to those who care only for students with higher academic achievements. Importantly, some students feel ignored by their teachers and this kind of biased behaviour is an unfavourable characteristic for effectiveness as an EFL teacher (Chen, 2012; Shishavan and Sadeghi, 2009; Borg, 2006).

Emotion refers to the teacher's temper, sense of humour, and patience. A pleasant personality is a very important characteristic for an effective EFL teacher from the learners' points of view. Learners prefer their teachers to be open-minded, respectful, calm, good-tempered, caring for their students and humorous during lessons, thereby creating a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. Getting angry and being easily annoyed are perceived as unfavourable characteristics in EFL teachers. Students are unhappy with teachers who reproach them often, especially when they made mistakes, and prefer teachers to encourage them to correct their errors instead of scolding them (Chen, 2012; Chen and Lin, 2009; Shishavan and Sadeghi, 2009)

Typically, kindness includes friendliness and politeness. A good relationship between teachers and their students is considered vital to the processes of teaching and learning and seems to involve teachers being seen to respect their students. Additionally, teachers should know when

and how to deal with their students with kindness. Being impolite and ignorant of students' feelings, thoughts, abilities, and language skills are regarded as unfavourable teachers' characteristics (Chen, 2012; Chen and Lin, 2009; Shishavan and Sadeghi, 2009)

Responsibility also emerges as a vital characteristic of an efficient EFL teacher, and refers to teaching intention as well as teaching preparation. Teachers should, according to students, repeat the subject matter when students fail to understand it. Students also prefer teachers who are happy to teach their students individually outside the classroom. Lack of responsibility and impatience are unfavourable characteristics. Moreover, students are dissatisfied with teachers who do not explain and guide the students with their assignments (Chen, 2012; Borg, 2006)

2.4.4.2 Classroom Teaching-related Characteristics

Classroom teaching-related characteristics include classroom activity organisation, lesson delivery, and classroom atmosphere creation.

Good and appropriate activities motivate students to study effectively as well as participate eagerly in class. Students seem to prefer teachers who devise enjoyable activities that make them feel comfortable and relaxed in the classroom. Besides being fun, such activities help the students to learn the subject matter without having to put in too much effort. Moreover, creative activities such as singing songs are popular among students, and they prefer teachers who have instructional competence in their language class (Chen, 2012; Chen and Lin, 2009).

Lesson delivery refers to the means of presentation, the ability to make lessons comprehensible, techniques for dealing with teaching content, and error correction. Students appear to prefer teachers who have good teaching skills and use a variety of techniques. Teachers need the ability to adapt their teaching techniques to meet their students' proficiency; they should provide sufficient content knowledge and make the lesson comprehensible to draw their students' attention. Moreover, a teacher should deliver the lessons in a loud voice at an average speed, as students prefer teachers who teach at an appropriate speed and adjust their teaching speed depending on students' abilities. However, some teachers, so students claim, tend to make their lessons complicated and incomprehensible to make the students believe that their teachers are intelligent; students are unhappy with teachers who always make things complex and confusing, thereby causing them to lose track of the lesson. Providing students with a clear focus of what they should be taught is preferable, since they can easily understand so that

teachers do not have to waste time repeatedly explaining lessons to their students (Chen, 2012; Borg, 2006).

2.4.5 Professional development

Professional development is considered as a way to maintain and enhance the quality of teachers; therefore, the effectiveness and weaknesses of professional development are worth investigating. Many studies suggest the need for thorough evaluation of approaches to professional development (e.g. Wichadee, 2011). However, in the present study the focus is on teachers' and learners' perceptions and this therefore guides the discussion below regarding the issue of professional development in English language education.

According to Berliner's model (1994), teacher professional development is defined as a continuous movement through the consequent stages of novice, beginner, competent, professional, and expert teacher. Additionally, professional development is described as "the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and knowledge and examining his or her teaching systematically," (Richards and Schmidt, 2003, p.542). Furthermore, 'Professional development' can be interpreted in different ways, and terms such as staff development, in-service training, professional learning, and continuing education suggest slightly different conceptualisations of the process (Mizell, 2010).

Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu (2010) suggest that the importance of professional growth is such that the teaching profession cannot ignore this element, particularly because of its potential to help raise educational standards. The consensus in the literature is that teachers need to equip themselves with the skills and knowledge needed to improve opportunities for learners and professional development can assist and support teachers throughout their careers. Professional development can occur in formal contexts, such as conferences, seminars, and workshops, and in informal processes such as co-teaching, mentoring, and learning from a peer (Mizell, 2010).

Generally, professional development can help teachers gain practical ideas, strategies, and resources that can be applied inside and outside the classroom in order to help analyse student achievement, identify learning problems, develop solutions, address students' needs, enhance teachers' effectiveness with students, and importantly, strengthen teachers' knowledge base and skills, contributing to their growth (Mizell, 2010). Consequently, teachers undergoing training programmes need to be able to apply the knowledge and skills learned to their practice

in classrooms (Guskey, 2000). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) suggest that effective professional development in teaching is practice-embedded and consists of five elements: opportunities to learn in a supportive community, links between curriculum, assessment, and professional-learning decisions, the application of new knowledge, skills and feedback, deeper knowledge of content and how to teach it, and sustained learning. English language teachers need to take part in many professional activities or create their own self-development strategies either individually or collaboratively in order to gain the skills needed to be effective in their roles (Hismanoglu and Hismanoglu, 2010). The fact that around one third of teachers leave the profession within their first three years of teaching, owing to its complexity and difficulty (Ingersoll, 2003), suggests the need for teachers to continually improve their skills, as they are likely to face an overwhelming number of unfamiliar issues such as instruction, classroom management, and curriculum (Mizell, 2010). Noticeably, it is possible that English language teachers might leave the profession more than other subject teachers due to the number of tourist teachers in some EFL countries.

In-service professional development has, however, been found in some studies (Jacob and Lefgren, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) to have little or no effect on student outcomes. Studies point out that attending professional development courses does not always mean that teachers are interested in or receptive to the provided training programmes (Robb, 2000; Guskey, 2000). It seems that teachers do not always apply their training in the classroom since some claim that training sessions are boring and irrelevant to their interests, and they are likely to forget almost everything they learnt. Therefore, professional development programmes may not be useful if teachers and their learners do not benefit from them. Although some teachers have successfully developed themselves after attending professional development; there are still some teachers who believe that teaching experience is the most important part of teaching; therefore, some experienced teachers see no need for professional development, despite the reported benefits of knowledge and reflection. On the other hand, it is not at all certain that having teaching experience always leads to teaching expertise since some experienced teachers appear unwilling to accept new suggestions from professional development despite the fact that they might get some beneficial feedbacks from opportunities to reflect on and enhance their knowledge (Tsui, 2003). However, despite some problems, professional development appears on the whole to be beneficial since a number of teachers need ongoing support and guidance in order to overcome all the challenges that face them (Lind, 2007).

2.5 Issues with regard to teaching methods and materials

Teaching methods and materials are considered as two of the major issues of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand. This section focuses on teaching approach and style, including the grammar translation method (GTM) and communicative language teaching (CLT), and the issue of textbooks.

2.5.1 Teaching approaches and style

Studies have suggested that two of the most widely used teaching approaches in English language teaching are the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). To investigate the effectiveness and the problems of these two approaches, some contrastive studies between two teaching approaches have used pre-test and post-test methods (Chang, 2011), or classroom observation (Zohrabi et al., 2012) to evaluate learner's performance. This is beyond the scope of the current study, which concentrates on teachers' and students' perceptions to investigate the issue of teaching approaches.

English language classrooms in many Asian countries such as China, Thailand, and Vietnam have been dominated by traditional methods of rote learning of grammar structure and their rules (Walia, 2012). This approach is called the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), wherein teacher-centred pedagogies are the main focus. However, in the education reform declared in the National Education Act (NEA) of B.E. 2542 (1999) in Thailand, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has gradually replaced the traditional approach as the approved pedagogy (McDonough and Chaikitmongkol, 2007). The Thai government has focused on the importance of learner-centred pedagogies together with communicative competence. Despite the fact that the Thai government encourages English language teachers to develop CLT in their classrooms, teachers nevertheless still tend to apply GTM. It has been suggested that some of the problems in applying CLT include lack of teacher support as well as professional learning environments, resulting in the failure of policy goals (Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006). Applying CLT in the classroom, learners are likely to be stressed because CLT calls for a radical change from passive to active learning, as noted in Wilhelm and Pei (2008), and it may be that learners cannot adjust themselves immediately to deal with the shift in the teaching approach from the traditional approach they are familiar with to the new approach. Thus, it appears that most teachers continue to use traditional approaches in to their classrooms in contrast to policy

requirements (Chorrojprasert, 2005). The following section will discuss the two major teaching approaches, GTM and CLT.

2.5.1.1 Grammar translation method (GTM)

The GTM has been considered as one of the most conventional methods for foreign language teaching (Chang, 2011). GTM is implemented in the language classroom, primarily highlighting teaching grammar and syntactic rules, reading comprehension, translation of literacy texts, together with rote memorisation of vocabulary (Maleki, 2005; Machida, 2008). Larsen-Freeman (1996, p.4) has pointed out that the characteristics of GTM teaching process are that “students are taught to translate from one language to another and to learn the grammar of the target language deductively. And students have to follow the teacher’s instruction.” Moreover, Cook (1991, p.3), cited in Senel (2010), observed that ‘Grammar translation teaching emphasised explanations of grammatical points because this fits in with its view that L2 learning is the acquisition of conscious knowledge.’ Accordingly, translation is seen not so much as a means of communication, but as a tool to help learners to understand and use the target language more precisely, appropriately, and accurately (Senel, 2010). GTM was, therefore, aimed at helping students to read and appreciate foreign language literature. As a result, it is believed that language learners would increasingly familiarise themselves with the grammar of their target language, leading them to grow intellectually (Larsen-Freeman, 2004).

In general, the GTM relies on the use of learners’ native language within the classroom. The teacher provides grammar rules and sentence structures to enable learners to use knowledge deductively; rote learning is normally applied when grammar is learned, and the teacher will allow learners to do grammar drills and translate to and from the target language. From the characteristics of GTM, it might be said that GTM helps improve the mastery of grammar for language learners, although students find it difficult to use grammar rules flexibly and appropriately in real contexts since little attention is paid to listening and speaking, as well as the pronunciation of the target language (Chang, 2011). As a result, GTM learners are likely to lack the proficiency of communicative competence. The major skill practiced is the reading skill, merely put in the context of translation (Abdullah, 2013). Chang (2011), although a relatively small scale study, he did provide a pre-test and post-test of grammar competency within two different classrooms, each of which used GTM and CLT, respectively. The findings showed superior results in grammar knowledge in the class applying GTM whereas

communicative competence was better in that applying CLT. It seemed that the choice of approach had a direct influence upon the area of achievement.

Due to the fact that GTM is widely used in EFL contexts despite the almost universal recommendation about implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), there are a considerable number of studies which indicate the positive effect of applying GTM in the classroom. Learners are likely to fully understand the context since teachers are allowed to use their first language when teaching using GTM in the classroom. As pointed out in Macaro (2003), the teacher is liable to give very extensive explanations to learners in their native language; thus it is more likely that learners will fully understand the content of the text they are studying. This is also supported by Ellis (2008) who suggests that English language teachers using L1 while explaining lessons to learners helps bring about classroom dynamics and a sense of security for learners. Equally importantly, using first language in language classroom enables teachers to make a deeper personal connection with their students, fostering a positive affective and comfortable environment in the classroom (Edstrom, 2006) although somewhat dated now, did suggest that explaining meanings, words and phrases, as well as grammar structure in the second language, was very time consuming in that it wasted a lot of time explaining and clarifying meanings of words in other ways such as definition and illustrations in the second language. This study has had a strong influence on a number of studies in the area of language use in the classroom. However, using second language in the classroom could be highly beneficial for L2 practice, as suggested by Kavaliauskiene and Kaminskiene (2007), and despite the need for translation in language learning, native teachers of English have claimed that the more often the target language is exposed, the better learners can practise, thereby suggesting that it is the use of the first language that wastes time. Even so, it is argued that time allocation in language classroom is not adequate to encourage students to practice what they have learned, since teachers spend much time elaborating on grammar rules and translating each item of vocabulary separately, leading students to be passive in the classroom (Abdullah, 2013). As a result, learners' interaction is inadequate in the GTM classroom (Ellis, 2008). Daminani (2003) further provides an explanation of comprehension questions in reading; learners found it simple and straightforward to respond to questions in their native language. As a result, teachers could easily assess and evaluate the proficiency of their teaching according to whether learners could understand clearly and precisely what they had been taught. It has also been suggested that communication between teacher and learners does not bring about linguistic problems (Cook, 2001). It seems that teachers who cannot speak

English fluently or use English precisely can apply GTM in the target language classroom since they can provide knowledge in their mother tongue (Liebscher and O’Cain, 2005). Code switching is perceived as highly beneficial, especially for lower level learners, in ensuring that task instructions are precise and classroom procedures can easily be understood (Cook, 2001; Harmer, 2001).

On the other hand, despite many benefits of applying GTM, there are numerous studies that indicate the negative effect of applying GTM in the classroom. It can be said that there are a number of issues questioning with whom and why GTM should be implemented in the language classroom. Additionally, as noted in Vermes (2010), the main foci of this method are reading, comprehension, and translation; therefore, there is little direct confrontation with foreign elements. Equally importantly, development of cultural awareness and everyday life experiences are scarcely involved in the classroom where GTM is applied (Abdullah, 2013). Thus, despite the fact that learners are likely to master grammatical rules, these rules cannot be appropriately applied in a real situation due to the lack of communicative competence development, bringing about low self-confidence in using English (Nunan, 2003). Moreover, Wang’s (2009) study has reported that the lack of communicative practice in the classroom is likely to contribute to boredom for learners, since classes applying GTM are normally taught in a lecture style, where the teacher speaks his/her native language almost all the time rather than using the target language; therefore, lessons can be tedious and learners lose interest in the classroom. This may not, of course, be a criticism of the GTM method itself, but rather the way it is implemented. Good teachers can create interesting classes, whatever their teaching methods, and make learners active in the classroom. Abdullah (2013) has further explained that it is possible for learners who have learned their target language through GTM to be familiar with the habit of first thinking in their native language and interpreting their thought into the target language. As a result, they are unable to get proficiency in the target language that approximates to that in the mother tongue as noted in Kavaliauskiene and Kaminskiene (2007). Mahmoud (2006) also suggests that although students are very good at understanding authentic reading or listening materials, the majority of them still have to keep mentally translating from the target language to the first language, and vice versa.

Although, it can be claimed that GTM has been generally regarded as the least effective teaching approach, it is still widely used in schools around the world, especially those in Asia (Ahmad and Rao, 2013; Richards and Rodgers, 2007). Despite the fact that GTM is still widely

applied in the second language classroom, no theory for this method is specially formulated. There has been little literature that provides a rationale or justification for this method, especially from a linguistics and educational aspect. According to Richards and Rodgers (2007), modern scholars have negatively regarded GTM as a legitimate language teaching method.

2.5.1.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The origins of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are primarily found “in the changes in English language teaching tradition dating from the late 1960s, (Richards and Rodgers, 2007). Because the traditional syllabus failed to encourage language learners to use language appropriately for genuine communication outside the classroom, despite the fact that learners could produce the correct sentences in the classroom, some linguists attempted to re-design the syllabus in a bid to achieve the communicative goals of language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2007).

CLT has been widely used in second and foreign language teaching (Chang, 2011). It marks a radical change from the traditional GTM, which has been implemented throughout history. The GTM relies on repetition and drills, whereas CLT mainly focuses on class exercises, which vary according to the learner’s reaction and responses. According to Larsen-Freeman (2007, p.121), CLT aims broadly to “apply [a] theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication.” CLT theory emphasises practice as a means of developing communicative skills in real-life situations that learners are liable to encounter. It can be said that the CLT approach is primarily aimed at preparing language learners for communication; therefore, mistakes are acceptable. Importantly, misconceptions about CLT among ELT practitioners are often a difficulty of CLT implementation in the classroom. Thompson (1996) has pointed out the four widely-held misconceptions about CLT, these being lack of grammar, the speaking skill, doing pair work and group work, and too much time, skills, and energy needed for teachers. These misconceptions have had a negative effect on CLT implementation. Sato and Kleinsasser (1999) found that Japanese EFL teachers could not understand the CLT concept accurately, which affected their readiness to implement CLT in the classroom. This study (Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999) was among the first to investigate practitioners’ practice in the classroom and to explore the relevance of teachers’ belief, knowledge and real practice in the classroom;

therefore, it is useful example in terms of the area of misconception of CLT principles. It might be beneficial that professional training should be provided for English language teachers to make them fully understand how to apply CLT in the classroom practice, as noted in Hiep, (2007); Orafi and Borg, (2009); Kalanzadeh et al., (2013) that due to the limited knowledge of how to apply CLT in the classroom, many EFL teachers have also complained about the lack of professional training in CLT to equip them with a better understanding of the use of CLT.

A number of studies have explored the effects of applying CLT in the classroom. A considerable number of difficulties have emerged. The CLT approach has been criticised for being biased in favour of native-language teachers, since the activities provided in the class create an unrestricted range of linguistic forms by learners; therefore, it is rather difficult for non-native teachers to be sufficiently well rounded in the “target language” to tackle all the language problems that may arise during the class (Harmer, 2001). Not only do teachers teach the target language to learners, but they also have to induct their learners into membership of the English speaking people. As a result, it is considered very troublesome for non-native teachers who are not fluent in the “target language” to teach their learners effectively. For example, applying CLT is considered difficult for non-native English speaking teachers, due to their lack of knowledge (Koosha and Yakhabi, 2013). Furthermore, a study conducted in Hungary has pointed out that although Hungarian EFL teachers had good grammar knowledge, their English pronunciation was poor and rather out-dated (Benke and Medgyes, 2005). According to Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2007) study, Thai secondary school teachers lack confidence in implementing CLT in the classroom, since they are worried about not having adequate knowledge for communicative activities. This study further reports that teachers admitted being confident in teaching grammatical rules rather than communicative skills so some training might be necessary to increase their confidence.

Crucially, learners’ low English proficiency is also regarded as a constraint on implementing CLT in the classroom. Hiep (2007) reports in a study in Vietnam that Vietnamese EFL learners do not have adequate knowledge of English to communicate with each other. Thus, most of them use the Vietnamese language with their peers when engaging in group work; therefore, English language teachers experience difficulties in getting learners to participating in the communicative activities in English. Similar to the situation in Thailand, Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) have pointed out that Thai EFL learners have very limited knowledge of English, resulting in the difficulty for teachers to engage in communicative activities in the classroom.

Despite the importance of CLT, the heavy focus on examination or the deeply rooted examination culture is one of the difficulties of developing CLT in the classroom since teachers still need to apply other teaching approaches to provide grammar and reading skill knowledge which exist in the examination. Manajitt (2008) has explored Thai EFL school teachers in Bangkok, and found out that both teachers and learners primarily focused on the English knowledge and skills that were likely to be in the entrance examination rather than English for communication. This finding is similar to that of Islam and Bari (2012) regarding applying CLT in Thailand, which reveals that Thai and Bangladeshi students primarily focus on grades and examinations; thus, paying attention only to the skills in the test, including grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. These two studies (Manajitt, 2008; Islam and Bari, 2012) have pinpointed the issue of the exam-oriented system which impedes the development of CLT in the classroom; however, the latter further suggests that students from international schools face fewer problems with CLT and they are also more fluent in speaking English than those in Thai schools; therefore, despite the heavy focus on the exam, the school surroundings where English is used as the major language might have influence on the proficiency of communicative skills. Due to the heavy focus on grades and entrance examination, it might be more advantageous to include speaking and listening skills in the exam with the hope that educators will pay more attention to other skills apart from grammar and reading, as noted in Ahn (2015), noting that the new National English Ability Test (NEAT), planned to replace the current entrance examination in 2016, includes speaking and listening skill in addition to reading and writing with the hope that the test helps develop English proficiency test in Korea.

Furthermore, large class sizes and limited time allocation are also considered to be difficulties in implementing CLT. Bock (2000) reports that in Vietnam large class sizes and limited time allocated to each lesson make it challenging for Vietnamese EFL teachers to provide supplementary communicative activities in the classroom. Similarly, Dhanasobhon's (2006) study suggests that large class sizes in Thailand impede the implementation of CLT in the classroom since Thai EFL teachers find it difficult to prepare activities and material for their learners, as well as controlling and organising classroom interaction.

The mismatch between curriculum and classroom practice is another important difficulty in applying CLT in the classroom. It is pointed out that teachers are likely to rely on their personal beliefs and experiences rather than theoretical knowledge (Wanchai, 2012). Furthermore, Wang (2008) notes in a study in China that there was a gap between the textbook's designer

principles where a learner-centred approach was the main focus and the classroom reality, where teachers still focus on teacher-centredness. Orafi and Borg (2009) have also undertaken a study in Libya, pointing out that EFL teachers identified a disconnection between curriculum policies and classroom practices in that key curricular principles of CLT did not reflect in teaching practices. In Thailand, Tayjasanant and Barnard's (2010) study also reports a wide gap between the official curriculum statement and what actually happens in the classroom in that National Education Act (1999) promotes CLT as the English teaching approach whereas most English language teachers still apply GTM in the classroom.

The other important issue relating to the difficulty of applying CLT in the classroom is the cultural effect. For example, a culture of expecting to only receive instruction from the teacher seems to impede the implementation of CLT in the classroom in Vietnam, since some students do not take part in the communicative activities, and do not accept peer feedback (Hiep, 2007). With regard to the status of English language in EFL countries, English is used as an international language; thus, there are scarce opportunities to use English in everyday life in EFL countries. The lack of an English environment is reported, which hinders the implementation of CLT in the classroom (Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013).

2.5.2 Textbooks

As a mediator between teacher and learner, studies have suggested the importance of the textbook; therefore, issues emerging from textbook design and selection have been investigated. Some studies primarily focus on the consequence of textbook design (Funk, 2012), others concentrate on the textbook evaluation process (Cheng et al., 2011). This study explores teachers' and students' perceptions on the issue of textbooks in English language education.

Textbooks play a vital role in language classrooms since they are essential elements of learning, given that they provide an explicit framework which helps teachers and students keep track of what they have already done and what they will be doing in the next lessons and also help teachers prepare materials for the class in a timely manner; therefore, teachers do not have to waste time creating other materials (Ur, 1998). Considering the importance of textbooks, it is of vital importance for selectors to choose the most appropriate teaching materials for their learners, as pointed out by Cheng et al., (2011) who indicate that textbook selection has an effect on the teacher, students, and classroom dynamic.

However, there are a number of studies that point out the problems of using textbooks, mostly involving textbook quality. Textbooks used in classrooms do not always meet students' needs, since they are mostly written for a global market. Therefore, textbooks are likely to include some irrelevant and uninteresting topics for some groups of students that lead to students becoming bored in the classroom, as noted in Diniah, (2013), that textbooks do not meet teachers' and students' requirement, because of the lack of appropriate content. This is also supported by Kayapinar (2009), suggesting that it is highly beneficial to use a textbook which could meet learners' needs or expectations. However, it is rather difficult for a textbook to meet all learners' needs since each learner might be interested in different areas, as pointed out by Riassati and Zare, 2010, and no single textbook can meet a large and different groups of language learners; therefore, teachers take this into account and try to compensate for the weaknesses of each textbook to bring about the most effective outcome for their learners. Moreover, some textbooks selected for language classrooms are written by foreigners; hence, the topics related to the cultural setting and knowledge of the native countries might not be appropriate for students (Riassati and Zare, 2010; Srakang and Jansem, 2012); however, it does not always mean that providing cultural settings and knowledge of native English speaking countries is uninteresting. It can be beneficial to provide cultural knowledge in English language education as suggested by Thanasoulas (2001) and it seems that teaching foreign language could beneficially include cultural factors as foreign language intercultural competence is vital for the enrichment of communicative competence and can promote cultural insightfulness. Thus, the textbook selected should not be culturally biased so that learners can portray positive stereotypes (Tok, 2010).

Furthermore, the fact that most textbooks do not meet learners' educational levels and proficiency levels is also regarded as a problem, despite the fact that textbooks are claimed to provide for each level and are properly organised to suit students' levels of study (Chandran, 2003). Level of language input in the textbooks does not match learners' language proficiency. Teachers still suggested that most textbooks contained little explanation and insufficient amount of knowledge including all skills; therefore, they needed to provide supplementary worksheets to add students' extra knowledge (Ghorbani, 2011; Srakang and Jansem, 2012). Moreover, because the educational system in many countries such as Thailand and Turkey is exam-oriented, the primary aim of students for English learning is to pass university entrance examinations (Darasawang, 2007). Therefore, the knowledge provided in textbooks might be inadequate for students to prepare themselves to pass examinations, especially because there

are only a few examples of university examination-type questions in most Thai textbooks (Srakang and Janssem, 2012). It is thus necessary to re-evaluate textbooks in order to respond to students' needs and provide more appropriate knowledge in language classes (Phonhan et al., 2012).

From all the issues mentioned above, textbook evaluation might be needed, as noted in Zhao and Zhang (2005), since this allows teachers and educational administrators to assess the strong and weak points of textbooks when they choose them for each level of students to meet their needs, to cover all language skills, to focus on the examination as well as to foster cultural awareness. This is because some textbooks do not cover all language skills or there is no balance among four language skills, as suggested in some studies (Farooqui, 2008; Ghorbani, 2011) which have found that some textbooks pay little attention to writing and speaking. Language teachers, therefore, have the responsibility to choose the appropriate textbook to meet their students' needs, as teachers play a vital role as mediators between published textbooks and their students (Srakang and Janssem, 2012).

Interestingly, due to a number of difficulties of textbooks, some teachers in Srakang & Janssem (2012)'s study believed that using English textbooks was a waste of time. Instead, due to the exam-oriented system in Thailand, Thai EFL teachers in this study provided supplementary worksheets to meet learners' need, including detailed grammar and language items, most of which were taken from examples of the entrance examination.

2.6 Issues with regard to culture, beliefs and values

Culture in the English language classroom has differently influenced language teaching and learning depending on where the English classes take place. Some studies have critically analysed the underlying assumptions about culture (Ho, 2009), others focused on the application of an international partnership project (Kourova and Modianos, 2013) to present the issue of culture and inter-cultural awareness in EFL classroom. However, this study will explore teachers' and students' perceptions, so as to investigate the issue of culture in English language education.

Culture covers various areas of human life (Abubaker, 2008). Culture has been defined in many different ways. Samovar et al. (2000) have defined it as the way of life of a people, including

their learned behaviour patterns, attitudes, and material things and these are transmitted from generations to generation through learning. Also, culture may be defined as the personality characteristics of a society; it is like glue sticking people together (Watson et al., 2002). Without culture, people could not understand the lives and motivations of others, leading to the difficulty of connecting with their concerns and interests (Kuo and Lai, 2006). Culture has also been inherent in human beings and a powerful human tool for developing society, adding to knowledge, and establishing a relationship between people in the society.

Cultural difference is considered to be one of the important issues in English language education since some sociologists believe that without language, culture does not exist and language is also influenced and shaped by culture (Wang, 2011). Due to different backgrounds, it is beneficial for teachers and their learners to know each other's cultural aspects to avoid misunderstanding. For example, Chinese students always smile when they cannot answer questions, which might be misunderstood by their teachers from a different background (Scollon and Scollon, 2001). Furthermore, Chinese students hardly use expressions such as nodding their heads or giving feedback like 'of course' when they respond to their teachers and peers. Therefore, teachers and their classmates from different backgrounds are likely to interpret the lack of expression as a disagreement with others (Jandt, 2003). From these examples, the influence of culture in learning practice in the classroom may be seen as being in evidence. Thus, it is worth mentioning culture and its influence on English language learning.

The substantial example of the influence of culture or value on learning is Confucian philosophy. Confucian philosophy, mainly Chinese values, influence language learning among Asian countries such as China, Korea, and Thailand. Its belief primarily focuses on the harmony in society through respect for age and social hierarchy (Jandt, 2003). The influence of Confucianism has impact on patterns of thinking, communication behaviours, and the way learners use English as a second language (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Generally, according to Confucian philosophy, learners can show their high respect for teachers by addressing them with formal titles in their home country (Scollon and Scollon, 2001; Abubaker, 2008). Moreover, Chinese learners also consider their teacher as the smartest and most knowledgeable person, whose most important responsibility is to provide them with knowledge to pass examinations (Stephens, 1997).

With regard to the influence on English language learning, the characteristics of Confucian philosophy can be identified, including a lack of critical-analytical skills, passivity, and effort versus achievement (Cross and Hitchcock, 2007; Wang, 2006; and Shi, 2006):

Lack of critical-analytical skills includes a major focus on the mastery of correct knowledge through memorisation and rote learning. Stephens (1997) has pointed out that teachers' role is to transfer knowledge whereas learners' role is to listen and memorise the content. Consequently, learners holding with Confucian philosophy are likely to appear to be lacking critical and analytical skills. Similarly, Thai teachers think that students trust their teachers to provide them with the best of knowledge, so Thai learners are not aware of the concept of autonomous learning, which is as an important skill in the current fast-changing world (Dueraman, 2013). As also suggested by Nonkukhetkhong et al., (2006) Thai teachers do not apply CLT in the classroom since they are aware that Thai learners are not familiar with autonomous learning; therefore, language teachers find it difficult to encourage their learners to study by themselves. Thai learners normally read and do only what the teachers assigns them (Sittihitikul, 2010). Furthermore, regarding English language teaching, Thai education principally prefers the transferring of academic knowledge through memory-based learning, to encourage learners to acquire knowledge, analytical skills, problem solving, and creativity, as pointed out in Kitjaroonchai (2013); Richmond, (2007). Therefore, because of this rote system, most Thai learners fail to apply knowledge in the real life situations because they merely memorise concepts and matter, without any interest in them (Kitjaroonchai, 2013). Accordingly, a learner who has acquired grammar and vocabulary knowledge need not necessarily be proficient in English language, and may also be unable to communicate well in English, as Suwannarak and Phothongsunan (2008) report that the major problem of English language learning in Thailand is the inability to communicate. Thus, Thai teachers should be aware that learning a new language is no longer limited to the classroom territories, since the world is becoming a global village (Dueraman, 2013).

In contrast to Western culture, students influenced by Confucian philosophy do not volunteer and question the validity of content (Wang, 2013). This passivity is mainly related to the concept of losing face and the associated feeling of embarrassing when they make the mistakes. Chinese' face is also a belief that influences language learning. The effect of the Chinese face includes avoiding mistakes especially in speaking English in the classroom. Most Chinese learners cared so much about their 'face' that they avoided speaking in English, since they were

worried about producing speech with wrong grammar. Apart from speaking, Chinese learners are not willing to help each other read compositions, since they are afraid of losing face if their friends found the mistakes. According to Confucian principle of modesty, Chinese learners seem not express their true feelings or opinions for fear of embarrassing their peers (Chan, 1999). This could impede the opportunity to practice communicative skill in the classroom. For example, in Thailand, Thai learners fail to achieve English competence, mainly because of the lack of a supportive environment and inadequate communicative practices (Hengsaddeekul et al., 2010). This is because most Thai learners choose to play rather passive roles in the classroom, since they feel safe and comfortable as silent learners, so they have little chance to improve their communicative competence with their teachers as well as classmates, resulting in a lack confidence in using English, especially on a daily basis (Prapphal, 2004). Arguably, Shi's (2006) study shows the decline of the Confucian philosophy's influence on learning, suggesting that Chinese learners are beginning to prefer to be equal with their teachers in a more interactive and interesting learning environment and they are more active with more language learning strategies rather than rote system.

Apart from the influence of Confucian belief and Chinese face, shyness is based on the assumption that individuals try to take control of their self-images in social and public contexts (Stritzke et al., 2004). Individuals prefer to say nothing rather than being disapproved of or rejected by others (Saunders and Chester, 2008). Butt et al. (2011) also claim that shyness obstructs the development of students, especially in oral performance. For example, some EFL learners do better in reading and writing but they do very poorly in speaking, due to their shyness (Pazouki and Rastegar, 2009). Meanwhile, non-shy students were reported to perform better in English language learning in comparison with shy students (Bashosh et al., 2013). However, Pazouki and Rastegar's (2009) study reported no correlation between shyness and learners' language proficiency, including all language skills. Thus, it does not always mean that shyness impedes language learning. It might be claimed that Bashosh et al.'s (2013) and Pazouki & Rastegar's (2009) studies have investigated university students; however, both studies are two of the most salient studies pointing out the relationship between shyness and EFL proficiency which has impact on this study.

The other belief is collectivism. Thai society is collectivist as evidenced by a sense of responsibility to the group, the family, or even extended social groupings. Moreover, Thai society primarily focuses on social interest rather than personal interest (Buriyameathagul,

2013). Owing to the belief in collectivism, Thai learners primarily concentrate on uniformity rather than individuality as being required in foreign language learning. Moreover, most learners do not raise any questions in the classroom, although they disagree with others. Thus, learners will normally listen to teachers since they are not encouraged to share their opinion. This belief is rather disadvantageous for learners, because the teachers may assume that students have enough knowledge and unknowingly ignore the importance of learners' expectations and needs when learning a new language (Dueraman, 2013).

Moreover, Foley (2005) and Wilhelm and Pei (2008) suggested the influence of Thai mannerisms on English language learning, consisting of thoughtfulness and politeness. Teachers are regarded as the highest in the social hierarchy in the classroom; thus, they are respected, obeyed, and followed. Apparently, people hardly learn from their independent thinking, but from others; thus, learners are likely to believe that the only pattern of good English language is demonstrated by their teacher. Students mostly imitate their teachers in pronunciation, as well as speaking style, and this could cause problems for learners owing to the change of their teachers of English since some teachers might have different speaking styles and various accents; therefore, learners are liable to be confused about the appropriate way to speak English. Of note is Wilhelm and Pei's (2008) finding that owing to the precepts of politeness and respect for others; most Thai learners are unwilling to express their opinions that may be in contrast with others' ideas, for fear of offending others. Consequently, group discussions become a less practical means for learning than individual essay writing or class activities. In sum, the mannerisms of Thai learners keep them from better understanding their lessons, leading to low improvement in their English language skills (Somphong, 2013).

2.7 Issues with regard to linguistic differences and language interference

Linguistic difference and language interference are two obstacles in English language education, affecting listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Some studies have created pre-test and post-test research designs (e.g. Oradee, 2012) while others have applied project-based learning (e.g. Poonpon, 2011) to investigate the problems with regard to these issues. However, this study explores teachers' and learners' perceptions to present the problems of linguistic difference and language interference in English language education.

Language interference is also known as language transfer, first language (L1) interference and cross meaning and linguistic difference (Sinha et al., 2009). Ellis (2008) define interference as a transfer' which learners' first language (L1) has influence on the acquisition of second language (L2). And the transfer is influenced by perceptions about what is transferable, as well as stage of their L2 learning development. Due to the interference of L1 for L2 learners, many difficulties for foreign language learners include phonology, lexicon, and grammar of the target language. Language interference could have positive and negative outcome. It is positive when relevant structures of both L1 and L2 are similar and lead to the correct production of the second language. In contrast, it could result in negative influences when L1 and L2 are different in structure, causing the interference of the learning of the second language. L1 overlaps with L2 and the linguistic interference occurs in polyglot individuals (Sinha et al., 2009). This interference can be regarded as one of the factors that impede the development of language skills in the second language, probably causing the negative effects on language learning.

In Thailand, the Thai government has continuously sought to improve Thai learners' English proficiency (Kanoksilapatham, 2007). However, some studies (Wiriyachitra, 2005; Pongsiriwet, 2002) have found that there are still a number of problems in English language learning, including in all English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is claimed that there are two main factors that affect Thai learners' ability to learn English: firstly, little opportunity is given for Thai learners to use English in the classroom, as it is claimed that learners spend 80 percent of their time in the classroom using Thai; and secondly, the University Entrance Examination, one of the major exams taken by learners in Thailand, is also considered to be a factor (Foley, 2005). Most Thai learners wish to pass the exam, wherein English is one of the compulsory subjects taken by all learners. Thus, most learners are likely to focus mainly on reading, vocabulary, and grammar, whereas listening, speaking, and writing skills are normally ignored. The remainder of this section will discuss how Thai learners' English language skills are regarded by some as an impediment to the success of English language learning among Thai learners (Bennui, 2007; Somphong, 2013).

2.7.1 Listening skills

It is widely accepted that listening comprehension plays a vitally important role in English language teaching and learning (Saitakham, 2012). Furthermore, Rost (2001) has indicated that listening is the primary channel through which language learners access second language data; thus, listening skills are regarded as a key to second language acquisition.

Listeners must have adequate knowledge of the language in order to be highly proficient in terms of listening skills (Vandergrift, 1999). Regarding second language learning, learners' listening ability will gradually improve during the process of learning a language. In order to practice listening skills, Fernandez (2001) emphasises the importance of language teachers, not only in providing knowledge for their learners, but also in encouraging them to succeed in their learning. In addition to the teacher's role, there are many other means by which a learner can improve their listening skills outside of the classroom, such as watching educational English programmes on television, listening to an international radio station, chatting with foreigners, as well as listening through the internet or websites (Saitakham, 2012).

However, there are some problems with regard to listening arising in second language education, namely, English language education. Bennui (2007) has investigated the causes of Thai learners' poor performance in terms of listening, and suggests that students' prior knowledge of English is the main cause. Listening is one of the most difficult English language skills for Thai EFL learners, due to the fact that they lack the opportunity to practise listening in the real context. The findings of Bennui's study (2007) show that learners tend to have higher listening performance if they have better linguistic knowledge gained from their past experiences upon which to build. Therefore, it is vital that teachers provide learners with a variety of teaching methods to improve learners' listening skills. This is also supported by the study of Juan and Abidin (2013), suggesting that lack of prior knowledge in English vocabulary impedes Chinese learners becoming proficient in listening skill. Furthermore, the main problem with listening ability among learners is that they are not familiar with the English sound system or native English speaking teachers' accents and pronunciation, which leads to students not fully understanding the lessons, as also reported in Huang (2004), that Chinese students find it difficult to study English with an American professor due to lack of clear pronunciation, causing them not to understand lectures. It can be claimed that Juan & Abidin's (2013) study and Huang's (2004) study primarily focuses on Chinese students in university level; however, this study has shown the significant problems of listening skill of English language among EFL students, some of which are the potential problems among Thai students reflected in my study. Moreover, due to the fact that learners often have inadequate opportunities to practice listening and speaking, teachers must include reading-writing activities designed to enhance listening-speaking skills in their lessons. This might be rather difficult for countries where the grammar translation method has been chosen to be the teaching approach since reading, writing, and grammar are the main focus of learning. Therefore, little

opportunity is given to learners to practice listening and speaking skills. Integrating listening practice together with other the practice of other skills can encourage learners to develop their listening performance (Bennui, 2007).

2.7.2 Speaking skills

Problems with speaking skills for English language learners include pronunciation, especially where accent and intonation are considered as important factors in teaching and learning English in expanding circle countries (Goodwin, 2001; Lazaraton, 2001). In Thailand, some learners still have difficulty in communicating in English, despite the fact that they have studied English for a number of years (Numpoon et al., 2012).

Regarding pronunciation, it has been suggested that the interference of a first language affects learners' speaking ability in terms of the target language, bringing about mispronunciation in the second language (Altenberg, 2005; Yamada, 2005). Stressed syllables and intonation are also regarded as potential problems when language learners practice pronunciation (Numpoon et al., 2012). This is also supported by the study of Wei and Zhou (2002), suggesting that Thai learners mispronounce some consonant sounds and ending sounds. Moreover, Thai learners sometimes practice speaking English in a monotonous voice, and often think in Thai and translate into English later meaning that they do not speak automatically.

Problems with regard to speaking skills mostly include the unnaturalness of the way some language learners involve themselves in speaking activities. Khamkhien (2010) identifies reasons why teaching and learning spoken English in Thailand is still sometimes ineffective. As stated earlier, native English speakers' accents are considered to be more acceptable among learners, especially in terms of being prestigious and having high status in society (Buripakdi, 2008); therefore, most Thai learners feel that they need to sound as native-like as possible in order to be admired by others. Moreover, learners' exposure to authentic English is limited due to the fact that English is used as a foreign language in Thailand, as noted in Senel (2006) that learners who live in English communities or outer circles countries have more opportunities to listen and speak English, and are therefore more likely to be proficient English users. Derwing et al.'s (2007) findings also agree that learners' language experience, the opportunity they have to use English in their daily lives, affects their pronunciation ability.

Furthermore, regarding aspects of learners' personalities, such as being shy or introverted, these can result in a lack of opportunities to practice phonological and speaking activities if it means that they are not eager to participate in classroom activities (Senel, 2006), hindering learners from improving their speaking skills. Thus, it is vitally important that teachers of English encourage their learners to practice communicative skills and stimulate learners' pronunciation competence as far as possible in the classroom (Khamkhien, 2010).

What is more, Sursattayawong (2006) has investigated problems affecting communication between Thai people and foreigners, reporting issues of misinterpretation regarding the contexts and contents of language used, the accents of foreigners from inner and outer circle countries (Pawapatcharaudom, 2007), the level of language and vocabulary, and common characteristics of Thai speakers such as lack of self-confidence. All of these factors can result in miscommunication during conversation.

2.7.3 Reading skills

Useful strategies to develop reading ability include scanning, skimming, speeding reading, and the ability to identify and eliminate irrelevant information (McNamara, 2009). These skills must be stimulated so that learners can improve their reading comprehension. Regarding academic reading, text analysis, making inferences and critical thinking are also needed to enhance reading competence (Munsakorn, 2012). A considerable number of studies (e.g., Suknantapong et al., 2002; Westwood, 2003; Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008; McNamara, 2009) have identified difficulties in developing reading skills, including low level decoding skills, lack of motivation to learn, lack of cultural knowledge of foreign material, lack of diversity in teaching materials, lack of learner autonomy, over-dependence on the teacher, lack of opportunities to read, and insufficient exposure to reading materials. With regard to the examination, Soonthornmanee (2002) has argued that reading is a vitally important skill, especially for high school students due to the fact that they have to be able to compete in order to pass entrance examinations (wherein English is a main subject). Thus, it is vitally important to improve English reading comprehension proficiency among Thai students.

In English language education, there are some problems with regard to reading. Decoding is one of the important issues, because learners who are unable to recognise word meaning waste their time defining words by other clues in the text, whereas those who recognise meaning are automatically able to develop their reading comprehension more effectively (Westwood,

2003). Another factor that affects learners' reading comprehension is the lack of encouragement for autonomous learning; most learners are prone to relying on others, such as teachers, friends, parents, and dictionaries, to help them solve their reading problems and rarely attempt to do it by themselves (Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008). Furthermore, textbook material is identified as one of the factors that prevents learners from improving their reading comprehension. This is because learners need to understand domain-specific knowledge about the topic of the text, such as history, science, or geography, in order to understand what is being said. However, learners often do not have adequate domain knowledge, resulting in a lack of understanding of the text (McNamara, 2009). Pratontep and Chinwonno (2008) also maintain that Thai learners who have low English proficiency tend to face difficulties in terms of reading English. Interestingly, learners may know the meaning of words and sentences, but are unable to understand the relationship between sentences and the meaning of the whole text (McNamara, 2009). Nuttall (2005) also argues that classroom pedagogies might affect learners' reading comprehension. Chomchaiya and Dunworth (2008) have also investigated barriers to Thai learners' English reading comprehension, indicating that Thai learners struggle to develop reading skills in terms of understanding contextual clues, identifying the main ideas of texts, and handling vocabulary in translation.

2.7.4 Writing skills

The nature of writing means this language skill is perceived as the most difficult skill to master by both native and non-native speaking learners, resulting in a lack of interest in studying writing (Dueraman, 2012). Regardless of learner attitudes, writing is perceived as an important skill to develop in order to master a target language.

Writing is often considered one of the most difficult skill for EFL learners to master (Watcharapunyawong and Usaha, 2013), particularly as it requires both semantic and syntactic knowledge. There are a variety of writing competencies upon which teachers of English need to focus to improve their learners' writing proficiency, including grammatical structures, vocabulary, organisation, and ability to give feedback to learners' on writing when appropriate assessment is needed. Weigle (2002) has noted that inadequate linguistic knowledge or limited language proficiency negatively affects second language writing quality. Therefore, English language teachers need to spend time helping learners to develop writing skills. Similarly, Jenwitheesuk (2009) has also examined causes of writing errors among Thai English learners, revealing that their errors are primarily caused by insufficiency of syntactic knowledge,

including in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, it is vital that EFL teachers ensure that learners gain extensive language input in order to stimulate their writing development (Dueraman, 2012).

It can thus be said that first language interference in second language performance is a severe problem among Thai EFL learners. The English and Thai systems are different in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and textual conventions (Thep-Ackrapong, 2005; Tuaychareon, 2003). Numerous studies (e.g., Sattayatham and Honsa, 2007; Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong, 2008; Jenwitheesuk, 2009) have attempted to categorise types of error made by Thai learners when writing, including the interference of the first language with regard to direct translation, the differences of syntactic rules between Thai and English, and the transfer of the Thai system to English writing. This is because Thai learners frequently think in Thai before writing in English, meaning that errors can easily be made (Bennui, 2008). Sattayatham and Honsa (2007) support these studies, pointing out that among Thai learners syntactic and semantic features are prominent in most errors which are made when translating and writing in English, largely owing to the fact that Thai learners depend heavily on the Thai language system.

2.8 Summary

Due to the fact that the study of perceptions of teachers and learners and their comparative views about problems of English language education is inadequate and still under research, especially in Thailand. I consider it as a gap in educational research. This study, therefore, aims to fill the gap to explore the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the problems of English language education in Thailand. Moreover, this study is among the first to be conducted in Thailand which has attempted to investigate the perceptions of teachers and students at the upper secondary level, applying a bottom-up, grounded approach in order to capture the problems raised by authentic teachers' and learners' voices.

This chapter has reviewed the related literature and the theoretical framework guiding this study. It started with the process of literature selection, followed by the importance of teachers' and learners' perceptions and their comparative perceptions, and the issues of English language education in global and Thai context are subsequently shown. From all the literatures provided, it was prioritised by the number of times it was mentioned in previous studies, showing that

issues with regard to policy of English language education as well as those of NS and NNS teachers appear to be most important issues for this study. Each section consisted of issues relating to policies of English language education, teachers, teaching approach and materials, the influences of culture, belief and value, and linguistic differences. Of the five issues, the issues of the policy of English language education consisted of class size and examination system. The issues of the teacher included problems of native and non-native English speaking teachers, their accent influences on credibility, shadow education, teachers' characteristics, and professional development. Then the teaching approaches applied in the classroom and the quality of textbooks were two issues of teaching approach and materials. Subsequently, the influences of culture, belief, and value were reviewed. Lastly, the issues of linguistic difference and language interference, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, were explored.

Regarding problems of English language education both in global and Thai context reviewed, it is vitally important to note that five key issues, together with fifteen problems of English language education have been pointed out in this chapter. Concerning the main sources having impact on this study, it might be said that some literatures have included various issues of English language education in different levels, however, each issue, generally, consists of the its own influential sources (e.g. class size (Khanarat & Nomura, 2008), English language examination (Chih-Min, 2007), native and non-native English speaking teacher (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Ma, 2012), the accent of English language teachers (Buripakdi, 2008; Methitham, 2009), shadow education (Thuamkorn, 2009; Boonsaeng et al., 2010; Bray, 2013), teachers' characteristics and lesson delivery (Borg, 2006; Chen, 2012), professional development (Mizell, 2010), teaching approaches and style (Chang, 2011; Abdullah, 2013), the quality of textbook (Srakang & Jansem, 2012), culture, beliefs, and values (Wilhelm & Pei, 2008; Dueraman, 2013), language interference (Wiriyachitra, 2005; Pongsiriwet, 2002), listening skill (Bennui, 2007), speaking skill (Senel, 2006; Khamkhien, 2010), reading skill (Chomchaiya & Dunworth, 2008; Mcnamara, 2009), writing skill (Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007)). Despite the fact that there are a considerable number of sources reviewed in this study, a few literatures are the main sources having significant influence on this study, consisting of Choi & Lee (2008) and Kitjaroonchai (2013). However, due to the fact that this study was conducted to investigate perceptions of Thai EFL teachers and learners of English language education at the upper secondary level, Noom-Ura (2013) is considered as the most influential literature upon which the conclusion from the findings in this study will draw. Despite only

teachers being interviewed, using questionnaire as a research methodology in Noom-Ura (2013), data from the study are very useful and have great impact on my study in terms of problems of English language education in Thailand. However, my study filled research gap in that, to provide detailed insights of problems of English language education, findings were investigated by applying in-depth interview with bottom-up approach to Thai secondary teachers. Apart from teachers, in order to gather extensive data, this study also applied focus group interview with Thai secondary students to compare the perceptions of teachers and students in terms of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand. However, to the best of my knowledge, the study of students' perceptions of English language education have not been investigated in the upper secondary level. However, the reason why these studies (Noom-Ura, 2013; Kitjaroonchai, 2013; Choi & Lee, 2008) have the great impact on this study is not because teachers' perceptions have been investigated. Instead, it is due to the fact that these studies have investigated the problems of English language education in secondary level both in Thai (Noom-Ura, 2013; Kitjaroonchai, 2013) and global context (Choi & Lee, 2008), on which this study is based.

The instruments used to examine the problems and to achieve this aim will be reviewed in chapter three.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction and overview of the chapter

From the research questions mentioned in chapter 1, it is vitally important for the researcher to apply appropriate research methodology in order to answer these questions. This chapter will discuss the research methodology selected for use in this study.

Generally, a research project is based upon underlying philosophical assumptions about what makes valid research and which research methods should be appropriately used in a study for the development of knowledge. It is important to know what the assumptions are in order to conduct and evaluate a research. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the philosophical assumptions underlying this research, and to present the research approach. Moreover, general philosophical assumptions are presented; the interpretive philosophical stance is adopted for the framework of the research. Furthermore, research design, strategies, instruments, and data collection processes together with their strengths and weaknesses, and pilot study are also discussed. Equally important, in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, reliability and validity are also presented. Finally, ethical considerations are discussed at the end of this chapter.

The research method selected in this study was that of qualitative phenomenology. The research design applied in this research was an interpretive case study, analysed through qualitative methods. In-depth interviews and focus group interviews were used as the data collection tools. Furthermore, strengths and weaknesses of each data collection process were also presented. Additionally, a pilot study is also discussed to show that the researcher was aware of potential limitations, flaws, and weaknesses within the interview design prior to time-consuming process of collecting data in the research. What is more, a variety of methods were suggested including literature review check, and triangulation, and later employed to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. At the end of the chapter, ethical considerations are discussed.

Overview

3.2 Research Paradigm

- 3.3 Phenomenology
- 3.4 Qualitative approach
- 3.5 Case Study
- 3.6 Data Collection
- 3.7 Ethical Consideration
- 3.8 Summary

3.2. Research paradigm

When conducting a study, identifying the research paradigm is vitally important since it has been widely acknowledged as a means of enabling researcher to determine an appropriate framework. A research paradigm is an all-encompassing system of interrelated thinking and practice, in which the nature of enquiry, with ontology, epistemology and methodology is defined (Terre-Blanche and Kelly, 1999).

The term 'paradigm' originated from the Greek word *paradeigma* and translates in English as 'pattern'. This term was coined by Thomas Kuhn (1962) to represent a conceptual framework that is shared by a community of scientists, providing them with a convenient model for probing problems and finding solutions. A paradigm is, essentially, a worldview, a framework of values, beliefs, and methods wherein research can be anchored. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.105) point out that a paradigm can be defined as “the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation”.

Fossey et al. (2002, p.718), meanwhile, define a paradigm as “a system of ideas, or world view, used by a community of researchers to generate knowledge”. Philosophical assumptions or a theoretical paradigm about the nature of reality are vitally important to understanding the perspective from which the study is carried out (Krauss, 2005). Therefore, a theoretical paradigm is a formal means of identifying the underlying basis for the research framework that is used in constructing an investigation. Contemporary qualitative research is generally conducted using a number of paradigms that have an influence on conceptual and meta-theoretical concerns of legitimacy, data analysis, ontology and epistemology (Joubish et al., 2011).

Ontological and epistemology aspects involve a person's worldview, which has an important influence on the perceived relative significance of aspects of reality. Trochim (2000) define 'epistemology' as the philosophy of knowledge, or how we come to *know*. Likewise, epistemology is closely related to ontology, as well as methodology. Ontology usually involves the philosophy of reality, while epistemology identifies how people come to know this reality. Moreover, Bracken (2010, p.2) state that epistemology is firmly based on the ontological belief that "the behaviour of human subjects is manifest of an ordered and rule governed external reality". Therefore, there is a conceptual perspective that human behaviours and actions are firmly established by stimuli that are not of their own making.

Methodology addresses the particular practices used to gain knowledge of reality (Krauss, 2005). Dobson (2002) point out that the relationship between ontology and methodology (the latter being the researcher's theoretical view) also plays a vitally important role in alternative methods, since ontological assumptions or the underlying belief system broadly defines the methodology or the choice of methods.

3.2.1 Ontology

Term ontology originally derives from Greek; 'onto' means 'being', and 'logo' normally translated as 'science'. Thus, ontology is defined as the science or study of being (Lawson, 2004). Ontology is related to the nature of existence, the structure of reality, what things exist in the world, and also how we categorise them (Crotty, 1998). In other words, ontology is simply defined as what is real in the world. The general purpose of social science research is to understand social reality as different people view it, and to show how their perspectives shape the social action they take within that reality (Anderson et al., 2003). It is also important to investigate ontological distinctions (Crotty, 1998). This is because it enables the researcher to disclose how people's perceptions influence the way in which people uncover social reality. Researchers may view social reality as co-constructed by actors who interact and make sense of their world in a dynamic way. Moreover, truth in actors' experience can be investigated through rigorous interpretation (Bracken, 2010). According to Bryman (2008), there are two basic ontological positions: objectivism and constructionism.

Bryman (2008, p.19) defined objectivism as "an ontological position that asserts that social phenomenon and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors. [This] implies that social phenomena and the categories that we use in everyday discourse have an

existence that is independent or separate from actors.” In this light, an ontological position is implied that social phenomena confront actors as external facts that are beyond their reach or influence. In other words, reality exists outside of the individual and consists of specific entities with regard to ontological view. It may be noted that the world consists of entities and the relations that exist among them. From an objectivism perspective, reality exists through the structures of entities and each human has independent understanding.

In contrast to objectivism, constructivism is defined (Bryman, 2008, p. 19) as

“an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. [This] implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction, but ... are in a constant state of revision. In recent years, the term has also come to include the notion that researchers' own accounts of the social world are constructions. In other words, the researcher always presents a specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive. Knowledge is viewed as indeterminate,”

In this sense, constructionism asserts that social entities such as culture and organisations are created through the perceptions and actions of social actors. Therefore, social entities have a reality which is experienced and performed. Moreover, due to the fact that social interactions between actors are a continual process, social realities are active, which means that they are in a constant state of revision. Furthermore, social entities are definitely multiple in that they are different for different actors.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is a philosophy closely related to knowledge and how people come to know about a thing (Thomas, 2009). Epistemology can potentially be classified into three philosophically distinct categories: positivism, interpretivism and critical postmodernism (Merriam, 1998). Research paradigms reflect our beliefs about the world we live, as well as the world we want to live in. In this context, Guba and Lincoln (1994) distinguish between positivist, post-positivist, and postmodernist enquiry, categorising postmodernism and post-structuralism as belonging to the ‘critical theory’ category. They (1994, p.109) also point out that “the nature of reality assumed by positivism is realism, whereby a reality is assumed to exist; in contrast, post-positivism assumes that this ‘reality’ is only ‘imperfectly and

probabilistically apprehendable". The aim of positivist and post-positivist enquiry is to explain, to predict and to control (Willmott, 1997). Nevertheless, critical theory develops a more transactional and subjectivist epistemology as Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.110) state: "[T]he investigator and the investigated object are assumed to be interactively linked, with the values of the investigator . . . inevitably influencing the inquiry. Therefore, critical theory is primarily aimed at critique and emancipation (Willmott, 1997).

The philosophical assumption underlying this stems mainly from the interpretivist paradigm; therefore, further details of interpretivism paradigm will be explained in the following section.

Interpretivists believe that human beings are different from the material world and that the distinction between people and matter should be mirrored in terms of investigation (Bryman, 2008). It is therefore posited that the interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation, where observation refers to the accumulation of information or data about events, and interpretation involves rendering meaning pertaining to said data or information by making inferences or by judging the parallels between the data and some abstract pattern, as noted by Reeves and Hedberg (2003, p.32), the "interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from [the] subjective experiences of individuals. The use [of] meaning (versus measurement) oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, [which] rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and the subjects". Interestingly, Willis (1995) has claimed that interpretivists are anti-foundationalists, i.e., they strongly believe that there is no single precise route or particular method to knowledge. Similarly, Walsham (1995) points out that there are no 'correct' or 'incorrect' theories in the interpretive tradition. Instead, theories should be judged with regard to how 'interesting' they are to the researcher and those with the same interest. They seek to develop their constructs from the field by an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of interest.

According to Kaplan and Maxwell (1994), interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables; instead, such research focuses primarily on the full complexity of human sense-making as the situation arises. Thus, it is vitally important to note that the primary focus of interpretivists is not to generate a new theory, but rather to judge, evaluate and refine interpretive theories.

Three different approaches to theory are normally adopted in interpretive case studies: (1) theory that guides the design, as well as collection of data; (2) theory as an iterative process of

data collection and analysis; (3) theory as an outcome of a case study. All of these approaches are classified by Walsham (1995). In this research, a theory of the importance of perception was developed as an iterative process of data collection and analysis.

3.2.3 Interpretive approach

Generally speaking, qualitative research involves an interpretive approach to social reality. As noted in Terre-Blanche and Kelly (1999), an interpretive approach primarily focuses on the value of detailed description of first-hand accounts gathered in context which aims to recreate the meaning of shared experience. Historically, qualitative approaches based on the interpretive research tradition have been the domain of social sciences during the past three decades (Prasad and Prasad, 2002). It should be noted that qualitative research and interpretive approach are not by any means equivalent and interchangeable terms (Klien and Myers, 1999). Compared with the interpretive approach, qualitative research has a broader term. It refers to a study process that looks into a social human problem in a natural setting and also produces a whole and complicated representation through rich description, explanation, and examination of people's words and points of view (Creswell, 2007). Conversely, interpretive research assumes that knowledge of reality is obtained only through social construction, including consciousness, language, shared meanings, other artefacts (Klien and Myers, 1999). Interpretive approaches follow the underlying principles of phenomenology. Notably, phenomenology mainly focuses on lived experience as the basis of human action. It is vitally important to note that despite the fact that interpretive approaches have been widely used and have produced new knowledge, they have also contributed to epistemological and methodological confusion within the social sciences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Seale, 2003). One of the distinctive confusions that accompanies the interpretive rejection of objective methodological procedures for producing knowledge is how knowledge produced within interpretive approaches can be justified. Giorgi (1994) criticises interpretive approaches insofar as that they combine theoretical and methodological principles from different philosophical traditions, consisting of phenomenological principles and concepts together with positivistic tradition in methodological while justifying the results in legitimating research approaches, for example. Thus, it may be suggested that the interpretive research tradition is not a single, unified approach.

3.2.3.1 Assumptions of interpretive approach

Sandberg (2005) points out the basic assumptions underlying the interpretive research tradition. Importantly, advocates of interpretive approaches maintain that it is impossible to build an objective description of reality; however, its specific historical, ideological, cultural, gender-based, and linguistic understanding of reality always influences its description. Moreover, from the interpretive research tradition, reality is socially constructed by negotiation between people about the nature of that reality. Equally important, language from a socially constructed reality does not achieve its meaning primarily through a people's negotiation with objective reality, but rather in the way people socially define and use it in their different social actions.

3.2.3.2 Characteristics of interpretive approach

Generally speaking, interpretive approaches share a common focus on the analysis of the construction of meaning of the ways people make sense of their everyday life. Therefore, subjectivity is regarded as a vital and positive component of research in interpretive approaches. It is said that the social world is viewed as a subjectively lived construct (Mottier, 2005).

Interpretive research mainly focuses on a natural setting. Normally, the subject of research is related to what surrounds the respondents' everyday lives. It is always an experienced world of respondents; thus, it is said that a world is related to a conscious subject. It is apparent that knowledge is produced through a life experience of reality.

Moreover, an interpretive approach heavily depends on naturalistic methods, including interviewing and observation. Thus, interpretive research primarily concentrates on interpretation and meaning, since interpretations play a key role in a study. Therefore, it is vitally important for researchers to interpret and make sense of the data.

It is vital to note that the researcher collects data with the respondent in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality owing to the fact that meanings emerge from the data. Therefore, the questions should be open-ended. There should be no definite answer from the respondents in order that researcher can interpret and make sense of data naturally provided. In this case, the researcher is regarded as significant measurement device in the study. Therefore, the responsibility is to analyse data through words; thus, it is important for the researcher to collect data in a respectful manner. Clearly, interpretive research does not focus on descriptive

numerical measures or inferential statistics. It primarily focuses on unstructured data, as noted in Elliott and Timulak (2005); Mottier (2005); Sandberg (2005).

3.2.4 Theories in this research study

It should be noted that 'research methodology' and 'paradigm' are independent, despite the fact that they can both be employed by the researcher to complement the study. Accordingly, it has to be noted that 'qualitative' methodology does not always mean that an interpretive philosophical stance must be adopted in the study. Qualitative research can likely or likely not be interpretive, depending on the underlying philosophical assumptions of the researcher. Generally, researchers base their research on certain philosophical perspectives; most likely, these are based on either a single or more paradigm(s), depending on the type of work they are researching. With regard to the discussion about epistemology previously mentioned, the philosophical assumption underlying this research mainly stems from the interpretive paradigm. This is because the interpretive approach aims to describe the subjective reasons and meaning behind a phenomenon.

Constructivism is closely related to interpretivism. Interpretivism indicates the essential features of shared meaning and understanding, whereas constructivism broadens this concern with knowledge as produced and interpreted. In the context of this research, individuals construct their knowledge within a social context through prior experience and knowledge, and the researcher acts as an interpreter, taking an interpretivist and constructivist epistemological stance. Therefore, the researcher attempts to observe, investigate and understand perceptions of English language education at upper secondary level through strategies such as in-depth interviews and focus-group interviews set within a social context. In this research, the researcher explores what participants think, not what they do; therefore, human experiences are explored in order to understand the phenomenon.

3.3. Phenomenology

Edmund Husserl was one of the first researchers to pioneer the phenomenology research method (Cohen, 1987; Koch, 1995). He primarily focuses on the study of phenomena as they appeared from consciousness (Laverty, 2003) and the subjectivity of experience to be the source of knowledge (Koch, 1995). Husserl also believes that experiences are trustworthy, suggesting that an individual's perceptions are an accurate presentation of their consciousness

(Fouche, 1993). Moustakas was a founder of phenomenological research, mainly concentrates on the wholeness of experience and the importance of experiences. Moustakas (1994) regards experiences and behaviour as an integrated and inseparable relationship of individuals and a phenomenon of their experience. In phenomenology, perceptions are ultimately grounded in a perspective in time and space, showing that phenomenology starts with a phenomenon under consideration not with a theory, as pointed out in Husserl (1977) that phenomenological research begins with a perspective free from hypotheses. Merriam (1998) notes that a phenomenological inquiry is an attempt to deal with inner experiences unprobed in everyday life, as noted by Cohen and Ornery (1994), Crotty (1998), and Lester (1999) that phenomenology aims to profoundly understand the meanings and the essence of people's daily experience around a specific phenomenon and how they make sense of the experience, and to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by individuals in a situation. Therefore, it is essential to consider the nature of experience and its potential influence on educational research. Due to the fact that phenomenology involves the deep information and data translation through inductive method, phenomenological approaches are based on a research paradigm of subjectivity and concentrates on the essence of the subjective experience and insights into an individual's actions (Lester, 1999). Consequently, phenomenological methods are highly beneficial in gaining the experiences and perceptions of people from their own perspective of the phenomena.

Phenomenology has been widely used in educational research (Creswell, 2003). The most common data collection process used in phenomenological study includes in-depth data, so as to gain insights into participants' detailed descriptions of their experience and prior knowledge (Simon and Goes, 2011). The findings discover, describe, identify, and understand rather than predict and control so the results could be expressive descriptions rather than precise numbers (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, the positive rapport between researchers and participants is important in gaining depth of information (Lester, 1999). Generally, researchers aim to see what has evolved and emerged from the data which is different from previous studies, so the data analysis process primarily focuses on an understanding of the meaning of the description of the phenomenon (Simon and Goes, 2011).

In this research, a phenomenological study was chosen to help gain insights from participants' description of their lived experience and prior knowledge. Listening to the responses of participants helps to provide the problems of English language education in the upper secondary level in Thailand. Moreover, this study concentrates on data emerging from Thai

EFL teachers and students which is different from those from previous research, so as to identify the uniqueness of problems in Thailand. Weakness of phenomenological studies may also be identified, in that the data does not contribute to direct generalisations, as claimed in survey research. Moreover, data in this study are generated from a number of interview recordings; thus, analysis is normally messy and time consuming.

3.4 Qualitative research

Generally speaking, qualitative research sets out to describe and explain people's experiences, behaviour, and social contexts, in order to understand how they feel, and how they interact with the social world (Fossey, et al., 2002). Furthermore, by implication, qualitative research focuses on data that are difficult to quantify numerically. Thus, a qualitative researcher will attempt to gain insights into the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour of selected participants by concentrating on variables in a natural setting (Merriam, 1998). Findings may then lead to the investigation of new concepts or theories. Domegan and Fleming (2007, p.24) point out the aim of qualitative research, namely that "to explore and discover issues about the problem on hand, because very little is known about the problem. There is usually uncertainty about dimensions and characteristics of problem. It uses 'soft' data and gets 'rich' data." To collect qualitative data, in-depth interviews and focus groups are common methods, in that qualitative data sources include observation and interviews. Thus qualitative data may be gathered in an unstructured way; detailed data are collected through open-ended questions in interviews (Joubish, et al., 2011). Therefore, the primary intent is to develop themes from the data that emerge (Creswell, 2003). Denzil and Lincoln (2005) also note that qualitative research involves a variety of studies, such as those looking at personal experiences, empirical materials gained from case studies, and life history interviews, as well as problematic moments in individuals' lives. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), it is also important to note that qualitative research employs inductive data analysis in order to provide a better understanding of the interaction of 'mutually shaping influences' and to clarify the interacting realities and experiences of researchers and their participants. Merriam (1998) point out that an inductive method is adopted in order to support or challenge theoretical assumptions. This is because the researcher is regarded as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. The researcher is responsible for controlling the situation, and making sense of multiple interpretations, since multiple realities arise in any given context, as both the researcher together with participants construct their own realities. The researcher attempts to collect data in a no-interfering manner;

thereby seeking to study situations and experience in a real context, as the researcher shares their perception naturally without predetermined constraints or any conditions that control the study or its results. Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that qualitative research tries to study the everyday life of different groups of people and communities in natural setting. Thus, this research is highly beneficial to study educational settings and processes. Moreover, Patton (2002) also support the fact that qualitative approaches are widely used as data analysis strategy to gather data about a problem.

3.4.1. Rationale for a Qualitative Study

Using qualitative data is suitable for human learning in one research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Domegan and Fleming, 2007). According to Guba (1981), it is suggested that a research paradigm be used whose philosophical assumptions are matched by phenomenon being investigated. Due to the fact that this research is about human learning, mainly focusing on teachers and learners' perceptions towards English language education; thus, a significant process in this study is the investigating of data in detail, and the educational experiences of individuals. The process influencing these experiences and the analysis of descriptive data are entirely undertaken by the researcher as an interviewer in the study. This approach provides the researcher with an opportunity to take into account the perceptions of participants and multiple interpretations in a natural environment. The researcher identified a qualitative approach, consisting of a description of participants' experience and an inductive analysis of data highly appropriate in this research, due to the fact that all procedures enhance the possibility for some objectivity that is more effective than adopting quantitative approach. As noted in Patton (2002), qualitative approaches are more appropriate to enrich the insights necessary to understand the participants' perception of the experience. Moreover, constructed knowledge cannot be considered 'right' or 'wrong'; therefore, it is not possible to generalise data across all possible contexts; however, data exist within specific contexts and perspectives, depending on individual's experience.

3.4.2. Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Merriam (1998) points out four key characteristics of qualitative research. Firstly, qualitative researchers attempt to understand the meaning associated with people's world's and experiences. Patton (2002, p.1) also states that qualitative research is "an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there.... The

analysis strives for depth of understanding”. As Creswell (2003) noted, qualitative research brings personal values into the study.

Secondly, the researcher is the principal instrument for collecting, as well as analysing data. Due to the fact that understanding is the primary goal of qualitative research, the human instrument, which is regarded as responsive and adaptive, is, therefore, likely to be the effective means of collecting and analysing the data.

Thirdly, the process is inductive. Generally speaking, researchers collect data to formulate concepts, hypotheses, or theories instead of deductively deriving the hypotheses to be tested. The data inductively gathered from the findings are in the form of themes, categories, and concepts.

Lastly, the findings from qualitative inquiry are considered richly descriptive. Words are normally used to convey what the qualitative researcher has learned about a phenomenon. Creswell (2003) points out that qualitative research mainly focuses on a phenomenon. Thus, the findings are typically data gathered from interviews with participants or field notes, all of which contribute to the descriptive nature of qualitative research.

3.5. Case study

The case study is widely used as a research strategy across a variety of disciplines, including educational research. Robson (1993, p.146) defines a case study as a strategy for conducting research “which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence”. Similarly, according to Yin (2003, p.13), a case study may be defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. Interestingly, the idea of context, such as cultural background, is extremely important when conducting a case study, since it is easier for the researcher to define the boundary of a case and thereby clarify the rationale for using the case study (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, Yin (2003) notes that the case study is a preferred method for examining contemporary events, as opposed to historical phenomena, and is, therefore, often chosen by researchers who are interested in investigations with a focus on language teaching and learning. Additionally, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) view

the primary defining features of a case study as a multiplicity of perspectives, which are firmly established in a specific context. Therefore, the aim of a case study is to understand people in social context by interpreting their actions as a single group, community, or a single event, all of which can be called ‘a case’.

Stake (1995) identifies the four characteristics of qualitative case studies as holistic, empirical, interpretive, and empathic. Holistic focused on the interrelationship between phenomenon and its contexts. Empirical based the study on the observation of the field. Interpretive referred to researchers’ intuition and how they saw research as a researcher-subject interaction. Empathic meant that researchers reflected the derivative experiences of the subjects in an emic perspective.

Merriam (1998), meanwhile, suggests that case studies are characterised as being particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. To clarify, particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular process, situation, event or phenomenon. Descriptive refers to the rich, deep, and extensive set of details related to the phenomena. Heuristic refers to what people have discovered and experienced to understand the phenomena. Inductive refers to the form of reasoning applied to establish generalisations or concepts arising from the data.

Theory is also important in case study. This study is based on theory of the importance of perception. Harling (2002) stresses that existing theory acts as a starting point for the researcher and provides a structure where a set of questions is initially given. Yin (2003) states that theory could potentially be used to direct the case study in an exploratory manner. As such, it is likely that the researcher will react to the data received during the data collection process and apply theory to filter and structure the data. This process confirms the existing theory. However, when organising recently collected data, the researcher “should be careful to prevent existing theory from predetermining the result” (Harling, 2002).

According to Tellis (1997), it is important to note that a case study cannot be regarded as representative; however, the focus is on what can be learned from a single case. It is worth applying a case study methodology in research, since it advances fundamental knowledge of the particular knowledge domain. Therefore, the underlying philosophy of a single case study is the need to ‘improve’ not to ‘prove’ (Stufflebeam et al., 2000). It is apparent that the present

study will attempt to improve the understanding of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand.

A case study may either focus on a single case study or use a number of cases. A multiple case study or collective case study is employed to provide a general understanding by using various case studies that occur on either the same site or that come from multiple sites (Harling, 2002). Furthermore, Harling (2002) points out that when multiple cases are used, a detailed description of each individual case is presented, and themes are highlighted within each case. Thematic analysis is used to examine data across cases. Interestingly, Yin (2003) notes that it is more difficult to implement the multiple-case design than to use a single case study; however, the ensuing data yielded in the former can make researchers more confident about their findings. Multiple cases examine the conditions under which the same findings will have been replicated, but can also involve conflicting cases. Zucker (2009) points out that each multiple-case study method must predict either similar results (a literal replication) or contrasting results (a theoretical replication).

Furthermore, it is also crucial that the researcher is aware of the limitations of applying a case study as a research methodology. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) pinpoint that serious criticisms of the case study as a research strategy are generally based on non-representativeness as well as a lack of statistical generalisability. Furthermore, the richness and complexity of collected data means that the data can be open to different interpretations and, importantly, potential researcher bias. However, in spite of the lack of a detailed analysis of case study data and a lack of statistical generalisability, Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.193) argues that “looking at multiple actors in multiple settings enhances generalisability,” showing that case studies can also be generalised. Yin (2003) also notes that case studies can be conducted for analytical generalisations. To clarify, the researcher’s goal is to generalise a particular set of outcomes to some broader theoretical propositions. Hence, it is clearly seen that no research methodology is perfect, and thus, a researcher can probably use data attained with multiple methodologies.

Considering the interpretive stance adopted in this study, as well as the nature of the research question, the researcher strongly believes that the most appropriate research methodology in this study is the case study. This is due to its strength in sharing unique perceptions and the concerns of individual participants in a real world context, which is probably not appropriate in a quantitative approach. According to Yin (2003), the case study design is suitable for

situations or events where it is very difficult to split the phenomenon's variables from its context.

Noticeably, the research design in this study is an interpretive case study that is mainly analysed through qualitative methods, including in-depth interview together with focus group interview. The researcher will analyse the qualitative data inductively. Generally speaking, the researcher analyses, interprets, and theorises about the phenomenon against the backdrop of a theoretical framework. Merriam (1998) notes that the qualitative case study in education is normally carefully planned and framed with concepts, theories, and models. Consequently, an inductive method is employed to support or challenge theoretical assumptions. Due to the fact that meaning is of great concern to the qualitative approach, the participants' perspectives of their own conceptions is the major focus (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003). Thus, the framework established in this study supports examining participants' perspectives from their own experience. Findings are discussed in relation to existing knowledge or theory with the aim of showing how this study leads to a broadening of the knowledge base.

Due to the interpretive approach developed in this research, in conjunction with the nature of the research question, the researcher finds it most appropriate to choose a case study as the research methodology in this study, since it provides a systematic way to gather data, analyse information, and report the outcomes, which brings us to an understanding of a particular problem, issue, or situation. This is because the case study provides a wide variety of participant perspectives and insights. Moreover, the study uses multiple data collection techniques, including in-depth interview as well as focus group interview of Thai EFL teachers and students. Considering teachers, a multiple case study strategy will be applied in this research, in which each individual teacher interview is considered as a single case study. Therefore, the multiple cases in this research will consist of 32 single cases of English language teachers who will be interviewed twice about their perceptions of English language education in Thailand. Individual teachers will also be interviewed a second time, with data based on the pre-determined issue from the first interview.

With regard to learners, the multiple cases will consist of 20 single cases. Individual focus groups, each of which consists of 4-6 English language learners at upper secondary level, will be considered as a single case study. Therefore, there will be 10 cases of English language learners in this study, each of which consists of one focus group, who will be interviewed

regarding their perceptions of English language education in Thailand. As a follow-up to these focus groups, one of the learners in each focus group will be randomly selected from their group, and then treated as an individual case study. Thus, there will be another 10 single cases from the ten focus groups. Existing theory is addressed in the literature review section, which means the researcher is able to organise information while collecting the data received from participants. However, the researcher has to be careful to prevent existing theory from predetermining the result, as focusing heavily on the data from existing theory might result in the researcher failing to consider the emerging data from the interview.

3.6. Data collection

In this study in-depth interview and focus group interview were selected to collect qualitative data from participants. Therefore, the following sections will identify the features of in-depth interview and focus group interview, followed by how they are employed in this study.

3.6.1 In-depth interviews

The in-depth interview is a qualitative research method, the goal of which is to explore an interviewee or participant's feelings, points of view and perspectives from their experiences. The interview is an excellent opportunity for the interviewer to investigate the research questions from the interviewees' perspectives and to widen the interviewer's viewpoints about the question, rather than making generalisations about behaviour. Since different interviewees can generate different ideas on the same themes, the interviewer can gain new insights during the interviews, as noted by Kvale (2007). Moreover, the interview is beneficial when the researcher wishes to obtain more detailed and thorough data on one topic (Adams et al., 2008) or would like to explore new topics in depth. According to Allmark et al. (2009), the nature of in-depth interviews enables the researcher or interviewer to investigate details of participants or interviewees' experiences, offering a more complete and clear picture of potential reasons for certain phenomena. Nevertheless, basic research questions are necessary in order for the interviewer to be adequately focused within the interview, no matter how it develops. The interview normally starts with general questions related to research questions, while more specific questions are gradually developed in order to delve deeper into the individual teaching experience (DiGiggo-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Once the interview is completed, the researcher will analyse qualitative data, implementing procedures of theme development, as

well as the specific data in order to answer the qualitative research questions (Creswell and Plato Clark, 2011).

It is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the in-depth interview. There are many distinctive advantages of in-depth interviews. Firstly, a researcher has the opportunity to investigate participant responses for more information and clarification due to the fact that in-depth interviews provide much more detailed data than other data collection methods. Secondly, complex responses are allowed for in in-depth interviews. Thirdly, questions can be adjusted, changed and revised during the interview to allow the researcher to gain a better understanding of participant responses. In this way, skilled interviewers can efficiently respond to questions and interviewees' responses and probe for greater detail. However, it is important to keep the questions focused and relevant to the study, even in semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Fourthly, interviews provide the best method for assessing respondents' attitudes or feelings, since the researcher directly collects data. In-depth interviews disclose valuable insights and enable the interviewer to discover the story from the interviewee's point of view. Moreover, the researcher is able to express nonverbal communication with the interviewee, showing that the interviewer is not only listening, but also completely understands what the respondent is intending to share. Furthermore, if the interviewer establishes good rapport with the interviewee, it is likely that the interviewee will feel at ease during the discussion and may be willing to share more as a result, allowing the researcher to collect better data from the interview. Incidentally, the setting of the interview also has an effect on the success of the interview: if the setting is natural, the respondent will tend to give more natural responses.

However, there are also difficulties involved with collecting data via interviews. Firstly, it is time-consuming since it takes time to conduct interviews, transcribe data, code data, and analyse the results. Additionally, qualitative data can be vague, bringing about difficulties in data analysis especially for a less experienced researcher. Secondly, an interviewer needs good communication skills, not something that everyone possesses naturally. Therefore, it is vitally important that the researcher is well trained in order to be a highly skilled interviewer able to pose questions and respond to the interviewees' responses. It is possible that the interviewee may be too shy to provide sufficient data for the interviewer. In this case the interviewer might have to encourage the interviewee to express their opinions. Therefore, establishing a good rapport can be highly beneficial for conducting an in-depth interview. Importantly, due to the

fact that the number of in-depth interviews is often very small, it can be difficult to make generalisations about the results. In addition, interviews are often criticised for being subjective as well as subject to the researcher's biases. Furthermore, the researcher has no real way of knowing whether or not the interviewee has lied, therefore, the validity of the data cannot be guaranteed. Importantly, the interviewee may not have consciously lied, but may have an imperfect memory of the experience concerning the phenomena in question (McDonough and McDonough, 2006; Dornyei, 2007; Adams et al., 2008; Creswell and Plato Clark, 2011; Jacob and Ferguson, 2012; Harding, 2013).

3.6.2 Focus group interviews

The focus group interview generally consists of four to eight participants, who share a common interest in the topic of study (Office of Quality Improvement, 2007; Adams et al., 2008). It is considered to be very difficult to keep the conversation going in enough depth if focus groups have too small a number of participants. On the subject of participants, Adams et al. (2008) suggest having a homogeneous group of people for focus groups since it tends to make for a more comfortable environment where they can talk with one another freely. As Williams and Katz (2001) note, participants can generate more open responses if they are familiar with one another outside of the research situation. The focus of group interviews is to allow the researcher to access the knowledge and perceptions of participants. Barbour and Kitzinger (1998, p.5) state that the focus group is able to access the "knowledge, ideas, storytelling, self-presentation, and linguistic exchanges within a given cultural context". Williams and Katz (2001) also point out that the focus group is adapted during the study to access the feelings, attitudes, and beliefs expressed by participants. Also, Kairuz et al. (2007) maintain that a focus group involves a group discussion in order to identify the thoughts and perceptions of a chosen group of people with regard to a specific topic of investigation.

Generally speaking, focus groups are based on two fundamental assumptions. The first assumption is that individuals can provide rich information about a topic in a study, while the second is that the collective and individual responses encouraged by the focus group will form material that is different from that collected by other methods (Glitz, 1998). Focus group interviews are chosen for certain studies since they disclose real feelings from the participants' perspectives, as well as providing richer and more profound sources of information than personal interviews. This is because dynamic discussions bring about more developed answers than an individual response. Additionally, nonverbal information such as excitement,

confusion, doubt, and stress are also clearly present in focus group interviews, unlike in surveys for example (Office of Quality Improvement, 2007). Therefore, it is useful for all participants to take a few moments to consider each question before starting the discussion. Moreover, the interview should be unstructured or semi-structured together with open-ended questions in order to encourage participants to share their perceptions, so that as much data as possible can be efficiently collected. However, if there are too many formal and unclear questions, participants will not be encouraged to provide their own input. Thus, the moderator must be well prepared before conducting a focus group interview (Krueger and Casey, 2000).

Moderators or investigators play a vitally important role in focus group interviews since the moderator's responsibilities are to facilitate the discussion of the myriad topics that may be raised during the interview (Adams et al., 2008) as well as to ensure coverage of topics that answer the research questions and meet the research objectives. As noted by Finch and Lewis (2003), a focus group interview should allow for each participant to share their views on the issues that arise from the discussion. Thus, the moderator should ensure that each person takes a turn at explaining his or her perspectives on the topic. According to Finch and Lewis (2003), it is also crucial for the moderator to ensure that every participant makes a contribution to the discussion and that there is no dominant participant who takes control over other participants' time.

Both the advantages and disadvantages of focus group interviews are vitally important to discuss. There are a number of distinctive strengths of focus group interviews. The benefits of focus group interviews illustrate why researchers should consider using focus group interviews as a method for examining the social world. To begin with, focus groups can generate valuable information that is not necessarily available from an in-depth interview or survey. Furthermore, one focus group meeting uses fewer resources, including time and money, than a variety of in-depth interviews or surveys. Focus group participants can react to each other's responses to generate more detailed information or ideas that they might not have thought of on their own, thereby producing new ideas and ways of connecting their personal views to specific situations. Thus, focus group participants tend to guide the direction of moderator questioning. Accordingly, researchers can gather extremely rich, high quality data from focus group discussion. Importantly, focus groups effectively use the multiple realities of the participants' experience, and frequently provide the researcher with glimpses of a world that the researcher

may not have experienced. Additionally, focus group discussion can be a natural forum for hearing new views, since participants are likely to express their perspectives spontaneously.

However, there are also limitations when using a focus group interview as a method in a study. To start with, the small size of a focus group means data cannot not always be generalised to a larger population. Additionally, focus group interviews are not designed to provide statistical data, encourage participants to reach a consensus on a proposed topic, solve personal problems, or change people's attitudes. Furthermore, open-ended responses can be difficult for researchers to group into categories. Moreover, it is vitally important to note that points of view presented by a dominant speaker in a focus group are likely to overshadow other participants' ideas and skew or derail the discussion. Importantly, some topics such as sexuality or abuse are not appropriate for focus groups due to the fact that privacy and confidentiality are paramount in these situations. In cases like this it may not be appropriate for participants to hear one another's views. Findings from focus group interviews are likely to come from subjective opinions; therefore, researchers may report biased data. In addition, it is possible that focus group interviews are unnatural since the moderator or the researcher does manipulate the discussion to some extent. Finally, focus group interviews probably do not give an in-depth understanding of an individual's opinions or experience (Glitz, 1998; Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999; Krueger and Casey, 2000; Williams and Katz, 2001; Ho, 2006; Office of Quality Improvement, 2007).

For the purposes of answering the research questions, a qualitative approach, including in-depth interviews and focus group interviews, would be employed in order to gain data from participants. The researcher would gather and analyse the qualitative data in order to explore the phenomena under review. Generally speaking, an interview involves purposeful talks between two or more people that can help a researcher collect data that is related to the research objectives. The interview style will be semi-structured, wherein the overall framework of the topic of questions will be introduced with greater flexibility and extensive follow-up to responses (McDonough and McDonough, 2006). With regard to the in-depth interviews conducted in the present study, upper secondary English teachers were selected as interviewees, whereas upper secondary students were chosen to form focus groups for sharing their learning experiences. Thus, questions could be revised and adjusted, evolving during the interview. Data collection was conducted twice in the research.

During the first stage of data collection, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with Thai EFL teachers, as well as focus group interviews with Thai EFL students, all of which were in the upper secondary level from various state schools. The researcher asked the interviewees about their perceptions of English language education. The first interview was to establish a general information from participants' personal life experience of their English language education. Due to a bottom-up approach being applied, the researcher gave open-ended questions to participants to respond from their experience freely without interruption and lead questions. Data were audio-recorded and were transcribed to ensure an accurate and detailed record of actual language data (McDonough and McDonough, 2006). The recordings were then transcribed, coded, and analysed, using thematic analysis, prepared for the second interview.

After all the data had been analysed from the first interview, the second interview were conducted to broaden the data to gain more detailed perspective of all issues emerged from the first interview. Further details were required to answer research questions; therefore, after having analysed the interviews using a thematic analysis process, a second round of interviews were conducted, in order to discuss the themes and ask interviewees to elaborate on their answers based on data from the first interviews. Creswell (2007) points out the importance of a second interview, as it allowed for more useful and meaningful responses from the participants. All teachers were asked about their perceptions in terms of how they addressed the importance and difficulties of English language education in upper secondary level in Thailand. Following this, a student was randomly selected from each focus group and was asked for their perspective on how these issues had been addressed. The second interview concentrated on the specific issues as well as to confirm the data from the first interview. This might help prevent a misinterpretation of the researcher as well. Moreover, during the first interview, some participants might not be aware of some issues they experienced since the researchers used bottom-up approach; therefore, all data were emerged from their perception at the time of the interview process. It might be useful to conduct second interview to remind them of some experiences they might forget to mention during the first interview. In short, the purposes of conducting the second interview were to confirm the themes highlighted in the first interview and to broaden the interviewees' perceptions in greater detail to better understand the problems of English language education in the upper secondary level in Thailand. Both interviews aimed to answer the proposed research questions.

The difference between these two interview was that the first interview used the open-end questions, applying bottom-up approach in order that they could freely provide data emerged from their own experience. Thus, each teacher and each focus group might identify both similar and different perceptions based on their prior knowledge and experience.

The second interview, meanwhile, was conducted based on data from the first interview. Each issue would be asked to confirm whether or not participants still perceived it as a problem of English language education in Thailand. This helped not only to broaden data but also to confirm the accuracy of the analysis from the first interviews. Additional issues and extra comments on each problem were expected to be elaborated from the second interview.

3.6.3 Pilot study

A pilot study was carried out at Satriwithaya School, a secondary state school in Bangkok, in February 2014. The purpose of a pilot study is to assist the researcher in identifying whether or not there are limitations, flaws or weaknesses within the interview design. Adams et al. (2008) note that it is vitally important to determine potential problems prior to the expensive and time-consuming process of collecting research data. Another purpose is to allow the researcher to make revisions, where necessary, prior to the implementation of the study (Kvale, 2007). According to Turner (2010), it is recommended that research be conducted with participants who have similar interests to those taking part in the study. However, Adams et al. (2008) suggest that researchers strive to obtain different types of users in order that variations of biases as well as expectations can be clearly understood and accounted for. Moreover, a pilot study also helps the researcher refine research questions, and helps to identify how questions proposed in full-scale research are likely to be interpreted. Research issues emerging from pilot studies should be taken into consideration to refine interview questions, including those used in in-depth interviews, as well as focus group interviews, and also to improve interview techniques.

3.6.3.1 Samples in pilot study

In the initial stage of the pilot study, two Thai EFL teachers in the upper secondary level at Satriwithaya School in Bangkok were chosen to conduct in-depth interviews. The two teachers were an experienced EFL teacher who had been teaching for more than 25 years and an EFL teacher who had been teaching English for less than five years. This is because the researcher wished to obtain sources of information from two different teachers who have a

number of experience gaps. Moreover, ten Thai EFL learners at upper secondary level at Satriwithaya School in Bangkok were selected to conduct two focus group interviews, each focus group involved five students. The first group included five students who are now majoring on the Maths–Science programme. The other group was made up of five students who are now majoring in English–French. These two groups of learners have different characters; it is therefore useful for the researcher to determine the potential weaknesses in the study. Sample interviews were conducted at the school. Two teachers were asked to conduct interviews during their free periods from teaching while ten learners participated in focus group interviews after school finished. It can therefore be said that time is not a barrier to conducting a pilot study. With regard to teachers, as a former EFL teacher in this school, my colleagues were very helpful and volunteered to participate in the pilot study. However, for learners, because a consent letter was sent to the principal and the head of the Foreign Language Department to ask for permission to conduct the interviews in order to collect data for my research, it was convenient to attend two English classes to introduce myself and ask them to take part in the pilot study. Fortunately, five learners from each class volunteered to participate in focus group interviews after school finished. Subsequently, I arranged times and places to conduct the pilot study. The introduction took me approximately 10 minutes. However, the interview period of time varied depending on how much data was generated.

3.6.3.2 Outcomes of the pilot study

It is no exaggeration to say that the pilot study was largely successful because participants' responses reflected their clear understanding of the proposed questions, including five structured questions in the pilot study. Moreover, no confusion or misunderstanding existed throughout the pilot study. Importantly, the pilot study showed that the research design was carefully selected; both teachers felt able to give their perceptions as freely and openly as possible, as they both needed their interviews to be confidential and private. However, in contrast to the teachers, learners were eager to share their perceptions in focus group interviews because they were not familiar with the researcher, and some of them are shy so they feel free to have been interviewed with their friends since they suggested feeling more relaxed with friends than being individually interviewed with the researcher; thus, it was better for them to participate in the pilot study in groups.

3.6.4 Validity and reliability

Reliability and validity are generally mentioned together, due to the fact that they are related in terms of research accuracy and credibility. Reliability relates to the degree of consistency of data collected on several occasions or by different observers (Creswell, 2003;). On the other hand, validity is used to consider whether the findings will accurately represent the social phenomena being studied (Creswell and Miller, 2000). As stated in Berry (2002), validity is defined as the extent to which the measuring instrument is appropriate to the task, whereas reliability relates to how the results of repeated tests are consistent with the selected measuring instrument. Silverman (2010) demonstrates how the qualitative approach can incorporate measures dealing with validity and reliability. In this study, there are multiple methods used to establish the validity and reliability of the findings.

Triangulation is a method used by the qualitative researcher to establish and ensure the validity of a study by means of analysing a research question from multiple perspectives and evaluating these findings (Golafshani, 2003; Guion et al., 2011). Guion et al. (2011) also presents five types of triangulation that can be applied: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation, and environmental triangulation. Patton (2002) states that “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches” (p. 247). Nevertheless, Barbour & Kitzinger (1998) argues that mixing paradigms may be possible; however, mixing methods within one paradigm might be problematic. Therefore, the researcher needs to consider that each method within the qualitative research paradigm has its own assumptions in terms of its theoretical framework to bring to the research.

In this study, data triangulation is used to test the validity of the data. Data triangulation uses different sources of information in order to assess the validity of a study. In this study, Thai EFL teachers and students at upper secondary level from various state schools in Bangkok have in-depth interviews and focus group interviews conducted on them respectively. Both sets of interviews are carried out to gain insights into participants’ perceptions of English language education in Thailand. During the data analysis stage, the findings from Thai EFL teachers and learners would be compared to determine the similarities and differences they display in the topic. Thurmond (2001, p. 254) notes that among the distinctive advantages of triangulation are that it results in “increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomenon, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing a clearer understanding of the problem”. It may be seen that the benefits lie

largely in the quantity and diversity of data used for analysis. However, there are also limitations in applying triangulation to a study. The amount of time to be expended is regarded as one of the weaknesses of triangulation. This is because greater planning and organisation are required to collect more data. Moreover, there may be possible disagreements based on researchers' biases, contradictions due to the theoretical frameworks used as well as little understanding about why a triangulation strategy is being applied in a study (Thurmond, 2001).

In-depth interviews and focus group interviews would be recorded in this research; thus, the researcher must be aware of the accuracy of the interpretation of the transcripts. Accordingly, in order to establish reliability and validity within my research, raw data will be checked with the interviewees in order to reduce potential misunderstandings where questions and answers are concerned. As such, the findings will be judged on whether the data have been accurately interpreted in order to make sure that no distortion has occurred. Likewise, providing quotes from interviewees throughout the study can increase the credibility of the information. However, the researcher must be aware of the issue of not identifying the participant's quotes so that they can easily be traced back to an individual, especially if confidentiality has been promised.

Furthermore, the literature review can also assist the researcher in establishing the theoretical validity of their findings. The findings will also be confirmed by comparing them with the literature review, which will summarise previous related research. Shenton (2004) points out that the examination of previous research findings is done to assess the degree to which the findings' results are congruent with those of previous studies. Silverman (2010) also claims that the ability of the researcher to relate findings to an existing knowledge base is a key criterion for evaluating their credibility.

In addition, Patton (2002) points out that the credibility of the researcher is crucial in qualitative research, since the researcher is the major instrument of data collection and analysis. Thus, having a similar background, qualifications and experience is considered to be highly beneficial in ensuring the credibility of the research. Thus, as a former English language teacher at upper secondary level in Bangkok, this researcher can also check the validity of findings where other teachers have been interviewed, owing to the fact that the researcher has partaken in a similar education system and curriculum.

3.6.5 Samples

When selecting samples in research, it is vitally important to consider participants who best represent the group of people who will meet the research aims, in order that the most credible information to the research will be provided (Turner, 2010). Adam et al. (2008) point out that the sampling framework that is the reference point will allow the researcher to choose appropriate people for their study; however, the researcher must be aware that no matter what sampling frame is used, the sample of the wider population will be biased. Therefore, it is apparent that it is impossible to get an ideal sample for one's research. Equally important is the necessity to contact potential respondents to participate in interviews, including in-depth and focus group ones. The strategy used to make initial contact heavily relies on participants' characteristics, personal contacts and ease of access. As noted by Creswell (2007), it is important to acquire participants who are willing to freely, openly and honestly share information on their perspectives towards the topic of the research. It may be easier to conduct the interviews with respondents in a comfortable environment.

As mentioned earlier, the aim of the study is to understand the problems of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand, based on the perceptions of both teachers and students. Teachers and students at the upper secondary level were chosen to investigate the problems of English language education since secondary level is the important sub-sector of educational system. Moreover, this level also acted as a feeder to higher education level (Khatoon and Parveen, 2009). To gather the data, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews will be employed in my research. Sixteen English language teachers, all of whom are from secondary state schools in Bangkok, would be selected as convenience samples, all of whom volunteered to participate in the research and in the in-depth interviews. Moreover, ten focus groups will also be created, consisting of upper secondary learners from various state schools in Bangkok. All learners were selected as convenience samples, and they also volunteered to take part in the research to be part of a focus group interview. Both the in-depth interviews and the focus group interviews were semi-structured and will be audio-recorded for analysis.

The reason why I chose secondary schools in Bangkok as the focus of the research is one of conveniences: I was able to access these schools because I live in Bangkok and, as such, I would not incur extra expenses by having to travel to other provinces. Moreover, state schools are selected, as all state schools follow the same regulations and curriculum established by the

government; therefore, each interview will be presented as a case study in investigating the perceptions of teachers and students at upper secondary level about English language education in Thailand. Moreover, all the teachers and learners come from eight different state schools in Bangkok. As a former English language teacher at upper secondary level at a public school in Bangkok, I was able to select some of my colleagues and some students as samples from the school where I worked. Also, my colleagues and students' friends participated in my research. All of them volunteered to be part of my research sample. Therefore, it was convenient for me to access my samples. Equally importantly, despite the convenience, I also am aware of the problems inherent in selecting convenient samples. To illustrate, it is possible that the background and characteristics of volunteers do not match and do not represent the larger population; therefore, the researcher must be aware that the findings from convenience samples cannot be generalised to the wider population.

3.7. Ethical consideration

Ethics is defined as a code of manner or behaviour which is considered correct, therefore, it is vitally important for research to be aware of research ethics as noted in Bryman (2008) that there are ethical issues at almost every stage in social research. In qualitative research, ethics closely relate to two groups of people, namely researchers who should be aware of their responsibilities and obligations, and the samples whose basic rights should be protected. This is because qualitative research mainly focuses on exploring, examining, investigating, and describing people and their natural environments, including interviews, observations, and audiovisual material. Moreover, concepts of relationships and power between researchers and their sample are inherent in qualitative research. As such, participants' willingness to share their experience is a key issue in qualitative research. Furthermore, most qualitative studies are conducted in participants' everyday environments; therefore, research requires a full awareness of ethical issues, which probably arise from the interactions (Orb et al., 2000). Murphy and Dingwall (2001) have developed an ethical theory based on four major principles: non-maleficence; beneficence; autonomy or self-determination; justice. To clarify, non-maleficence refers to the fact that researchers should avoid harming participants. Beneficence means that the research should generate more positive and identifiable benefit than be conducted for its own sake. Moreover, autonomy or self-determination refer to the respect to participants' values and decisions. Lastly, justice means that all participants should be treated equally. Consequently, researchers should be aware of how to access participants in order to

collect data. Differently, Ramos (1989), meanwhile, has identified three types of issue which can arise in qualitative research in terms of ethical consideration. These issues consist of the relationship between researchers and their participants, researcher's subjective interpretations of collected data, and the design itself. Ethical consideration in qualitative research includes a number of issues, as follows:

3.7.1 Avoiding harm

To begin with, avoiding harm is a basic right to be aware of when conducting research related to human beings. Flick (2011) has pointed out that the risk of harm for research participants is one of the major ethical issues in a research. There are many ways in which participants can be harmed, including physical harm, emotion harm, psychological harm, and embarrassment. Moreover, sensitive issue can make interviews emotionally intense; therefore, it is vitally important for researchers to identify any potential harm and also point out how this harm can be minimised (Allmark et al., 2009).

3.7.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity are probably relevant if the research involves various participants in a specific and small setting (Flick, 2011). The nature of anonymity means that data provided by research participants must never disclose their identity; thus the researcher must not use the names of the participants or other personal means of identification (Cohen et al., 2011). This means that a subject or participant is regarded anonymous when other person cannot identify the subject or participant from data provided. Thus, privacy of participants is promised, no matter where the situation holds, and no matter how personal or sensitive the information is. As noted in Kimmel (1988), it is vitally important to store data safely in order that others cannot access to the data. Confidentiality of participants' identities is also highly necessary; therefore, any violations of confidentiality should be made with participants' agreement. Moreover, a researcher should provide guarantees to the participant about data storage (Harding, 2013). Thus, despite the fact that a researcher knows who has given data or is able to identify participants from the data provided, the researcher must not make the connection known publicly; the boundaries surrounding the confidential data must be strictly protected (Cohen et al., 2011). Kimmel (1988) points out that it is possible that some potential interviewees in research refuse to take part in the research when the guarantee of confidentiality is weak, not understood, or vague. A researcher who conducts interviews is able to promise to the interviewee that the researcher and the research team involving transcribing audio files are

the only group of people who will be aware of individual responses (Harding, 2013). Nevertheless, in contrast to in-depth interviews, confidentiality is not possible to guarantee when conducting focus group research, due to the fact that other members in a focus group listen to one another's views. Accordingly, the researcher can only ask focus group members to keep other participants' views confidential (Liamputtong, 2011). Focus group members should be aware of limits to confidentiality before the researcher starts the interviews.

3.7.3 Informed consent

Informed consent is defined as a legal permission to complete before one can participate in a study (Allmark et al., 2009). However, it is rather difficult to provide absolutely thorough information to research participants due to the fact that the study can possibly get off the subject and in some cases change course dramatically. It is also vitally important to note that it is unfeasible and impractical for ethnographers carrying out the study to gain all informed consent (Bryman, 2008). The researcher provides a detailed explanation as to the nature of the study, as well as any potential harm or risk that may arise in the research. All participants are asked to give consent for researcher to collect data from them, as pointed out in Allmark et al. (2009), in that it is desirable for the participants to know and understand the privacy and confidentiality rules before giving consent to the interview. The consent form also shows that participants are free to decline participation at any stage for whatever reason without penalty. It is also noted that the consent form ensures the participants that no risks are involved in the research. Should participants wish to access collected data or the results of experiment, they will be given the data they asked for. More importantly, informed consent is necessary before conducting a study due to the fact that it is one of the procedures for confirming that research subjects and its nature are understandable and participation can be refused at all times, and that the researcher is always aware of potential risks. The researcher must note that some participants are still willing to take part in the study without signing the informed consent; however, this can bring about questions with regard to research validity, due to the fact that the samples can be biased (Singer, 2003). However, all participants in this study agreed to sign the consent form.

Informed consent is normally given by means of an information sheet for participants to sign. If possible, this letter should be on an official university letterhead, in order to inform participants that this data collection is an official university activity. Participants should be given an invitation to take part in the research in advance, owing to the fact that they can carefully consider whether they would like to participate in the study or not. Generally

speaking, a consent letter includes clear information for participants to make an informed decision as to whether or not they would like to take part in this research. Moreover, the letter normally tells participant who the researchers are and why they are doing this study. Additionally, the desired outcomes should also be in the letter, and there should also be some information about how and why the participants are selected, and importantly, the letter should explain what researchers need their participants to do for the study. This letter should also point out how participants will be provided feedback. Moreover, contact details of supervisor(s) should be provided instead of the researcher him/herself. Lastly, researchers should also give deadline for responding if necessary in order that they can collect data in time to meet research's time scale (Allmark et al., 2009).

3.7.4 Honesty and truth (deception)

Harding (2013) points out that honesty and truth are two of the most complex ethical issues in a research. It is suggested that a subtle form of deception is the fake persona. Deception can occur in not telling participants that they are now being researched, in not telling the truth, or in compromising the truth. Silverman (2010) notes that deception in research seems to be a problem when it causes the subject to harm. However, it is noted that sometimes a researcher cannot provide a thorough disclosure of the essence and purpose of the study without causing, research participant bias. In rare cases, a researcher needs not only to withhold some information, but to deliberately mislead the research participants (Dornyei, 2007). Kelman (1967) suggests three ways to deal with the problem of deception. Firstly, it is vitally important for a researcher to increase active awareness that the problem exists. The researcher should keep in mind whether deception is necessary or justified. Active awareness is, therefore, part of the solution, since it makes the use of deception a focus for deliberation, discussion, investigation, and choice (Cohen et al., 2011). Secondly, there should be an awareness that any potentially harmful manipulation must be kept at the moderate level of intensity; therefore, a researcher must be very sensitive to be prepared to cope with crises when they exist (Kelman, 1967). It is suggested that in order to minimise the negative effects, adequate feedback be provided at the end of the research; however, the feedback must be kept inviolable, and “in no circumstances should subjects be given false feedback or be misled into thinking they are receiving feedback” at the time the researcher introduces another experimental manipulation (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 96). Another way to deal with the problem of deception is that the researcher should ensure that new procedures are developed while collecting data (Kelman, 1967). Role-playing is suggested to explore new procedures or approaches. To clarify, the

research participant is asked to act as if he/she were a particular person in a particular situation. Thus, new techniques are likely to involve a radically different set of assumptions about the role of subject in the research (Cohen et al., 2011).

3.8 Summary

As discussed in this chapter, this study adopted a qualitative design, using an interpretive approach to collect data. 42 in-depth interviews were used to collect data from 16 Thai EFL teachers twice and another 10 from 10 students randomly selected from each focus group. Additionally, 10 focus group interviews were utilised to collect data from Thai EFL learners. The samples were Thai EFL teachers and learners from various state schools in Bangkok. All participants were voluntarily selected. In order to increase reliability and validity of the interviews, two Thai EFL teachers and two groups of learners were selected to conduct a pilot study, which was largely successful. With regard to ethical consideration, a consent form was sent to the principal of each school and each individual sample and all were successfully obtained. Moreover, anonymity and confidentiality were ensured during the interviews and report writing.

The data collection process and the findings of the in-depth interviews and focus group interviews will be presented in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction and overview of the chapter

This chapter mainly discusses the results of the study and the qualitative data collection is utilised to analyse the data. The data collection process is analysed in response to the research problems stated in chapter 1. The qualitative results, including in-depth interview and focus-group interview data, are analysed using Nvivo software, guided by thematic analysis principles. In the data analysis process, firstly, themes will be investigated from the first interviews. Moreover, pre-determined and emerging themes will subsequently be used in order to determine the deeper details of the participants' perceptions in the second interviews. It is important to note that the data analysis addresses the following research aims and questions.

Overview of the chapter

4.2 Research Aims

4.3 Research Questions

4.4 Thematic analysis

4.5 In-depth interviews and focus group

4.6 Nvivo

4.7 Stages of thematic analysis

4.8 Findings of the research

4.9 Summary

4.2 Research aim

This research aims to investigate the perceptions of English language education, as presented by Thai EFL teachers and learners at the upper-secondary level in Bangkok.

4.3 Research questions

Question 1: What are the perceptions of Thai EFL teachers at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, concerning English language education in Thailand?

Question 2: What are the perceptions of Thai EFL learners at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, concerning English language education in Thailand?

Question 3: How do these groups compare in terms of their perceptions concerning English language education in Thailand?

In order to answer these research questions, in-depth interviews were conducted with 16 individual teachers in the upper-secondary level and focus-group interviews were conducted with ten groups of students at the upper-secondary level, all of whom were from various state schools in Bangkok, investigating their perceptions of English language education in Thailand. Moreover, the second interviews were also conducted, applying in-depth interviews with sixteen teachers and ten learners, each of which was voluntarily selected from ten focus group interviews. The interview questions were based on data from the first interviews in order to broaden data and confirm the accuracy of the analysis.

4.4 Thematic analysis

Ryan and Bernard (2003, p.87) define themes as “abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds, and objects. You know you have found a theme when you can answer the question, ‘what is this expression an example of?’” Therefore, thematic analysis is used as a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This type of analysis also helps with analysing data in great detail (Ibrahim, 2012). The distinctive characteristic of thematic analysis is its combination of grounded theory, phenomenology, positivism, and interpretivism into one methodological framework (Guest et al., 2012). In brief, thematic analysis ensures that the reliability of the findings “to an external audience is paramount, and, based on our experience, achieving this goal is facilitated by systematicity and visibility of methods and procedures” (p.15). Furthermore, thematic analysis does not rely heavily on any pre-existing theoretical framework; thus, it can be used within different theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, thematic analysis is regarded as the most useful method for any study that seeks to conduct an investigation mainly using interpretations, since it provides a systematic element to data analysis; thus, it has been said that thematic analysis provides an opportunity to better understand the potential of any issue (Ibrahim, 2012). Equally important, thematic analysis enables two approaches to identifying themes within data, one of which is inductive and the other is deductive (i.e., theoretical). An inductive approach is a bottom-up approach presenting themes such that emerging themes are effectively linked to the data themselves, and importantly, inductive analysis is a process of coding data without linking

them to pre-existing coding frames. This is also called a ‘data-driven’ form of analysis. Thus, the analytical purpose of the inductive approach is exploratory analysis, since codes normally emerge from the data, which is not pre-determined (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, this approach can generate participant- or data-based meaning. By contrast, deductive or theoretical analysis is driven by theoretical interest in the area, and therefore, it is a top-down approach in which the researchers use a series of concepts, topics, or ideas in order to code or interpret the data (Braun and Clarke, 2012). Consequently, this approach can generate theory-based meaning and its purpose is a confirmatory approach, since it typically uses existing data. Braun and Clarke (2012) also highlight that it is not possible to analyse data using a purely inductive approach, since the researchers need to bring something to the data while analysing it, and they hardly ever completely ignore the content of the data when they code for “a particular theoretical construct” (p.59). Interestingly, Namey et al. (2008, p.138) have highlighted that the process of thematic analysis works by counting explicit words or phrases and mainly concentrates on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. The process for this is that

“codes developed for ideas or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code co-occurrence, or graphically displaying code relationships.”

Guest et al. (2012) point out that the very first step in the thematic analysis strategy in looking for themes is to refresh understanding of the analytical objectives. As soon as the researcher is familiar with the analytical objectives, re-reading the data is necessary. The importance of analytical objectives is that they help the researcher to stay focused on the task, and also help with the prioritising of which themes should be developed in the data analysis process. Moreover, Guest, et al. (2012) further note that some themes may be rather obvious, and so detailed analytical probing would not be needed, whereas some themes cannot be immediately determined during the analytical process. Therefore, the researcher should be aware of this issue while finding themes, so that themes will be thoroughly investigated.

As previously stated in chapter 3, in-depth interviews and focus-group interviews were used as research approaches in order to answer the research questions. Therefore, this chapter will

discuss the research tools used to analyse the data and how the data will be analysed. Nvivo software was used as a tool, following thematic analysis guiding principles.

4.5 Research tools

As pointed out in research methodology and design chapter, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews were selected as tools to gather data in this study from teachers and students at upper secondary level in Bangkok.

4.6 Nvivo

Researchers conduct qualitative data analysis, typically involving the interpretation of unstructured or semi-structured data, for a number of reasons. Maxwell (2013) highlights that these reasons normally include description, exploration, comparison, evaluation, pattern analysis, theory testing or theory building. Therefore, a researcher has to find the appropriate tool to assess the fit between method and purpose. A researcher also needs to select a qualitative approach that is determined by the research questions, as well as purpose (Richards and Morse, 2012).

Nvivo was therefore developed by QSR International in order to provide researchers with a set of tools that assist with the analysis of qualitative data. Its purpose is to increase the effectiveness as well as efficiency of such research. Nvivo also helps to answer research questions from a set of data derived from transcriptions without losing access to all sources of data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). Bazeley and Jackson (2013) also suggest that using Nvivo during qualitative data analysis assists researchers with managing data, managing ideas, querying data, visualising data, and reporting from the data.

4.7 Stages of thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) provided six stages of thematic analysis:

Step	Thematic analysis framework
1	Familiarising yourself with your data
2	Generating initial codes
3	Searching for themes
4	Reviewing themes
5	Defining and naming themes
6	Producing the report

Table 4.7: stages of thematic analysis

4.7.1 Familiarisation with data

It is vitally important to note that the researcher needs to focus on the data until he/she is familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. This process includes repeated reading of the data and attempting to search for meaning and patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Due to the fact that thematic analysis provides rich and detailed data, it is essential that researchers familiarise themselves with their data, in order to obtain a sense of the predominant and important themes from the data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). In order to familiarise themselves with the data, researchers have to transcribe the verbal data into written form, in order to conduct thematic analysis. Despite the fact that transcribing data is a time-consuming process, it is worth the time in order to become familiar with the data. According to Bird (2005, p.227), this stage is considered to be “a key phase of data analysis within interpretive qualitative methodology” and is also recognised as an interpretive act. Braun and Clarke (2006) also notes that it is vitally important to check the transcripts against the audio recordings in order to ensure the accuracy of the data. After finishing transcribing data, all data were imported in Thai into Nvivo to start data analysis process.

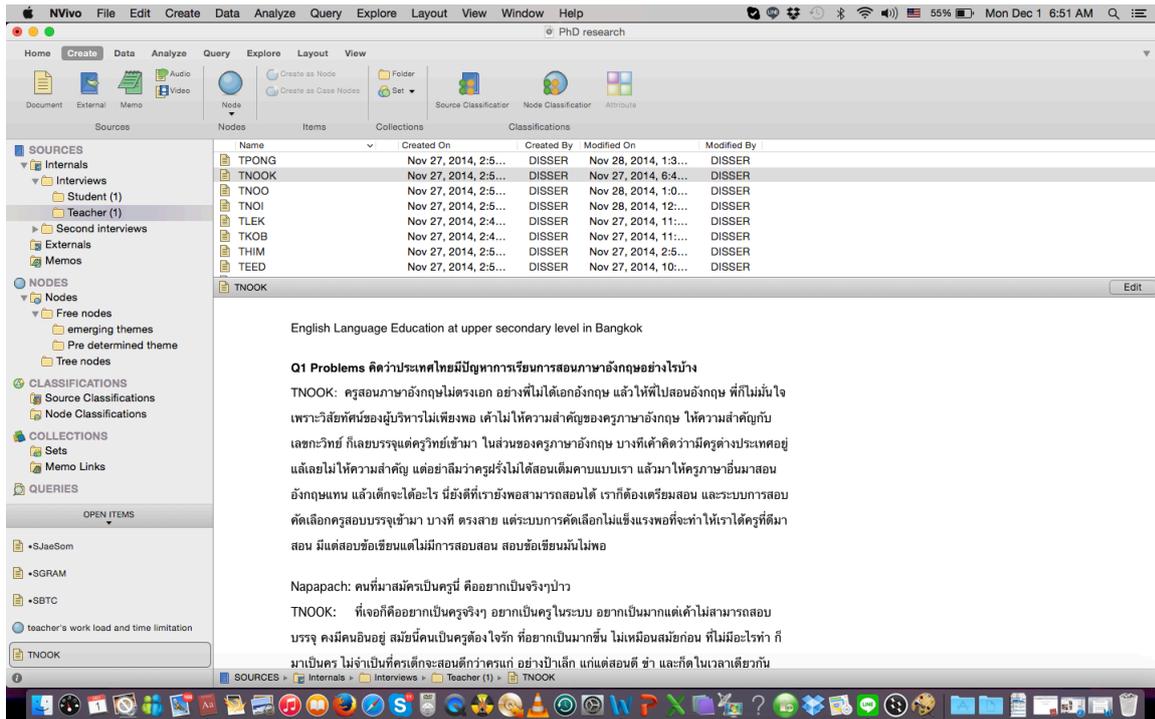


Figure 4.7.1: Interview transcripts imported into Nvivo10 (Mac Version)

Figure 4.7.1 shows the layout of the source folder, which was broadly divided into three major sources, which are ‘Internals’, ‘Externals’, and ‘Memos’. The ‘Internals’ folder was sub-divided into ‘Interviews’ and ‘Second interviews’ folders. ‘Teachers’ and ‘Students’ files were created for storing the transcriptions. Subsequently, the transcriptions were entirely imported into the ‘Internals’ folder under either ‘Students’ or ‘Teachers’ folders, depending on each interviewee. The letter ‘T’ at the start of file name represents a teacher’s file, while ‘S’ represents a student’s file. From this process, the researcher can familiarise themselves with the data.

4.7.2 Generating initial codes

After familiarising with the data, it is likely that the researcher will wish to generate an initial list of ideas regarding the transcribed data. Therefore, this stage includes the production of initial codes from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Codes identify a feature of the data that attracts the researcher’s interest. Tuckett (2005) pinpoints the importance of coding as a part of analysis since the researcher is organising the data into meaningful groups.

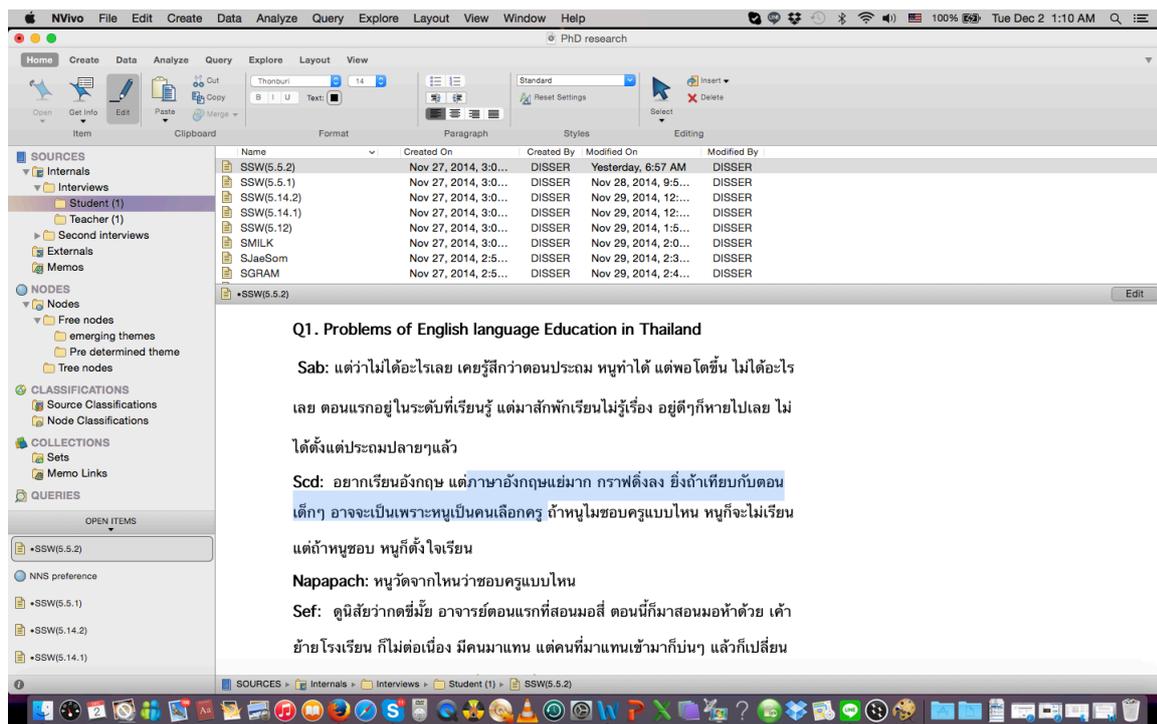


Figure 4.7.2: Coding data from transcriptions in Nvivo 10

From Figure 4.7.2, it may be seen that after importing the transcriptions into the relevant folder, the researcher could begin to determine what is interesting about data. While reading through the transcriptions, the researcher came up with interesting ideas that assisted in answering the research questions. These ideas were coded depending on the aim of the researcher as to whether to code the content of the entire data set or to code particular identifications of the data set. This study mainly focused on coding for content. The researcher started by reviewing the analytical objective, re-reading the transcription to be analysed, and, importantly, highlighting the kinds of meaning that the text is liable to exemplify (Guest et al., 2012). However, it is vitally important to note that the coded data are different from the units of theme analysis, since they are broader. Equally important, coding will normally depend on whether the themes are either data driven or theory driven. Data-driven analysis or the inductive approach primarily concentrate on the data, whereas theory-driven analysis or the deductive approach mainly focus on particular questions that the researcher has in his/her mind (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

4.7.3 Searching for themes

‘Theme’ is defined as a phrase or sentence that indicates what a unit of data is about or what it actually means (Saldaña, 2009). Guest et al. (2012) point out that the researcher

differentiates the identification of themes from the specification of codes. To clarify this, codes represent “a greater level of abstraction than themes, and a single theme can engender multiple codes” (p.52). Ryan and Bernard (2003) provide some guidelines for identifying themes such as repetition, indigenous categories, transitions, constant comparisons, and linguistic connectors.

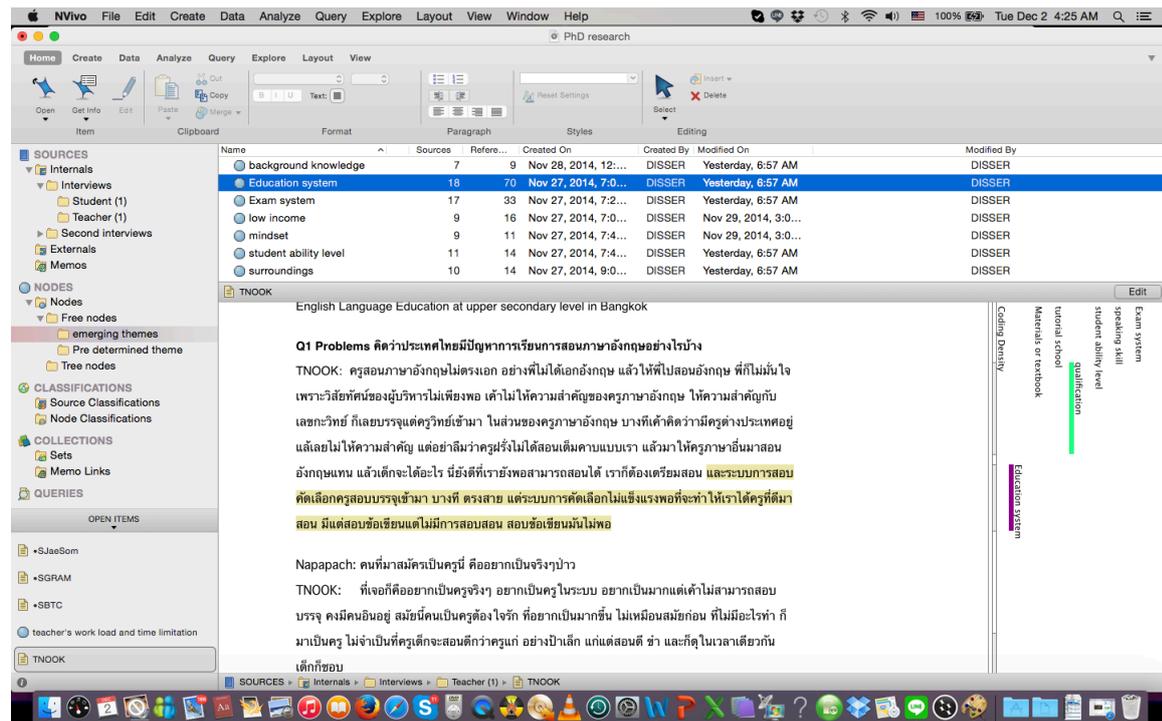


Figure 4.7.3.1: Searching for emerging themes in Nvivo 10

Figure 4.7.3.1 shows that the researcher created themes from ‘nodes’. In the ‘Free nodes’ folder, there were two theme folders, namely emerging themes and pre-determined themes. Primarily, the researcher only created emerging themes folders while coding the data from transcription, due to the fact that the researcher intended to discover data that emerged from all of the interviews without focusing on pre-determined data from previous chapter. Figure 4.7.3.1 shows that there were many themes from the data that emerged while sorting different codes into potential themes. The highlighted text is in relation to the emerging theme that is the ‘education system’ theme. However, conducting further analysis led to the researcher discovering more pre-determined themes as well, as noted in Figure 4.7.3.2.

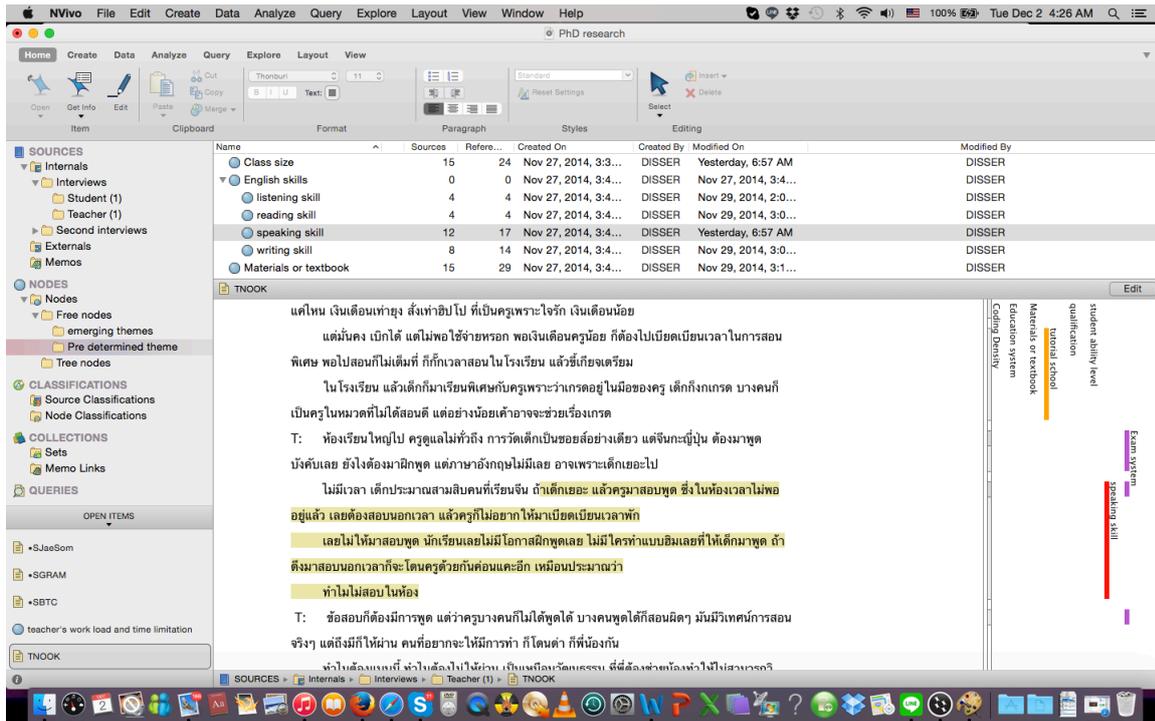


Figure 4.7.3.2: Searching for pre-determined themes in Nvivo 10

Figure 4.7.3.2 indicates that the researcher also created pre-determined folders, consisting of main themes and sub-themes. Pre-determined themes emerged from the transcription data as well. Therefore, as seen in Figure 5, the ‘teacher Nook’ or ‘TNOOK’ interview could generate both emerging themes and pre-determined themes.

4.7.4 Reviewing themes

This stage began once the themes had been discovered. During this stage, it was evident that some themes were not relevant themes for the research, whereas others could be broken down into separate themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, data within themes should be grouped together meaningfully, and importantly, there should be apparent distinctions between themes. After reviewing and refining the themes, the researcher must be aware of the validity consideration of each individual theme in relation to the data set. Braun and Clarke (2006) also note that the researcher needs to re-read all of the data at this stage for two major purposes. The first purpose is to ensure that the themes functions in relation to the data set. The other purpose is to code the additional data within themes that are potentially missed in earlier phases.

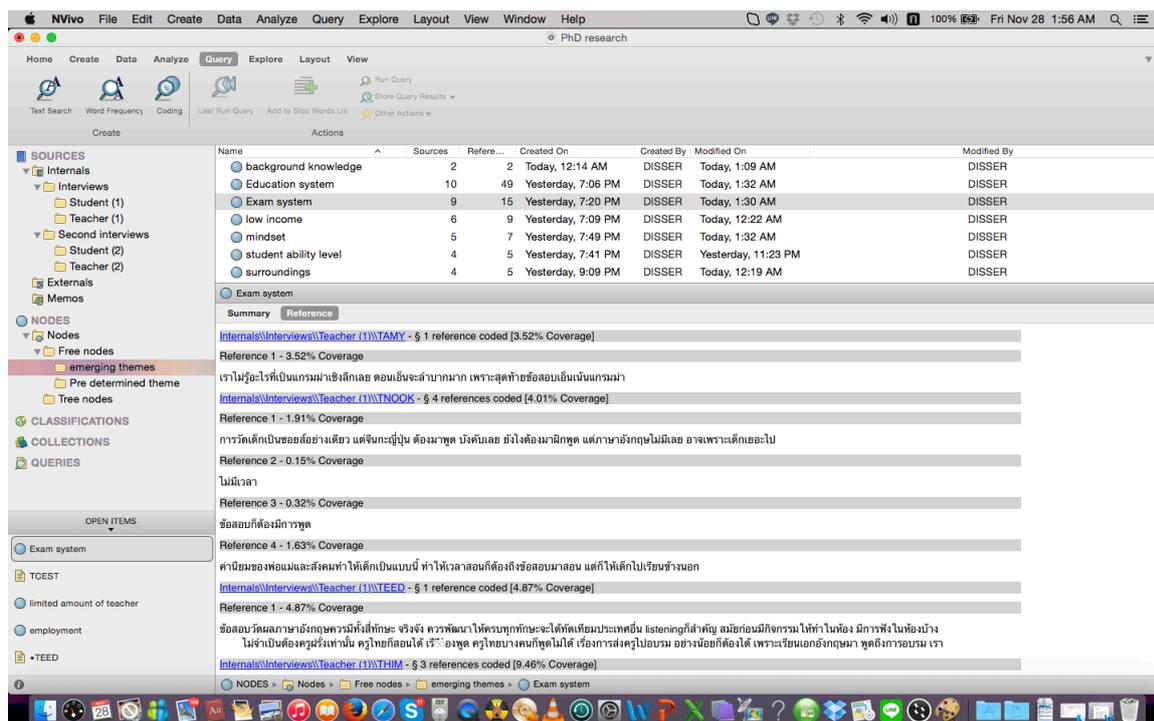


Figure 4.7.4: Reviewing themes in Nvivo 10

Figure 4.7.4 shows that when reviewing themes, the researcher can also discover references in relation to each individual theme. Thus, the researcher can check the details and review whether he/she has coded the precise data within one theme. If all of the data are appropriately coded in each individual candidate theme, the researcher can move to the next stage, which is defining and naming themes.

4.8 Findings of the study

The findings of this study include the perceptions of English language education among Thai EFL teachers and learners at the upper-secondary level in Bangkok, Thailand.

Participants in this research consisted of 16 Thai EFL teachers and 10 groups, each of between 4 and 6 Thai EFL students, at the upper-secondary level in Bangkok. The interview information obtained during the first of data collection were analysed and divided into several main outcomes. Data emerging from the second interviews have been reported in separate paragraphs as additional issues and extra comments in each issue. Regarding the perceptions of English language education by the Thai EFL teachers and learners, all participants regarded

English as a highly important area of study in Thailand. Interestingly, all of the participants agreed that English language education in Thailand did not meet international standards, which stemmed from a number of problems. These problems form the subject of this section. The following section will present themes based on the number of times they were most frequently mentioned, including both first and second interviews.

4.8.1 Class size

Class size was considered a major problem in respect of English language education in Thailand. The large classes prevalent in state schools in Thailand presented difficulties for the teachers, for example, in maintaining discipline in the classroom. In Thailand, the approximate number of students in a class is 50 (Khanarat and Nomura, 2008). From the interviews, all 16 teachers and the ten groups of students noted class size to be a problem for the learning of a new language. The following are the major issues with regard to class size:

4.8.1.1 *Ineffective classroom management*

Firstly, Thai EFL teachers claimed they could not manage their classrooms effectively due to the large number of students in a class. Eight teachers out of 16 said they could not pay attention to all of the students at the same time, making the organisation of joint activities problematic.

“The classroom is big so students tend to form into groups and talk a lot.”

(Teacher one)

“The classroom is too big. The standard classroom would be about 30; however, our class has 50 so I find it difficult to manage the students, divide them into groups, and ensure that they pay attention during class.”

(Teacher three)

Similarly, two groups of learners out of ten pointed out that their teachers could not manage the classroom effectively due to the large class size and because of this, their teachers were unable to check that the students had achieved their learning outcomes. Interestingly, one group of learners mentioned the problem of large class size, saying that it was likely that their teacher taught only students at the very front row of the classroom and paid little attention to those at the back of the room and because of this, learners claimed that it was very difficult for them to

have effective learning.

“The room is so big. Teachers aren’t capable of taking care of all the pupils. It would be nice to have the teacher ask more questions.”

(Student group ten)

Moreover, seven teachers and two groups of students wanted their classroom to have approximately 25-30 students while two groups of learners preferred only 20 students in one classroom although they claimed that it was not possible to decrease the number of students in a classroom in Thailand. In addition, there were two teachers who pointed out that they could not remember their learners in their class due to large class size. Not only did they teach their learners, but they also thought that they had to know their students to make for better learning. Large class size was therefore a barrier for them to remember all their learners.

4.8.1.2 *Too little attention paid to speaking practice*

Three teachers out of 16 pointed out that the large number of students in the classroom prevented them from practicing speaking skills in the classroom. One of them mentioned the importance of speaking skill for learners who learned language; however, she admitted not giving her learners much opportunity to practice speaking skill. Meanwhile, the other two teachers had similar opinions, namely that there was not enough time for them to practice speaking skills to all learners in one large class, even though they tried their best to give them opportunity to practice speaking skill in their classroom.

“The room is so big, which makes it difficult to have and interactive session between teacher and students.”

(Teacher ten)

“Large classrooms are the critical problem in English language education since English is a subject where 4 skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing must be practices together. It is not possible to practice all skills at the same time in a large classroom and it is especially hard to practice speaking skills.”

(Teacher thirteen)

Learners also considered class size to be a major problem in English language education. Two

groups of learners felt there was a lack of English practice in the classroom. One group of learners pointed out that although learners did not want to practice speaking skill in the class due to their shyness, it was better for them if their teachers encouraged them to speak more in the class. Even so, they noted that it was not possible to practice speaking skill in the large class. The other group of learners claimed that their teachers could not focus on speaking practice due to the large class size.

“The room is so big. It is difficult to work on speaking skills during the class because the classroom is too big which makes it difficult to have an interactive conversation.”

(Student group nine)

From the second interview, all 16 teachers and 10 students confirmed that large class size was the problem of English language education in the upper secondary level. All of them shared similar issues with regard to class size with those in the first interviews. However, in focusing on the extra issues emerged from the second interview, there were some minor points mentioned. Two teachers identified that the standards of the school also impacted on large class size in the school, since most students were likely to choose to study in distinguished schools as a result of their reputation and good student outcomes. Therefore, they claimed that it was very difficult to decrease the number of students in the schools.

Moreover, one teacher pointed out that the cause of large class size was school policy. Despite being issued from the national educational policy to have 40 students in one class, some school principals allowed more than this. Therefore, it was difficult to have a lower number of students in one school.

Another issue that emerged from the second interview was teachers' attention to the class. One learner in this study claimed that some learners who sat at the back of the class did not pay attention to the class, since the classroom was so big that they could take some nap or eat some snacks without teachers' notice. He also pointed out that the smaller the class was, the more attention they paid in the class.

4.8.2 Teacher's characteristics and lesson delivery

The participants noted that the English-speaking teachers' characteristics and their lesson delivery were major problems in English language education in Thailand. Fourteen

teachers out of 16 pointed out this issue as an important problem affecting language learning, as did 9 out of the 10 focus groups. Specific difficulties with regard to teachers' personality are discussed below.

4.8.2.1 Using unpleasant language with students

From the interviews, one teacher and three groups of learners claimed that teachers were reported as speaking to their students in a demeaning manner, although it was preferable that teachers encouraged learners to practise and improve their English skills. Interestingly, some teachers used unpleasant language with students such as 'stupid', discouraging them to be active in the class. Two groups of learners also noted this point that they thought the word 'stupid' should be strictly prohibited in the class: some teachers chose to communicate with smart learners in the classroom. Moreover, two groups of learners claimed that they wanted their teachers to be more flexible with learners' response instead of only focusing on what was right or wrong.

“When Thai teachers ask a question in front of the class, they are not flexible, they expect only a right or wrong answer. Some of them even use the word ‘stupid’ with learners when they answer incorrectly. Being a good teacher, one should encourage them to try harder rather than discouraging them.”

(Teacher six)

Furthermore, two groups of learners pointed out that teachers often looked down on learners' proficiency, making learners feel discouraged.

In interviews, it is seen that only one out of sixteen teachers mentioned this issue, whereas three out of ten groups of learners pointed out the importance of using the pleasant language with students in the classroom. Interestingly, all four interviews shared similar reasons, namely that using unpleasant language could possibly discourage learners to speak in class, and the unpleasant language such as 'stupid' must be banned seriously in the classroom.

4.8.2.2 Non-professional appearance

In the interviews, three teachers out of 16 claimed that it was vitally important for teachers to have a professional appearance even though they were at the age under 30. It was, moreover, especially important for young teachers to have a professional appearance in order

to earn the respect of the students. Three teachers said that learners tended not to respect teachers who had a non-professional appearance, in that a female teacher wearing rather short dress and skirt or a male teacher putting on skinny style trousers to the school. Moreover, one teacher observed the fact that proper outfits must be worn in order to increase teachers' credibility for their learners. Interestingly, none of students mentioned this issue in the interviews.

“Teachers’ characters have an impact on teaching, it is important to make learners feel respected and that you believe in them.”

(Teacher nine)

“As a young teacher, most learners feel that I am too young and too kind. Thus, I think I should have more a professional appearance. Sometimes I have to be strict in the classroom to make the learners be respectful to me.”

(Teacher fifteen)

In the interviews, it was seen that only three teachers who paid attention to teachers' appearance. Those three teachers gave importance of non-professional appearance and pointed out that having non-professional appearance could result in the credibility and appropriateness of being a teacher. Equally importantly, learners' response showed that they were not worried about their teachers' professional appearance.

4.8.2.3 Lesson delivery

Two teachers out of sixteen and six groups of students out of ten reported that the teaching style and its characteristics in the classroom were crucial factors, leading either to a good or a bad class environment. Both teachers noted that the class was boring if teachers had poor lesson delivery. One teacher admitted having a boring class since she heavily focused on context without any interesting lesson delivery. Thus inappropriate classroom management contributes to an ineffective learning outcome.

“I know it is hard to make learning fun because I do not have many interesting teaching styles to motivate learners to enjoy my class. As such, sometimes learners tend to lose interest in the topic. I focus heavily on context. Those that do not understand the lesson would then struggle even more, but I do try my best to teach them.”

(Teacher fourteen)

Interestingly, another teacher talked about native English-speaking EFL teachers that even though they were native English-speaking teachers who were familiar with language and were likely to better encourage learners to speak, they could also create a boring class if they had ineffective lesson delivery.

Moreover, four groups of learners out of ten regarded lesson delivery as important. They preferred flexible lesson delivery. For example, they wanted their teachers not to primarily focus on right or wrong responses especially while speaking skill was practiced, owing to the fact that this right or wrong focus generally created passive classroom, and learners chose to keep silent. They also pointed out that managing appropriate lesson delivery could make effective language learning.

Furthermore, two groups of learners out of ten wanted their teachers to include knowledge outside of the textbook and interesting activities had to be created in the classroom, so that the class could be less boring. Interestingly, both groups had a similar reason for this, namely that teaching only from the textbook was tedious, contributing to possible classroom distraction.

In the interviews, two teachers and six groups of students considered lesson delivery as significant issues in English language education. Most of them mentioned this issue with regard to Thai EFL teachers. However, one teacher pointed out this issue regarding native English-speaking teachers, namely that they could also create a boring class if they did not deliver their lessons effectively, although they primarily focused on speaking. Interestingly, both teachers who regarded lesson delivery as important issue also considered non-professional appearance as a crucial problem, too.

4.8.2.4 *Personal traits*

Seven teachers out of sixteen and eight groups of learners out of ten noted that teachers' personal traits had effect on English language learning in the classroom. Five teachers pointed out that strict teachers created a passive and boring classroom environment, since learners tended to be quiet and to say nothing in the class. The learners claimed that they were afraid that if they did or said something wrong, they would be punished. Therefore, learners chose to stay silent. Additionally, two teachers out of five also pointed out that, especially those that were old were very inactive in the classroom, sitting in front of the class and not writing

anything on the blackboard. They tended to have become bored with teaching, bringing about a very passive classroom.

“Some teachers do not pay attention to their class. This causes their class to be very passive and their students do not gain as much knowledge as the other classes do.”

(Teacher fourteen)

“Most learners prefer a kind teacher. However, I am a rather strict teacher so I feel that learners are quite passive in my class.”

(Teacher ten)

Similarly, five groups of students stated that they preferred studying with kind and flexible teachers. Studying with strict teachers made them feel under pressure at all times. Interestingly, four out of five groups of learners talked about the passive and boring class taught by Thai EFL teachers.

“I dare not ask questions since the teacher is very strict. If I say something wrong, the teacher tends to blame me, making me scared of saying anything in the class.”

(Student group two)

Furthermore, two groups of learners stated that some teachers kept talking or complaining about many other things in the classroom and spent little time teaching the lesson. This contributed to ineffective learning, since learners could not gain enough knowledge from their teacher. Interestingly, one group of learners out of two noted that they preferred strict teachers who could deliver the lesson effectively to kind-hearted teachers who kept talking about something irrelevant to the lesson. However, none of the teachers mentioned this point.

“Some teachers keep complaining and ignore teaching lessons in the classroom. Even worse, some teachers simply assign work and leave the classroom. This caused us not to pay attention to class at all. We prefer studying with strict teachers if they teach more effectively than kind-hearted teachers.”

(Student group eight)

From the second interview, all sixteen teachers and ten learners confirmed that the characteristics of EFL teachers was a problem of English language education in the upper secondary level. Most participants shared similar issues to the first interviews; however, there were a few emergent issues. The first emergent issue was that two learners focused on the good-looking teachers to attract them to pay attention to class. They claimed that attractive teachers made them eager to study and looked forward to studying their classes. However, having a class with a good looking teacher is not as important as studying English with efficient teacher, since teachers' appearance does not reflect their quality of teaching.

Additionally, one learner noted that some teachers were too lazy to teach effectively. They never wrote anything on the blackboard and seemed to ignore class activities and the feelings of their students. Interestingly, another learner claimed that some teachers paid attention to only smart learners, repeatedly calling their name to answer the question; thus, other learners were mostly ignored. She also noted that teachers seemed to prefer smart students.

4.8.3 Shadow education

In the interviews, six groups out of ten of the learners claimed that tutorial schools were very popular among English language learners. Nowadays, most Thai learners strongly believe that a tutorial school is really needed for learners to pass both the school examination and the entrance examination. Participants classified tutorial teachers who taught English language tutorial classes in Bangkok into two categories: tutorial classes with native English-speaking teachers and those with Thai EFL teachers. The former were classes for learners who wanted to improve their listening and speaking skills, whereas the latter were for those who wanted to pass the examinations, mainly focussing on grammar, vocabulary and reading passages that would be provided in the examinations. True to Thai beliefs in the importance of examinations, most learners talked about the latter.

Equally importantly, it is also crucial to note that in the interviews, the Thai tutorial teachers were classified into two categories: firstly, teachers working for a state or private school, running a tutorial course as extra classes after school both for their own students and for students from other schools; secondly, teachers running their own tutorial school business who taught students after school or at weekends. This second type of tutorial teacher would normally have their own teaching materials, rather than following a curriculum.

In the interviews, ten out of 16 of the teachers and eight groups out of ten of the students claimed that tutorial schools had an effect on English language education in Thailand. In contrast to other issues mentioned earlier, there were both advantages and disadvantages with regard to tutorial schools. Interestingly, ten teachers pointed out the problems with tutorial schools in terms of impacting on English language education, whereas eight groups of learners noted the benefits of having tutorial schools in Thailand, along with only a few weaknesses. I would like to start with teachers' perceptions towards tutorial schools, followed by learners' perceptions.

4.8.3.1 Teachers' perceptions

In the interviews, three teachers out of ten claimed that teachers from public or private schools did not pay attention to their class at school. This is so that they can put all their effort into teaching more effectively in their tutorial courses after school, as they earn more money from this. The more effort they put into tutorial classes, the more students they had in their class. None of the three teachers did tutorial classes after school; therefore, they noted that teachers running tutorial classes after school were normally not responsible in their duties at school, since they paid more attention to their tutorial classes. Even worse, two teachers out of three claimed that some teachers running tutorial classes after school sometimes shared the upcoming school examination to students studying with them, so that their students would definitely pass the school examination, which pleased the students, as Thai students tend to be heavily focused on grades. It can be said that all three teachers disagreed with the idea of tutorial classes.

“I think that some teachers teaching at school do not teach in the classroom effectively in order that they can save all their effort for their tutorial classes. This is due to the fact that they need to earn more money.”

(Teacher three)

“I heard that some teachers teaching at school do not pay attention to the classroom since they are more focused on their tutorial classes. Moreover, some teachers share the upcoming examination with learners in their tutorial classes so that those learners are always pleased to study with them. This is because most learners heavily focused on grades.”

(Teacher twelve)

Moreover, nine out of ten of the teachers argued that tutorial classes also reduced the quality of learners' studies while studying at school. All nine teachers claimed that their learners mostly ignored classes at school since they thought that they could still gain information from tutorial classes after school: most learners thought that teachers at the tutorial school were more reliable and taught them more effectively than teachers at the school.

“Most students attend tutorial classes so they do not care about the classes at the school. Students think that studying at school is not vitally important for them since the tutorial classes are taught more effectively; as a result, they are likely to ignore the classes at school.”

(Teacher five)

Equally importantly, in the interviews three teachers argued that tutorial schools were destroying the English language education system, since almost all students in Bangkok attended tutorial classes after school in order to build up their confidence in learning. Interestingly, two out of three teachers noted that some learners did not pay attention to tutorial classes and sometimes skipped classes since they had applied for the tutorial courses: they regarded it as a fashion for students at the upper secondary level. Therefore, they simply followed their friends by applying for tutorial courses. One out of three teachers also noted that students did not trust their teachers at school.

4.8.3.2 Students' perceptions

Similar to teachers' perceptions, two groups of the students pointed out that teachers who ran tutorial classes after school did not pay attention to their classes at school; instead, they taught highly effectively in tutorial classes. Thus, many students applied for their tutorial classes.

“I wonder why teachers pay less attention to their own class at the school since they teach us highly effectively in the tutorial classes after school. I would like to say that some teachers ignore their class; it may be because they earn more money from their tutorial classes.”

(Student group ten)

Furthermore, in the interviews two groups of learners regarded tutorial schools as being highly important for English language education in Thailand. However, they claimed that attending a tutorial school would not guarantee a successful learning outcome since some could not pass the examination despite having tutorial classes, whereas others not attending tutorial schools had very high scores in the English examination.

“I feel like Thai learners are now heavily obsessed with tutorial schools. It seems that we are not confident with English language learning at school at all. However, I still wonder why some of my friends who do not attend tutorial classes also have very high scores in the examination; they told me that they just pay attention to English classes at school, revise the grammar and memorise the vocabulary at home every day. Therefore, I think that if there were no tutorial schools in Thailand, learners would probably pay more attention to classes at school.”

(Student group nine)

Furthermore, four groups of the students also noted that many students considered tutorial classes to be a fashion. They admitted applying for tutorial classes since most of their friends did. They also pointed out that no matter how well the teachers at school taught, they still needed to apply for classes at tutorial schools despite the fact that they sometimes did not pay attention to the tutorial classes. Additionally, they also claimed that some learners applied for classes at tutorial schools simply due to the fact that they followed their classmates: some of them did not realise the real benefit of tutorial classes.

“I think attending tutorial school is an education trend. Many of my friends hardly attend tutorial classes despite the fact that they have applied for the courses. This is because they do just like others do without considering its importance, even worse, they do not pay attention to the tutorial classes. I think it is not the right approach because it shows that they just want to follow the trend of applying for tutorial classes. It wastes their money since the courses in tutorial schools are rather expensive, especially when studying with native English-speaking teachers.”

(Student group seven)

On the other hand, in the interviews five groups of learners argued that learners should attend tutorial schools in order to improve their English language learning. Equally importantly, four groups of learners argued the importance of tutorial schools. They admitted paying less attention to classes at school since they primarily focused on the classes at tutorial schools. Therefore, learners also noted that, even worse, sometimes they were absent from classes at their schools and chose to attend tutorial classes instead.

“I attend a tutorial class because I do not understand English language teaching from the teachers at school. The tutors at tutorial school give me many tips for memorising vocabulary and they explain grammar quite clearly. Admittedly, I hardly pay attention in my class at school as I instead believe strongly in my tutors.”

(Student group seven)

Equally importantly, eight groups of students argued that teachers who ran their own tutorial schools were far better than those teaching at school. In the interviews, the distinctive characters of tutors at tutorial school were pointed out:

Firstly, the tutors had effective teaching techniques. They gave many tips for memorising vocabulary as well as grammar structure; therefore, learners claimed that they were able to have a better understanding of English usage.

Secondly, the tutors’ characters were more pleasing. They were much more active, funny, livelier, and supportive than teachers at school. In addition, learners also pointed out that they were not stressed since tutors were not strict and never put pressure on them, leading to a more relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

“I am very happy with the tutors at my tutorial school since they are energetic in the classroom, making students to be more enthusiastic in studying. I never feel bored when learning at tutorial classes but I am always sleepy in classes at school. Additionally, the tutors try to encourage us to fight to get through the examination. The atmosphere in tutorial classes is much more relaxing than in the schools.”

(Student group four)

Thirdly, the tutors had good lesson preparation. They were well-prepared in the classroom and their lessons were consistent and went straight to the examination points. Most learners paid attention to the class due to the fact that what the tutors had prepared to teach to meet their interests. Learners pointed out that they were more confident that they could pass both the examination at the school and the entrance examination. Moreover, they argued that if they did not attend tutorial classes, they would never pass the examination since they could not rely on their teachers' teaching at the schools.

“The very good thing about tutors at tutorial schools is that they always prepare the lessons very well. Moreover, the context meets our interest, as we prepare both for the examination at school and the entrance examination. I am very confident and ready to take the coming examinations. Admittedly, I think I could not pass the examinations especially the entrance examination if I did not attend tutorial classes. Studying English only at school does not provide me with adequate knowledge for the entrance examination. I strongly think that I gain much more knowledge in the tutorial classes.”

(Student group two)

From the second interviews, all sixteen teachers and ten students confirmed that shadow education was one of the most influential issues of English language education. However, no new issue emerged from the second interview. Participants covered all the important issues with regard to shadow education in the first interview.

4.8.4 Linguistic differences and first language interference

In the interviews, twelve out of 16 of the teachers and six out of ten of the learners claimed that the linguistic difference between English and Thai is one of the crucial problems within English language education. There are many different linguistic aspects involved in using English in daily life. Speaking and writing are considered to be two of the most difficult skills with regard to linguistic problems, especially for Thai learners due to the linguistic differences and pronunciation. Only little attention is paid to listening skills. Interestingly, none of the participants noted that reading is the most difficult skill to practice.

4.8.4.1. Speaking skills

In the interviews, four out of twelve of the teachers and five groups out of ten of the students argued that speaking skills were very problematic, due to the various aspects involving pronunciation and grammar. Moreover, when Thai learners translated Thai to English when they were speaking English, the sentences were sometimes wrongly constructed, since the linguistics of Thai and English are different, for example in terms of the pronunciation, use of the past tense, and use of the plural.

“I found it difficult when speaking English because the linguistics of Thai and English are different. For example, in Thai you do not have to conjugate a verb when using the past simple tense; therefore, I am not familiar with conjugating verbs, meaning I am more likely to use an infinitive verb in the past simple tense.”

(Teacher six)

“I think pronunciation is very difficult since the sounds of Thai and English are very different. I found it very difficult to pronounce some English words. Moreover, I always forget to pronounce the ‘s’ with plural nouns, because there is no need to put ‘s’ or ‘es’ when nouns are plural in Thai. Consequently, I think different linguistics between Thai and English are problematic.”

(Student group ten)

4.8.4.2. Writing skills

In the interviews, five out of 16 of the teachers and three groups out of ten of the students claimed that the different linguistic aspects of Thai and English caused significant difficulties in terms of English writing. The problem was that Thai learners often translated Thai to English directly, or sometimes used karaoke language when they did not know how to write English properly. Thus, their English writing was full of mistakes since it was not exactly what they wished to write. Moreover, participants also noted that punctuation was a problem in writing, since there was no punctuation in Thai; therefore, sometimes it was confusing for Thai learners to use punctuation correctly.

“The biggest problem in English writing is that Thai learners always translate directly from Thai to English and the meaning is mostly wrong. It is not easy for them to write correct English.”

(Teacher thirteen)

“I found it difficult for me to use punctuation in English writing. I am always confused and do not know how to put punctuation into the right position because there is no punctuation in Thai. There is a difference in linguistics between Thai and English.”

(Student group eight)

4.8.4.3 Listening skills

In the interviews, only one out of 16 of the teachers and one group out of 10 of the learners claimed that they experienced problems with listening skills in English language education. One teacher claimed that Thai learners had difficulties in listening skills especially with audio, although there was no critical listening problem with face-to-face communication. The teacher also noted that there was more audio listening in daily life, such as announcements, telephones, and radios. Interestingly, a group of students maintained that they had difficulties with foreigners’ accents, since there were many different accents, depending on where the foreigners came from. It was difficult for them to understand a conversation, due to the fact that they were not familiar with the accents.

“Listening skills are considered the toughest of the English skills. Nowadays I think listening to audio such as announcements and telephones is vitally important. Thus, Thai learners should practise listening with audio more. Personally, I think face-to-face communication is not as difficult as audio listening.”

(Teacher sixteen)

“I think the most difficult part of listening skills is that there are many different English accents. It is hard for me to understand when listening to different accents.”

(Student group ten)

From the second interviews, all sixteen teachers and ten students confirmed that first language interference and linguistic difference were problems of English language education in the upper secondary level. All participants pointed out the problem of how the Thai language interfered with each English skill. However, some issues emerging from the second interview were pointed out. Three teachers pointed out that with regard to the claim of Thai learners being good at grammar, most mistakes found in the piece of writing were directly related to grammar

such as using fragments and run ons. Furthermore, two students pointed out that listening and speaking had an effect on each other; thus, it was beneficial to practice these two skills together. Additionally, two students noted the problem of speaking skills, namely that some learners were not shy to speak but they had limited knowledge of vocabulary; therefore, it was difficult for learners to communicate in English.

4.8.5. Teacher's low salary

In the interviews, 15 out of 16 of the teachers claimed that the low salary of teachers was one of the most important issues with regard to English language education in Thailand. Contrastingly, only five out of ten groups of learners considered low salaries to be a problem. It would seem that low salary was the critical issue since six of the teachers and one group of learners claimed that most people who specialised in English language chose to work for higher-paid professions such as officers in international organisations, flight attendants or translators, instead of being a teacher. Interestingly, three out of six of the teachers pointed out that many people would like to be English language teachers; however, due to low salary, they decided instead to work in other professions to earn higher salaries.

“The biggest problem for English language teachers is that the salary is very low. They can earn a lot more from many other international organisations, especially those who are good at the English language, in roles such as translators or flight attendants”.

(Teacher two)

“I have found that there are a number of people dreaming of being an English teacher especially those who are proficient in English. However, people who are very good at English change their mind because English teachers are low-paid; therefore, many people choose to work as flight attendants, one of the most popular professions”.

(Student group nine)

Furthermore, four out of 15 of the teachers and one group out of five students claimed that English language teachers should have had a higher salary in order to encourage them to be language teachers since English was considered as the main foreign language in Thailand; therefore, it was advantageous and profitable for those who knew English in Thailand. Interestingly, two out of four of the teachers also noted that English language teachers required

high qualifications, but were nevertheless very low-paid. Therefore, they pointed out that teachers need to be encouraged with higher salaries.

“Language teachers should get a higher salary to encourage people who are proficient in English language to be English teachers. Nowadays, the situation is that English language teachers require high qualifications yet they are low-paid.”

(Teacher seven)

“Schools should pay higher salaries to English language teachers in order to encourage them to be an English teacher. Actually, there are many people who are good at English; however, they think that the salary is too low to earn a living. They think that being good at English is an advantage in Thailand but they earn too little money.”

(Student group seven)

In addition, two out of 16 of the teachers and one group of student also noted that English language teachers in Thailand were very low-paid compared with those in other countries. They also claimed that the Thai government should increase the salaries of teachers to an equivalent level to those in other countries. Interestingly, one teacher and one student pointed out that many other countries especially those in the Western zone gave importance to the English language teacher profession; here, a teacher’s salary was perceived to be as high as a doctor’s salary.

“The low salary is one of the problems with English language education in Thailand compared with Western countries. This is because the Thai government pays too little attention to the teaching profession.”

(Student group six)

Importantly, there was another issue with regard to low salaries. Only one teacher noted that Thai EFL teachers had lower salaries than native English-speaking teachers despite the fact that they had a great deal more responsibilities at the school.

“Thai EFL teachers have a much lower salary compared with native English-speaking teachers. However, Thai EFL teachers have to teach, check students’ discipline, create examinations and attend homeroom activities; whereas native English teachers are only responsible for teaching and assessing students’ speaking tests. I think the Thai government should increase the salary for all Thai English language teachers in Thailand.”

(Teacher three)

From the second interview, slightly increased from the first interview, all sixteen teachers and eight students claimed that low salary was a problem of English language education in the upper secondary level. However, two students stated that they did not at all know of the salary rate of teachers. Apart from similar issues, two teachers claimed that their salary did not cover living expenses each month; they had to be very thrifty. Nowadays, the cost of living in Bangkok was continuously rising; however, their salaries had remained stable. Substantially, one learner claimed that due to the fact that the English language teachers received low salaries, there was low performance in the language teaching. Consequently, it was pointed out that if teachers got higher salaries, it is possible that the students would receive better language teaching.

4.8.6 Examination system

In the interviews, 13 out of 16 of the teachers and nine groups out of ten of the students considered the examination system to be a critical issue with regard to English language education in Thailand. Two major examinations were mentioned in the interviews, including the English examination within the school and English Admission or Entrance examinations. There were a number of major issues with regard to the examination system.

The first major issue was that heavy focus in the examination was on grammar and reading, with no writing section. Seven of the teachers and eight groups out of the students claimed that grammar was heavily focused on in the examination, and that there was no writing part at all. One teacher pointed out that writing skills consist of language use and organisation, both of which were considered significant for English language learning. One group of the students also pointed out that the writing part made learners actively prepare themselves better for the examination; therefore, the examination should include a writing part. This should at least be

a formative examination to evaluate their writing abilities and alert learners before the examination. Two of the teachers suggested that writing, listening and speaking sections should also be included. Interestingly, one group of the students claimed that it was very important to be aware that the weak point of a writing examination was that there was no standard form for teachers to check students' work against.

“Admittedly, the English examination includes grammar and speaking; however, little attention is paid to writing and speaking skills. In my opinion, there should also be a writing part in the examination, at least in the formative examination to allow learners to practice writing.”

(Teacher nine)

“Grammar and reading are heavily focused on in the examination. Despite its difficulty, I think there should also be a writing part in the examination. However, there is a drawback in including a writing part: there is no standard form for teachers to check students' work against.”

(Student group nine)

In addition, another problem in the English language examination system in Thailand was that examination style primarily evaluated a student's ability to learn by rote, rather than their use of critical thinking. Three of the teachers and five groups of the students noted that the examination system encouraged learners to apply a rote system to the examination, rather than critical thinking; therefore, they found it difficult to implement English language in a real context. Learners merely memorised what they needed to for the examination, without applying critical thinking. However, they believed that critical thinking was vitally important for language learning.

“I think the rote system destroys the English language education system since students do not develop critical thinking skills. As a result, Thai learners do not know how to think and how to apply English in a real context. They just memorise the vocabulary and grammar they need for the examination.”

(Teacher twelve)

“The examination evaluation heavily focuses on a rote system, such as vocabulary and grammar memorising, but lacks critical thinking. I think a critical thinking examination style would be more practical for learners who want to use English in daily life.”

(Student group seven)

Furthermore, inconsistency in the examinations was also seen as a problem. Five groups of students claimed that inconsistency in the examinations was regarded as one of the critical problems of the examination system. They argued that the examination should be commensurate with the standards set by TOEFL and IELTS. Four out of five groups of the students also suggested that the English language examination should be adjusted since each year's examination was inconsistent. Learners were extremely worried about their English language examinations, especially entrance examinations, since they were not the same as they were being taught at school. Interestingly, none of the teachers regarded inconsistency in the examinations as a problem for English language education in Thailand.

“The English language examinations are inconsistent. They always keep changing the examination style. Importantly, the grammar and vocabulary in the entrance examination are totally different from those in the textbook taught at school, which is much easier than the entrance examinations.”

(Student group ten)

Two groups of the students pointed out that an interview part needed to be included in the entrance examination so that students would pay more attention to speaking skills. Moreover, one group out of two also claimed that students could show their character in the interview part; therefore, some learners may not have done well in the English language examination. However, an interview part could show interviewers their speaking abilities as well as their attitudes towards their studies. It is vitally important to note that none of the teachers mentioned this issue in the interviews.

“An interview section should also be included together with the written English language examination so that students put effort into their speaking skills and so that they can also show their attitudes and fluency in their speaking skills.”

(Student group nine)

From the second interview, the number of teachers and learners who identified the English language examination as a problem increased from the first interview by one each, consisting of 14 teachers and all 10 students. However, none of the new issues with regard to the English language examination emerged from the second interview. Participants focused heavily on the similar issues presented in the first interview.

4.8.7 The EFL teacher's competence and poor quality of teaching

The competence of EFL teachers and their poor quality of teaching was considered to be a critical issue relating to English language education in Thailand. Thirteen teachers out of the 16, and nine groups of learners out of the ten, mentioned this issue in the interviews. Regarding their English competence, nine teachers out of sixteen and seven groups of students claimed that most teachers had little knowledge of English so they were unable to teach effectively in the classroom.

“Many EFL teachers still lack English proficiency so they cannot teach English well. It is a student's bad luck to study with those that have only little knowledge of English”

(Teacher fifteen)

“My English language teachers lacked grammar ability, speaking skill, and vocabulary knowledge. They could answer only a few of my questions about English in the classroom. They did not know the meaning of some general Vocabulary”

(Student group ten)

Even worse, three out of nine teachers noted that some teachers were so lazy that they did not try to learn more; they simply taught what they normally did in the classroom. Interestingly, two out of nine teachers admitted that they still lacked speaking ability, and they could not do well in teaching speaking.

“I have to admit that I still cannot speak English fluently; therefore, I cannot teach my learners effectively in their speaking skills.”

(Teacher seven)

In addition, three out of ten groups of students felt that their English was better than their English teachers. They also claimed that the English of their teachers did not meet standards. Their teacher could not answer some questions related to the context, or misspelled some normal words.

“I think I am better in English than my teacher. My teacher misspells some easy words such ‘television’ and ‘umbrella’. I do not believe in my teacher at all. Whenever I ask a question, she always asks us to check the answer by ourselves from the textbook and dictionary.”

(Student group seven)

Moreover, two groups of students claimed that a teacher’s competence in English affected their credibility in the eyes of their students. Thus, some learners felt that they could not have faith in teachers who lacked competence in the English language including knowledge of its grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

“I feel that some teachers have only a little knowledge of grammar since they are unable to answer many questions. Sometimes, I want to change my teacher since I do not feel I am gaining any knowledge from them, resulting in disrespect for the teachers.”

(Student group three)

“Some of my English teachers mispronounce some easy words and their translation is sometimes incorrect. Since discovering this, I have never believed in them again. I think their English is too poor to be an effective EFL teacher.”

(Student group nine)

From the second interview, fourteen teachers and nine students claimed that EFL teachers’ incompetence was a problem of English language education at the upper secondary level. The issues from the second interviews were similar to those from the first interview. However, some important issues emerged from the second interview. Firstly, in relation to out-of-field teachers, seven teachers pointed out that some EFL teachers were not specialized in English language; however, some foreign language teachers, all of whom in the interview majored German, Chinese, Japanese, and French, were assigned to teach English due to the English

language teachers shortage. Therefore, it is possible that foreign language teachers were not confident to teach, and were afraid that they could not provide adequate knowledge to their learners, possibly resulting in being viewed as an incompetent teacher. However, none of the learners pointed out the out-of-field teacher is the problematic issue.

Furthermore, six teachers regarded teachers' workloads as one of the problems that resulted in poor quality of teaching. Participants claimed that teachers were assigned to have duties in addition to teaching, including working in administrative, financial and activities affairs; therefore, some EFL teachers did not have sufficient time for lesson preparation, causing their learners to consider them as incompetent teachers. They further suggested hiring an administrative officer in each department to lessen teachers' burden apart from teaching and managing learners' behaviours. Four out of six teachers complained about the working stress from overloaded responsibility. They claimed that workload was one of the factors that impeded their teaching effectiveness. However, none of the learners in this study noted this issue as being a problem of English language education.

The other emergent issue of teachers' incompetency is related to student teachers. One learner claimed the inefficiency of student teachers is a problem of English language education, in that in the last semester in University level, learners from the Faculty of Education needed to teach as a student teacher in real classroom practice, depending on their major and level. Thus, the learner noted that student teachers were not always competent, causing learners in their class to have inadequate knowledge.

4.8.8 The EFL teacher's qualification

In the interviews, fifteen out of 16 teachers and five groups of the students out of ten claimed that the qualification of EFL teachers is considered to be one of the critical problems with regard to English language in Thailand. Interestingly, all of them mentioned qualifications in connection with native English-speaking EFL teachers only. They noted that native English-speaking teachers were still in need of English language education in Thailand, but their qualifications were still problematic. Surprisingly, none of Thai EFL teachers were mentioned in terms of qualification issue.

Five teachers and one group of the students used the term 'tourist teacher' in the interviews to represent a native English-speaking teacher who was not qualified to be a language teacher.

For the participants, a ‘tourist teacher’ was teacher who did not have teaching qualification and applied for a teacher position simply in order to earn money while he/she was travelling around.

“Many native teachers in our school are not qualified; they did not graduate in the teaching field. School hire native English teachers in order to teach better English to our students. However, native teachers are really needed in many Thai state schools; but there is an insufficiently supply of native teachers so that some ‘tourist teachers’ are hired to teach in our schools.”

(Teacher ten)

“Some native teachers admit being ‘tourist teachers’ in need of more money to travel. Their teaching is very bad. It is like a free period when attending their classes. No teaching takes place in their classes.”

(Student group nine)

Furthermore, seven teachers out of 16 and four groups of the students also agreed that a number of native English-speaking teachers in Thailand were not qualified; therefore, they had no ability to teach: they lacked grammar knowledge and teaching technique. Equally importantly, five teachers out of seven and three out of four groups of students observed that due to the fact that native teachers were often not qualified, their teaching quality was very poor. Often, they did not teach as effectively as the school expected. Interestingly, four teachers and two groups of students noted that being a native English-speaking teacher did not always mean that they could teach English well. It can be seen from the interviews that teachers and learners noted poor teaching quality with native teachers as a critical issue of English language education in Thailand.

“Actually, it is beneficial for learners to have an opportunity to study with a native English teacher. They can familiarise themselves with the accent and pronunciation. However, the drawback is that native English teachers are not qualified, do not know how to teach, and do not know how to create an exam since they are ‘tourist teachers’; therefore, students gain only little knowledge from them.”

(Teacher fourteen)

Moreover, three teachers also observed that the reason why some schools cannot hire qualified native English-speaking teachers was due to the limited budget of state school policy to pay for them. Therefore, qualified native English-speaking teachers chose to teach at well-paid schools. One teacher noted that qualified native English-speaking teacher's salary was very high; therefore, many teachers in state schools where budget was limited were claimed to be not qualified.

“Native English teachers are not qualified since our school has little budget for them. Therefore, it is said that quality comes with payment.”

(Teacher six)

From the second interview, all sixteen teachers and six students claimed that teachers' qualifications were considered to be a problem of English language education at the upper secondary level. However, there was one new issue with regard to teachers' qualification emerged from the second interview. Due to the inadequate number of teachers, two teachers in this study pointed out that teachers who were not qualified were hired to be EFL teachers: some worked for other profession, and others graduated from faculty of education, albeit majoring in different levels. Thus, teaching students in the upper secondary level was not their specialization, possibly resulting in a problem with English language education. Interestingly, four students pointed out that they did not care much about teachers' qualification: they would rather focus on the quality of teaching.

4.8.9 The value of heavy focus on grades

In the interviews, five groups of learners and three of the teachers pointed out that Thai people paid too much attention to examination grades; therefore, most Thai learners mainly focused on just the skills expected for the English language examination, including reading, grammar, and vocabulary. Therefore, little attention was paid to speaking and listening skills, both of which are ignored to some extent in English language learning in Thailand. One group of learners admitted ignoring speaking and listening skills since they were not included in the English examination. Moreover, two teachers pointed out that learners always asked questions about grammar and vocabulary but they were hardly interested in listening and speaking skills due to the fact that they primarily focused on what was included in the examination. One teachers also suggested having speaking, listening, and writing tests in the English

examination, like the IELTS test, in order to encourage Thai learners to focus more on speaking and listening skills.

“Thai learners are obsessed with grades. We primarily focus on the examinations; therefore, that which is not included in the examination is normally ignored by Thai learners. Admittedly, I do not care about listening and speaking skills at all because these skills are not included in the examination. Frankly, I think about grades, so I concentrate on grammar, vocabulary and reading.”

(Student group eight)

“It is a Thai value that grades are the most important thing in a student’s life. I think it ruins English language education since learners mainly focus on the examination, meaning they ignore the speaking and listening skills.”

(Teacher three)

From the second interviews, thirteen teachers and nine students pointed out the heavy focus on grades was one of the issues impeding speaking and listening skill since these skills were not in the English language examination. However, one issue that emerged from the second interview perceived by one learner, namely that she preferred studying speaking and listening skill in English class. She further noted that if an EFL learner was good at speaking and listening, it is possible that the familiarization of English usage might help to do better in the examination.

4.8.10 Student’s shyness

In the interviews, the shyness of Thai people was identified as being one of the major factors impeding the process of learning to speak English. Nine out of 16 of the teachers and eight out of ten groups of learners considered shyness to cause difficulty in improving English language learning, especially with regard to speaking skills. In the interviews, shyness was classified into three categories: a heavy focus on accuracy, the belief that developing a native English accent would be to overact it, and shyness when communicating with English speaking foreigners.

4.8.10.1 *Heavy focus on accuracy*

Six students pointed out that they were worried about the accuracy of their English, especially their speaking skills. They were shy in speaking English in front of other people since they were afraid that they would use the wrong grammar. Thus, it felt better for them not to speak English when they were with others.

“Every time I speak English, I am very worried about the accuracy of my grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, I choose not to speak English in the classroom since I am shy about using English inaccurately.”

(Student group eight)

However, in the interviews only three of the teachers claimed that a heavy focus on accuracy of grammar and vocabulary while speaking was the problem. It is also important to note that as EFL teachers, they found it difficult to encourage their learners to speak English in the classroom. This could be because they were shy and they were afraid that their friends would laugh at them if they used the wrong grammar.

“From my experience, I get too nervous to speak English as I am worried about the accuracy of my grammar and vocabulary. I have become much better after becoming an EFL teacher. However, I still think that most Thai learners are shy in the classroom since they are afraid that they speak English with the wrong grammar and that their classmates may laugh at them”

(Teacher fifteen)

4.8.10.2 Belief of overacting when speaking English with native-like accent

Four out of eight students noted that it felt like overacting to speak English with a native English accent. Interestingly, two out of the four students were also heavily focussed on the accuracy of their grammar. In addition to the issue of having a heavy focus on accuracy, they noted that they were shy to speak English in the classroom because their classmates would think that they were overacting; thus, they thought it was better for them not to speak English in the classroom.

“I am always shy especially when I have to speak English in front of the class. It is weird to speak English fluently with a native English accent. It is a Thai belief that speaking English with a native English-like accent is not normal within the Thai

environment.”

(Student group ten)

Similarly, seven out of eleven of the teachers pointed out that their learners were too shy to speak in the classroom; therefore, it was hard for teachers to practice speaking skills, no matter how much effort they put in to encourage their learners. They also claimed that it was a Thai value that people with a native English accent were considered to be overacting: this was a negative value in Thai society. Therefore, learners avoided speaking English in front of their classmates.

“Most students never speak in the classroom since they are afraid their classmates will laugh at them due to the overacting issue. I have tried to encourage them to speak, but they still keep silent. For example, I forced a student to answer my question individually; their classmates laughed at him even though he produced a native English accent, which is actually a good thing”.

(Teacher fourteen)

From the second interview, twelve teachers and ten learners confirmed that shyness is one of the problems of English language education in the upper secondary level, identifying rather similar issues to those raised in the first interview. However, there were a few issues emerged from the second interviews. Differently from the first interview, three teachers and four learners considered the fear and nervousness of foreigners to be a problem, impeding them from using English in the real practice. The reason behind this issue was that it was claimed from some participants that Thai learners dared not speak English with foreigners, since they were too shy and worried about foreigners not fully understanding what they were trying to say. Interestingly, two teachers noted that it might be better for them to be alone when facing English-speaking foreigners since some learners dared to speak English with foreigners in the condition that they were not among their friends. Moreover, two teachers believed that Thai EFL learners were not shy. Instead, some of them dared to speak English, but always made mistakes.

4.8.11 The teachers' recruitment system

In the interviews, twelve out of 16 of the teachers and seven groups of the students observed the teachers' recruitment system as being one of the critical problems with regard to

English language education in Thailand. There were two major recruitment systems mentioned in the interviews: Thai EFL teachers and native English-speaking teachers.

Regarding the Thai EFL teachers' recruitment system, three out of twelve of the teachers and four groups out of seven of the students claimed that they would like the teachers' recruitment system to be stricter than it is currently, as they felt that there were a number of low quality English language teachers.

“The teachers’ recruitment system is not that strict; therefore, there are many low quality EFL teachers.”

(Student group six)

Moreover, three out of twelve of the teachers noted that a teaching test should have been provided, together with a written test. They claimed that a written test alone was not enough to recruit people to be English language teachers; a teaching test was also vitally important to check the teaching quality before allowing them to teach in the real classroom. Apart from a teaching test, two groups out of twelve of the teachers also pointed out the importance of an aptitude test for teachers. One teacher suggested that both written and interview aptitude tests should be provided. Meanwhile, four out of seven groups of the students suggested that English language teachers should be evaluated at least once a year by taking an examination, in order to keep them continually knowledgeable and active. Participants claimed that teachers were rather inactive due to the fact that they had taught exactly the same textbooks and contexts for at least three years; thus, they did not feel they had to prepare more for the next academic year.

“The teachers’ recruitment system is less than credible. Many of the teachers are not qualified. A teaching test should be provided to check how they teach in the classroom. I feel that a high written test result alone cannot guarantee that the applicant can teach effectively. There are many teachers who are very good at the English language; however, they do not teach effectively in the classroom.”

(Teacher ten)

“A considerable number of English language teachers have an appropriate personality to be teachers; this is because they have only taken a written examination. Actually, I think psychological interview is essential to check whether or not applicants

are suitable to become teachers. Both teaching technique and psychology are important for a recruitment system.”

(Teacher twelve)

Moreover, one teacher pointed out that a professional teacher license could easily be purchased at the teachers' council of Thailand: surprisingly, this was legal. This system has gradually destroyed the recruitment system, since it was convenient for teachers who did not graduate from the Faculty of Education to get a professional teacher license and become a teacher.

Four out of twelve of the teachers claimed that the native English-speaking teachers' recruitment system is also problematic. One out of four of the teachers argued that a native English-speaking teacher recruitment agency would need to be strictly controlled since some native English-speaking teachers from recruitment agencies were not qualified. Two out of four of the teachers also pointed out that it was important for each school to be informed about the teaching quality and knowledge of native English-speaking teachers. They reported that there was a major problem whereby the school hires English-speaking teachers too easily; simply because of their nationality and appearance, without any test to check whether or not they could teach effectively. Being native English speakers does not always mean that they can teach English: being a teacher requires teaching skills, as well as knowledge about grammar.

“One of the problems with regard to native English-speaking teacher is the teacher recruitment agencies. There are a limited number of agencies where native English-speaking teachers are hired for each school; therefore, there are a few choices for schools to select native English-speaking teachers. I think that those recruited from agencies are not qualified and have poor teaching techniques. Teacher recruitment agencies should provide more training before recruiting them to their agency.”

(Teacher fifteen)

“Some native English-speaking teachers are tourist teachers who are not qualified and do not have teaching skills; however, they are hired because the school prefers those from Western countries and who have a native English-speaker teacher appearance. Personally, I reckon being a native English speaker does not automatically mean that they can teach English effectively. Therefore, they do not know

how to teach students. The school recruitment system should be stricter when it comes to recruiting native English-speaking teachers.”

(Teacher sixteen)

From the second interview, increased from the first interview, the number of teachers claiming the teacher's recruitment system was sixteen. However, only five students pointed out this issue, reduced by two from the first interview. The reason behind this might be that as a part of focus group interview from the first interview, not all members in one group had similar perceptions. Some learners might be aware of the different point of views, but did not share them with other members during the focus group interview. The second interview reports similar findings in regards to the problem of the recruitment system for Thai EFL teachers. However, there was one emergent issue regarding the native English speaking teachers. Owing to the fact that native English-speaking teachers were not qualified, one teacher argued that a separate recruitment centre for native English-speaking teachers must be provided to recruit them more strictly with written, teaching tests, demonstration of their teaching practice as well as interviews.

4.8.12 Teaching approaches

In the interviews, six out of 16 of the teachers and nine groups out of ten of the students claimed that the teaching approach was one of the problems with English language education in Thailand. According to the National Education Act (1999), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) must be applied in the classroom; however, EFL teachers still continue to apply the Grammar Translation Method (GTM).

4.8.12.1 *Heavy focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills*

Interestingly, four of the teachers noted that EFL teachers tended to focus heavily on grammar and paid little attention to speaking and listening skills in the language classroom. They claimed that this was one of the major problems since Thai learners had few chances to practice other skills apart from grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, due to the examinations, these teachers claimed that Thai learners remained obsessed with grammar, reading, and vocabulary in the examinations; therefore, Thai EFL teachers neglected communication skills in the classroom.

“Admittedly, most Thai EFL teachers apply the Grammar Translation Method and neglect speaking and listening skills in the classroom. In Thailand, grammar, vocabulary and reading are considered more important skills than listening and speaking. However, this is a critical problem as I think communication skills are also an important aspect of English language education.”

(Teacher six)

“Due to the fact that learners primarily focus on the examination, much attention is paid to grammar, vocabulary, and reading in the classroom. Thus, Thai EFL teachers lack communication skills when teaching English.”

(Teacher fourteen)

Nevertheless, eight of out ten groups of students pointed out that Thai EFL teachers focused on grammar and reading so much that they ignored teaching communication skills in the classroom. Even worse, two groups of learners claimed that some EFL teachers did not even teach grammar effectively; thus, they were likely to gain no knowledge in the classroom due to the fact that they lacked both grammar and communication skills. Interestingly, three of the students noted that they needed to practice speaking skills more. Therefore, teachers needed to create interesting activities to encourage learners to practice communication skills in the classroom. Additionally, two groups of learners pointed out that although Thai EFL teachers focused on grammar, vocabulary and reading, as covered in the examinations, they also needed English in daily life such as for writing job applications, CVs and formal letters.

“Actually, communication skills should be taught in the classroom together with grammar, vocabulary and reading skills, since they are vitally important in English language education. However, most Thai EFL teachers only teach grammar and vocabulary in the classroom. Even worse, some of them do not even teach grammar effectively, resulting in students experiencing difficulty in improving their English skills.”

(Student group nine)

“Teaching grammar in the classroom is acceptable; however, I need the EFL teacher to also focus on English usage in daily life such as writing résumés, job applications, and formal letters. This is because I think it is more practical than only studying grammar and vocabulary, which I do not know how to use in everyday life.”

(Student group six)

4.8.12.2 Lack of cultural knowledge

In the interviews, three of the teachers claimed that Western cultural knowledge was vitally important in language learning, since learning English was not only about how to use language. Culture played an important role, enabling learners to see the real context. All three of the teachers pointed out that it was better to share culture knowledge together with grammar and reading in the textbook since understanding culture could encourage livelier language learning.

“I think that cultural knowledge is a significant aspect for teachers to teach in the language classroom. Thus, EFL teachers should combine cultural knowledge with grammar and reading since it makes for livelier learning especially from the passage in the reading part.”

(Teacher two)

Interestingly, although Thai EFL teachers pointed out the importance of cultural knowledge, none of the students mentioned this point in their interviews.

4.8.12.3 Heavy focus on the school examination

In the interviews, five groups of learners claimed that teachers paid a great deal of attention to textbooks at school but they hardly prepared their students for entrance examinations. They needed their teachers to teach outside the textbook too, since the information inside the textbook was not adequate for them to get through entrance examinations. However, despite the importance of entrance examination, as stated by the learners, none of teachers noted this as a problem with the teaching approach.

“I would like my EFL teachers to focus both on textbook and entrance examinations since I think entrance examinations are also important for learners. Admittedly, most learners pay heavy attention to entrance examinations, so teachers should teach to meet our needs.”

(Student group four)

From the second interview, eleven teachers and ten students considered the teaching approach as a problem of English language education in the upper secondary level. Although most issues were similar to the first interview, one issue was raised by the teachers. As discovered in the second interviews, five teachers pointed out that most Thai EFL teachers had never been to native English-speaking countries; therefore, they found it difficult to teach culture, since they had never experienced the ‘real’ culture. They further suggested that teachers should have been sent abroad not only to learn better English but also to experience culture in the real context, so that they could teach their learners directly from their experience.

4.8.13 The belief of hierarchy

In the interviews, five out of 16 of the teachers and three out of ten of the students claimed that hierarchy had an impact on English language education since Thai learners paid such high respect to their teachers that they dared not ask questions or give their opinions in the classroom.

“I dare not ask teachers anything in the classroom, especially those who are old, because I feel that I need to be so respectful that I am quite scared of asking them any questions.”

(Student group five)

Interestingly, with regard to the strong belief in hierarchy in Thai society, five of the teachers noted that there was not only an issue with the relationship between teachers and their learners, but also with the relationship between old and young teachers, both of which had an impact on English language education. Three of the teachers noted that the relationship between teacher and learner led to silence in the classroom; one of the teachers claimed that most learners dared not speak and share their opinion in the classroom despite teachers not being strict and never punishing their learners when they gave the wrong answer. Equally importantly, two of the

teachers pointed out that the relationship between old teachers and young teachers also caused problems within English language education. Two of the teachers claimed that an older teacher normally had more power than a younger teacher; as a result, a young teacher had few chances to speak or give their opinion when all of the teachers needed to make a decision together. Generally speaking, the older teachers had control.

“Normally, most learners pay such high respect to their teacher that they keep silent in the classroom. Personally, I think hierarchy is very strong in Thai society; therefore, teachers must be respected and learners must be obedient. I want my learners to share their opinion and speak more in the classroom than they do now. The classroom is very inactive.”

(Teacher fourteen)

“As a young teacher, I feel that it is very hard to work with older teachers; it is like we have different backgrounds and beliefs. However, I still have to follow them and cannot share my opinion. The older teachers control everything and hardly listen to the voices of young teachers. As a result, I would say that there is a very strong belief in hierarchy in Thai society.”

(Teacher six)

From the second interviews, nine teachers and ten students confirmed that the belief of hierarchy system is one problem of English language education in the upper secondary level. Most issues were similar to the first interview. However, there was one interesting issue that emerged from the second interview. One student pointed out that it was Thai belief to always believe what teachers teach in the classroom although sometimes it was wrong. However, none of the students dared to tell teachers about the mistake teachers created during their explanation. Due to the strong belief in the hierarchy system, the student claimed that learners was scared of being blamed by their teachers for questioning or commenting on their ability.

4.8.14 Textbooks

In the interviews the participants claimed that textbooks are considered one of the critical issues within English language education in Thailand. 13 out of 16 of the teachers and five groups of learners noted that there are considerable problems with regard to textbooks.

4.8.14.1. *Textbooks do not meet learners' needs*

Six of the teachers and three groups of learners pointed out that the textbooks provided did not meet learners' needs. Four of the teachers noted that many of the topics in the textbooks were irrelevant to their learners' needs, which contributed to a lack of interest in the classroom. Similarly, three of the learners felt their textbooks needed to be updated, as many of the textbooks' topics were irrelevant to their needs. They claimed that they felt bored in the classroom when textbooks did not hold their attention.

“In some textbooks, there is too little information about grammar; therefore, some of the teachers have to prepare a lot more to teach their learners. However, the time available is inadequate for teachers to teach the grammar that is needed.”

(Teacher eleven)

“Some textbooks provide little information about grammar, whereas there is much more focus on grammar in the examination; therefore, I feel I need my textbooks to provide more information about grammar.”

(Student group three)

Equally importantly, two of the teachers pointed out that in many textbooks, little attention was paid to grammar; therefore, these teachers claimed that they needed to add in extra information. However, as time was limited in each class, they could not manage to teach this extra information. Crucially, one group of students also noted that the information about grammar in some of the textbooks was inadequate for passing their examinations. They argued that grammar needed to be focused on more within the textbooks, as they felt that grammar was one of the most important aspects of English language education.

“In some textbooks, there is too little information about grammar; therefore, some of the teachers have to prepare a lot more to teach their learners. However, the time available is inadequate for teachers to teach the grammar that is needed.”

(Teacher eleven)

“Some textbooks provide little information about grammar, whereas there is much to focus on grammar in the examination; therefore, I feel I need my textbooks to

provide more grammar knowledge.”

(Student group three)

4.8.14.2 Textbooks do not meet learners' levels

In the interviews, five of the teachers and one group of students claimed that the textbooks did not meet learners' English language proficiency levels. Interestingly, two of the teachers noted that some textbooks were too easy; whereas three of the teachers pointed out that some textbooks were too difficult for their learners' levels. Overall, participants claimed that inappropriate levels of textbooks caused difficulties in their language learning.

“There are a lot of problems with the textbooks. Advanced grammar is covered in the examination but the grammar in the textbook is too easy. There is also very limited vocabulary,”

(Teacher two)

“In some of the textbooks, the grammar is very easy but the vocabulary is too difficult for the level of learners.”

(Student group five)

4.8.14.3 Inconsistency in the textbooks

In the interviews, five of the teachers and one group of students pointed out that one of the problems with the textbooks was inconsistency. The textbooks for each level came from different publishers; therefore, some of the context in each textbook was not related to the others. Participants suggested using the same publisher for all levels, so that the content gradually developed in the same way.

“The consistency of textbook is important for English language learning. Schools should select the same publisher in order that the content is coherent at each level.”

(Teacher eight)

“The content of each textbook is inconsistent, since the textbooks for each level are from different publishers. I prefer using the same publisher for all the levels”

(Student group nine)

4.8.14.4 Corrupt Publishers

In the interviews, two of the teachers pointed out that there was corruption between the publishers and the teachers who had the authority to select the textbooks for each school. They claimed that some textbooks were selected because the publisher paid the teacher, regardless of the quality and appropriateness of textbooks and the levels of the students. None of the learners mentioned the issue of corrupt publishers.

“There is corruption between the publishers and the head of department; as a result of this, I feel that some textbooks are not appropriately selected.”

(Teacher nine)

4.8.14.5 Textbooks do not follow the national policy

Interestingly, in one of the interviews, a teacher pointed out that some of the selected textbooks do not follow the national policy. According to the National Education Act 1999, there was a major teaching approach shift from the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). However, many selected textbooks still mainly focus on GTM, which does not follow national policy. This teacher claimed that this type of inappropriate textbook was one of the obstacles for English language education, since the policy and textbook were incompatible. As a result, GTM is still a major teaching approach. However, none of learners mentioned this issue.

“The national policy and certain textbooks are not compatible. The policy follows Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) whereas the textbooks focus heavily on grammar. As a result, it is hard to apply CLT in the language classroom.”

(Teacher six)

From the second interview, fourteen teachers and five students confirmed that the quality of textbook was considered to be a problem of English language education in the upper secondary level. Most issues mentioned in the second interview were quite similar to the first interview. However, some issues were interestingly added to the second interviews. Three teachers pointed out that teachers were not responsible for selecting their textbook for their teaching level; therefore, some textbooks provide inadequate knowledge for learners. An additional comment was that it was not necessary to use the textbook issued by government as only

teaching material. Instead, teachers in each school could provide their own teaching material, such as supplementary worksheets, or create their own school textbook to meet their learners' needs and level. Moreover, two teachers did not perceive the quality of textbook as being a problem. However, they suggested changing textbook every four or five years to keep the context updated, in order that teachers were not bored with using the similar textbooks every year.

4.8.15 Time limitation and class hours

In the interviews, six out of sixteen teachers and four groups of learners mentioned time limitation and class hours as problems of English language education in the upper secondary level. There were two major issues with regard to these problems.

Six teachers and two groups of learners pointed out the limited number of English language subject class per week, limited to two classes. It was claimed that there were only a few hours to practice all English skills; thus, they suggested having as many classes per week as Mathematics and Science since English was viewed as equally important to those subjects.

“Personally I think there are too few classes for English language subject since school has policies giving importance to mathematics. In my view, English is also important and it is hard for me to practice all skills to learners in limited class hours per week.”

(Teacher eleven)

Moreover, four learners pointed out that only one speaking class per week taught by native English speaking teachers was provided to them, and this was inadequate. As an EFL country, learners claimed that they had few chances to use English in real practice in Thailand; therefore, it might be more beneficial for them to attend more speaking and listening classes at school with the native English speaking teachers. They needed this to happen at least twice a week to be familiar with English.

From the second interview, ten teachers and eight learners claimed that time limitation and class hours were problems for English language education at upper secondary level. Participants also pointed out similar issues with the first interview. However, one extra comment had been added in the second interview. Three learners noted that due to the limited

number of English class per week, their Thai EFL teachers could not teach textbook thoroughly, and some parts were missing, especially supplementary exercise. This was regarded as a problematic issue, since learners noted that whole textbook consisted of all skills of English. Thus, teachers should have been thoroughly taught to provide adequate knowledge.

4.8.16 The belief towards the education studies and teaching profession

In the interviews, it is important to note that there is a belief that people who are very smart would not work as a teacher, and that people who do not specialise in any particular subject will choose to study at the Faculty of Education, has effect on English language education in Thailand. It was stated that educational studies were not difficult, and that it was for those who did not know what to study. However, there were still people who really wanted to be a teacher and studied at the Faculty of Education. Three teachers and three groups of learners also claimed that the teaching profession was considered high status in Thailand, but low paid. Therefore, many people who become teachers do not know what they expect to earn as a living. Two out of three of the teachers and three of the learners noted that this belief was one of the reasons why there were a number of low quality teachers, which was an obstacle to improving English language education in Thailand.

“It is wrongly believed that people who are smart do not want to be a teacher. They choose instead to work for an international organisation. So many Thai teachers who can speak English are considered to be of a poor quality because they are not smart.”

(Student group one)

“Due to Thai values, the teaching profession is not considered to be okay. People who are teachers are normally those who do not know what to do for a living, leading to a number of low quality teachers in Thailand.”

(Teacher seven)

From the second interview, ten teachers and eight students noted that the negative belief toward education studies and teaching profession was one of the problems hindering people who had a good command of English from choosing to study and work as an EFL teacher.

Similar reasons with the first interview were shared in the second interview with regard to this negative belief. However, there was also one emergent issue. Interestingly, six teachers pointed out the positive issue of being EFL teachers that this profession was secure, and had good welfare, especially those in state schools. For example, they had health insurance for themselves, as well as for their parents. Therefore, there were still a number of people who wanted to be teachers, due to the fact that it was a secure and lifelong profession. Hardly any teachers were ever fired unless they conducted illegal activities.

4.8.17 Surroundings

In the interviews, four of the teachers and seven of the students pointed out that the surroundings were one of the crucial problems in English language education in Thailand. Participants claimed that Thai people had little opportunity to use English with native English speakers in daily life; therefore, they found it difficult to practice their speaking and listening skills. Interestingly, four out of seven groups of the students compared their school with international schools, where they believed learners had more opportunity to use English with native English speakers among the teachers or even with their classmates. They pointed out that the surroundings at their school had an impact in terms of encouraging learners to use English. However, none of the teachers compared the surroundings of state schools and international schools.

“Thai learners have little opportunity to speak English, especially outside the classroom. It is best for Thai learners to speak English as often as possible with native English speakers.”

(Teacher fifteen)

“We hardly get the opportunity to use English. If we could meet English-speaking foreigners more often, we would have more chance to speak English with native English speakers. I think surroundings have an important effect on speaking skills practice.”

(Student group five)

“One of the obstacles impeding learners from using English is their surroundings. Everyone at school speaks Thai. I have many friends studying at the international school. They told me they speak English all the time. Therefore, they are familiar

with using English with the teachers as well as with their friends. Sometimes, they even speak English outside school with their friends even though they are Thai, due to their familiarity with speaking English.”

(Student group ten)

From the second interview, ten teachers and eight students regarded the surroundings as a problem having an effect on English language education. Ten teachers and eight students pointed out that the problem of a few opportunities were given to Thai people to speak English in daily life. Interestingly, two learners noted that they practiced their listening skills by watching English language movies with Thai subtitles and also listening to more English language songs. These learners also pointed out that the home environment could help improve English even if only Thai was used among family members. Extra comments on this issue were that parents had influence on their children’s English language practice especially on listening skill. It might be more beneficial for learners if their parents encouraged them to be familiar with English language by installing cable television providing many English channels for their children to practice listening.

4.8.18 The credibility of EFL teacher’s accent

A speaker’s accent has an impact on their credibility (Lev-Ari and Keysar, 2010). From the interviews, eight groups of the students pointed out the issue of the credibility of the teachers’ accent. Surprisingly, none of the teachers pointed to this credibility issue with native English-speaking teachers in the interviews. Five groups of the students out of ten claimed to find it less credible to have a non-native English-speaking accent when speaking English due to the fact that the accent made the speech more difficult to process. They also stated that people tended to believe non-native English-speaking speakers less, due to the difficulty of understanding their accents. Thus, five groups of learners noted that native English accents were preferable to non-native accents. They found it more credible for their English language teachers to have native English accents and they desired to get used to native English accents so that they could use the proper accent in the real situation with native English-speaking people.

“Personally, I prefer studying English with teachers who have either a British or an American accent. I find them more credible to study with.”

(Student group eight)

“I study English with a few Filipino teachers. Frankly speaking, I think their accent makes them less credible when they teach English. I do not understand why. I prefer studying English with British teachers. I think I can practice my listening and speaking skills better with more stereotypical accents.”

(Student group nine)

Moreover, from the interviews, two out of ten groups of the students preferred to study English with native English-speaking teacher, not only because of the credibility issue, but also familiarisation with real life. They claimed to get used to non-native English accent from Thai EFL teachers. They found it less credible to have non-native English accent. However, they wished to study with native English-speaking teachers.

“I would like my EFL teacher to have native English since I don’t want to familiarise myself with Thai accent English.”

(Student group ten)

From the second interview, all ten students still confirmed the credibility of accent as being a problem of English language education in the upper secondary level. Interestingly, five teachers also pointed out this problem although none of the teachers mentioned this issue during the first interview. However, all issues regarding the credibility of accent perceived by these five teachers were similar to those from the first interview. Regarding the issues that emerged from the second interview, surprisingly, two students noted that they wished to study with Thai EFL teachers more, since they claimed to find it difficult to understand a native English accent with native English-speaking teacher. They did not think that accent credibility was a vitally important issue; they simply wanted to understand the context. They also pointed out that they needed to focus heavily on listening to native English accents while studying with native English-speaking teachers where they found it too difficult to understand the lesson.

4.8.19 Professional development or training

In the interviews, the participants claimed that a training programme was normally provided for teachers to develop their teaching skills. Seven out of the 16 teachers pointed out that training was also considered one of the issues with regard to English language education in Thailand. However, none of the students mentioned training issues with regard to problems

with English language education. The interviews generated two discussions about both needing more training and the uselessness of training.

4.8.19.1. More training needed

In the interviews, two out of seven of the teachers pointed out that they needed more training to develop their teaching skills. However, the teachers must have applied some knowledge from their training programmes to their teaching; otherwise the training would have been completely useless. Despite their criticisms, participants still believed that training was necessary. Furthermore, one out of two teachers noted that a follow-up programme was needed after training, to check whether or not the training programme was practical and effective.

“I believe that training is necessary; however, a follow-up programme or workshop after training is needed in order to continually raise awareness of the teachers and also to assess whether or not the training programme has been successful. Moreover, teachers should also apply their additional knowledge to the classroom.”

(Teacher nine)

4.8.19.2 Uselessness of training

In the interviews, five out of seven teachers noted that training was not necessary for them to develop their teaching skills. The participants pointed out the reasons behind this issue, such as the teachers lacking interest in the training programme, or the fact that the training topics were irrelevant. Moreover, two out of five of the teachers felt that the training budget was being wasted: they claimed that the training programme was not as effective as it should be. They also claimed that most teachers were not interested in attending the training programme unless they were assigned to do it by school representatives.

“As a head of department, I think the training programme wastes a lot of money and does not represent a rewarding return due to the fact that most of the teachers lack interest in attending the programme no matter how good the training programme is. I feel desperate to provide my colleagues with a useful training programme because they found this so useless for their teaching”.

(Teacher sixteen)

From the second interview, fifteen teachers confirmed that professional development was one of the problems of English language education. However, no students identified this as an issue. This might be because learners did not have any knowledge of training programmes. An extra comment was added in the second interview that due to limited budget provided for training programme, the quality was rather low. Thus, it might be more beneficial to hire trainers with appropriate qualification to operate the training programme.

4.9 Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative results of in-depth interviews and focus group interviews in conjunction with the research questions, utilising Nvivo software guided by thematic analysis principles, to analyse data. Research aims and research questions were also included in the first section, followed by the thematic analysis, in-depth interview and focus group interview, Nvivo process, stages of thematic analysis, and findings, respectively. From the interviews, Thai EFL teachers and learners shared both similar and distinctive perceptions of English language education at the upper secondary level. Some issues were pre-determined themes, while others were emergent themes in the Thai context.

The discussion of the findings, including a comparison of the results with previous studies, will be presented in chapter 5 in order to state the findings, interpretation and opinions, and to take a broad view of the research and place it in a wider context.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction and overview of the chapter

This chapter aims to analyse data, and to describe the significance of the findings in light of what has been conducted in previous research, and also to explain new understanding and insights into problems of English language education at upper secondary level after analysing the data in chapter 4. This chapter will start with an outline of the issues of English language education at the upper secondary level, followed by an interpretation of each issue with regard to teachers, English language education policies, teaching approaches and materials, the influence of culture, belief, and value, surroundings, linguistic differences, and corruptions.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the current research was guided by three linked research questions:

Question 1: What are the perceptions of Thai EFL teachers at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, concerning English language education in Thailand?

Question 2: What are the perceptions of Thai EFL learners at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, concerning English language education in Thailand?

Question 3: How do these groups compare in terms of their perceptions concerning English language education in Thailand?

The study was conducted using largely qualitative data-gathering methods, namely focus group interviews and in-depth individual interviews. Moreover, the second interview was conducted based on data from the first interview to broaden the data and to confirm the accuracy of the problems of English language education in the upper secondary level. The participants in this study were Thai EFL teachers and Thai EFL learners at the upper secondary level from various state schools in Bangkok. The reasons why pupils at this level were selected were, firstly, that all state schools in Thailand follow the same national education curriculum, which might be different from those followed in private schools and, secondly, little research attention had previously been given to pupils at the upper secondary level and importantly, secondary level is the important sub-sector of educational system and this level also acted as a feeder to higher education level. Most previous research had been heavily focused on students at university level as noted in chapter 2 and had also concentrated on a top-down approach. However, very little attention had been paid to a bottom-up approach in order to investigate the issues from

participants' perspectives. The bottom-up approach was used in this study, and participants were encouraged to share their perceptions freely without any leading questions. In order to improve English language education in Thailand, it was hoped that investigating the issues of English language education from the perspectives of Thai EFL teachers and learners at the upper secondary level would be an appropriate approach which might uncover new ways of seeing the problems. The findings in this study centred around several pre-determined themes, drawn from the research literature and similar in nature to themes commonly found in global and Thai contexts, together with several emergent themes, derived from the data itself and not previously extensively discussed in the research literature. Both pre-determined and emergent themes were gathered from participants' perceptions of their teaching and learning experiences. The researcher found it beneficial to investigate the problems of English language education by conducting in-depth interviews and focus group interviews, despite the fact, as discussed in section 3.6 in chapter three, that the number of participants was limited to 16 individual teachers and 10 focus groups of students, which could not represent the entire population of Thai EFL teachers and students at the upper secondary level in Bangkok. However, a second interview was also conducted in order that the researcher could investigate in-depth information and generate more in-depth questions simultaneously and raise more awareness of English language education during the interviews. In the previous chapter, I presented the results from both in-depth interviews and the focus group interviews, together with the issues and extra comments emerged from the second interviews of Thai EFL teachers and students at the upper secondary level. In this chapter, I will now attempt to present and discuss answers to the three research questions and go on to suggest ways in which the results may contribute to future developments with the hope that English language policy makers and Thai EFL educators may come to understand more deeply the issues of English language education in Thailand at the upper secondary level. My discussion will be organized around the major themes explored and emerging from the data and the views of teachers and students, compared for each theme.

In this section, I will discuss the perceptions of English language education by Thai EFL teachers and learners at the upper secondary level and compare these perceptions. With regard to three research questions, I will not answer these one by one; however, I will discuss the perceptions of English language education and comparisons between those of Thai EFL teachers and learners in each theme. Some themes were mentioned only by the Thai EFL teachers in my sample, some by only the Thai EFL learners, and some by both Thai EFL

teachers and learners. Essentially, themes will be presented in order of importance, in the sense of the number of times they were most frequently mentioned by participants. It should also be noted that issues previously mentioned in findings chapter will be grouped under the major themes, based on those in literature review chapter.

Overview of this chapter

5.2 The outline of issues presented in this chapter

5.3 Issues with regard to English language education policies

5.4 Issues with regard to teachers

5.5 Issues with regard to teaching approaches and materials

5.6 Issues with regard to culture, beliefs, and values

5.7 Issues with regard to linguistic differences and language interference

5.8 Issues with regard to surroundings

5.9 Issues with regard to corruptions

5.10 Summary of the discussions

5.11 Summary

5.2 Outline of the problems of English language education at the upper secondary level presented in this chapter

The table below summarises the problems of English language education at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, as perceived by the samples of Thai EFL teachers and learners.

Areas	Specific problems and concerns
ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Class size - Low Salary - English language examination - Time limitation and hours
TEACHERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher's characteristics and lesson delivery - Shadow education - The quality of native English speaking teachers - Thai EFL Teachers' recruitment system

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Credibility of accent - Professional development or training - Out-of-field teachers and work loads
TEACHING APPROACH AND MATERIALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching approach and style - The quality of textbook
CULTURE, BELIEF, AND VALUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Shyness -Hierarchy -Negative feeling of Thai students towards classmates having native accents -Belief of teaching profession and educational studies
LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Speaking skill -Writing skill
SURROUNDINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of opportunity to use English in daily life -Lack of opportunity to go abroad
CORRUPTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Textbook selection -School examination release

Table 5.2: Problems of English language education at the upper secondary level, as perceived by a sample of Thai EFL teachers and learners

5.3 Issues with regard to English language education policies

5.3.1 Class size

As noted in the literature review, class size was considered to be a pre-determined theme related to the problems in English language education. The fact that most Thai state schools have large classes, with approximately 50 students per class (Khanarat & Nomura, 2008), poses a number of problems for educators. For example, in larger classes, there tends to be less space for teachers and learners to move around (Kuehn, 2013). Additional issues include classroom management problems, practical concerns, instructional ineffectiveness, feedback problems and affective factors (LoCastro, 2001; Dhanasobhon, 2006). Larger classrooms also tend to be noisier, which makes communicating in the classroom, maintaining discipline, guiding individual students and developing a good rapport with learners more difficult. Khanarat and Nomura (2008), however, called attention to the fact that class sizes are often large as a result

of schools needing money from enrolment fees for their budget; thus, schools were unlikely to decrease the number of students per classroom, for financial reasons.

It may be noted that both Thai EFL teachers and learners in the current study regarded class size as one of the major problems of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand. With regard to class size, the main problems identified by these teachers and learners were rather similar to those emerging from previous studies (e.g. LoCastro, 2001; Todd, 2012).

However, they shared similarities and differences with regard to the reasons why class size was considered a problem. Both Thai EFL teachers and students in this study claimed that having a large class size prevented them from practicing communication skills in the classroom, due to the fact that it might not be possible for teachers to encourage all learners to practice speaking in class, as large classes gave learners little opportunity to speak. Learners claimed that it might be more beneficial for them if the class size were smaller, so that teachers could easily pay attention to the whole class. Furthermore, learners also claimed that it might be more useful for them if their teachers encouraged them to practice communication skills in the classroom. This is in line with Khanarat & Nomura (2008) who stated that learners had few chances to practise communication skills and Kuehn (2013) who pointed out that learners were able to practise communicative skills in a small classroom since teachers could engage with all of the students in the classroom activities. However, the Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study also shared different perceptions as to the issue of large class size. The teachers discussed the importance of discipline and the difficulty of teaching in a large classroom such as the lack of joint activities, while the learners noted the issue of the attention of teachers in the classroom such as a heavy focus only on the students in the front row. To illustrate, these Thai EFL teachers found it hard to maintain discipline or collaborate effectively with learners during classroom activities. However, due to the large class size, learners at the back of the room found it difficult to experience effective learning, since their teachers always paid attention to those in the front row, as also agreed in the previous studies of Kitjaroonchai (2013), which showed that learners who gained little attention from their teachers tended to be passive in the classroom, possibly leading to poor learning outcomes. Learners also claimed that it might be more beneficial for them if they could receive feedback from their teachers about their learning outcomes. They found that it was difficult for their teachers to check whether or not the learners achieved their learning outcomes. This problem is in the line with the suggestion of LoCastro

(2001), who believed it was important to give feedback in a large classroom. Teachers in the study also noted that they could not remember all of the other students' names due to the large class size. They claimed that this could be a crucial obstacle to them building good rapport with their learners; thus, they maintained that their teaching might be more effective in a smaller class, since having a good relationship with other learners requires familiarity with those learners, probably leading to a good atmosphere in the classroom. This finding is in line with Dhanasobhon (2006) and Kuehn (2013), who indicated that it is difficult for teachers to build a good relationship with their learners in large classes.

Interestingly, the distinctive issue of the standard of the school is also worth mentioning since it seems to have a massive impact on large class size. This issue is likely to be serious since it might bring about the inequality of education (Atagi, 2011). Only Thai EFL teachers in this study suggested standardising all schools, especially in terms of reputation and good student outcomes, so that the number of distinguished schools decreased, and all schools had the same standard with institutions of greater repute often having larger class sizes. Teachers claimed that most students chose to study in a school with a reputation for positive learning outcomes, hoping that this would give them a better chance of passing examinations. The finding is in accordance with the studies previous done by Ket-sing (2007), in that the larger or distinguished schools seemed to meet teacher-related standards and had positive impacts on learners' scores in national examination, claiming that quality teaching at large and distinguished schools might account for the higher scores their learners achieve in the national examination. It might serve to reduce the class size problem in distinguished schools if the government standardised all schools, so that students had more school options and could also choose to study at schools near their homes. Some teachers claimed that it might be more beneficial for learners not to wake up so early in order to travel to the distinguished schools, which could possibly lead to traffic congestion problems, especially during the morning. The issue of class size might be less problematic if learners had more choice of schools to attend and did not focus only on the distinguished schools. In contrast to the findings of Arias and Walker (2004) that this indicated that there was a positive relationship between class size and learners' performance, but there is still the possibility that having a large class size might be effective if teachers had the appropriate teaching methods. It might be worth considering that having a small class size does not necessarily mean that there will be only a positive impact on students' performance, since it may be possible for learners to learn more effectively when studying with better qualified teachers; however, it also depends on the teacher approach and

their classroom management. This is in line with the studies of Zyngier (2014), indicating that a small class size was beneficial when combined with appropriate teacher pedagogies.

5.3.2 Teacher's low salary

The issue of low earnings of Thai EFL teachers is considered to be an emergent theme, since it has not been pointed out in the previous literature review chapter. Both Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study agreed that due to the fact that the salary of a language teacher is considered to be low compared with other professions, a number of people who are very good at English and qualified to be effective Thai EFL teachers will choose to work in another profession where they will get a much higher salary. The findings were consistent with those of Atagi (2011), pointing out that the salary scale of Thai teachers is low in comparison to other professions with equivalent qualifications. Kelly Services (2006) report the salaries of professionals in Thailand, in that Engineers and business analysts earn twice as much as teachers do, and accountants with professional certification gain three times more than teachers. Even worse for Thai EFL teachers, there is no difference in earnings among subject specialists and the annual teaching salary of teachers in Bangkok is less than the GDP per person; therefore, all secondary school teachers are in the same salary scheme in Thailand (Atagi, 2011). Therefore, it might be the case that Thai EFL teachers at the upper secondary level probably feel that the teaching profession might not be as important as other professions, despite the fact that English is used as an international language in Thailand and people who have a good knowledge of English are regarded as privileged in Thai society (Sisamouth and Lah, 2015). Therefore, participants in this study suggested that Thai EFL teachers be higher paid, since English is their specialist knowledge; although English is not an official language in Thailand, it is an important international language, used to communicate with foreigners (Todd, 2006a; Kongkerd, 2013). This is in contrast to South Korea, where the teaching profession is considered to be one of the best paid jobs (Centre on International Education Benchmarking, 2015). Interestingly, the findings of this research suggest that paying a higher salary to those in the teaching profession would encourage more qualified EFL teachers to apply for teaching positions, in order for Thai EFL learners to gain an excellent opportunity to study with more qualified people. Although the teaching profession requires a high qualification, it is low-paid. Consequently, Thai people who have a good English qualification do not choose to be English teachers; although, some of them admit that the teaching profession is their dream job, but they cannot accept the low salary. Despite the fact that teachers' recruitment seems to be highly competitive, most people who have good command of English

do not choose to be an English language teacher. Thus, the selected teachers might not be those who are among the competent English language teachers. These findings of this study are in substantial agreement with those of Pitiyanuwat (2004), indicating that the status of teachers is deteriorating since the teachers' earnings are too low, in comparison with those of other profession, causing a limited number of qualified people to choose to enter this profession. This situation illustrates that a low salary discourages EFL teachers from continuing their profession. It might be more beneficial if the Thai government takes this issue into consideration, as Indonesia has. Indonesia has doubled the salary for teachers who finish their 4-year degree and obtained certification, and the number of certified teachers has continuously increased from 2012 (Kelly Service, 2014).

5.3.3 English language examination

The issue of English language examination is considered to be a pre-determined theme in this study, since it has been explored in the previous literature review chapter. Lunrasri and Gajaseni (2014) pointed out that examinations are the main method used to assess learning outcomes for a particular course, and tests are prevalently used to improve the quality of education in various countries. Thus assessment is one of the vitally important parts of teaching and learning since teachers can explore ways of supporting students' learning and applying their teaching strategies (Ndalichako (2015). It also plays a vital role in implementing language policies and practice (Paran, 2010). The university entrance examination is considered as one of the most critical challenges in English language teaching in Thailand (Todd, 2008).

Due to the fact that English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand heavily focuses on examination and English is a required subject in the national examination (Choi and Lee, 2008), the university entrance examination appears to be one of the major focuses of Thai learners (Jianrattanapong, 2011). Teachers and learners in this study claimed that the English language examination is also a fundamentally important challenge. Owing to the heavy focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading skills in the English language examination (Todd, 2008), Thai EFL learners are impeded from practising their speaking and listening skills, since these two skills seem to be ignored in the examination. Both teachers and learners in this study viewed the heavy focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading as one of the crucial problems of the examination, since they claimed that little attention was paid to speaking, listening, and writing. Thus, in order to improve speaking and listening skills for the Thai EFL learners,

learners in this study pointed out that including these two skills in the English language examination might mean that learners are more active and pay more attention to oral communication. This finding is consistent with the study of Todd (2008), which points out that the grammar, vocabulary, and reading are the only skills needed to pass the examination. However, this finding is in contrast to the study of Lunrasri and Gajasen (2014), which indicated that the English language examination in Thailand heavily focused on communicative skills including speaking and listening skills together with reading skill, grammar and vocabulary. It is aware that both studies (Todd, 2008 and Lunrasri & Gajesen, 2014) have mentioned the examination style in Thailand; however, the styles are different: the former focuses on grammar, vocabulary and reading and the latter points out the communicative skills in the exam. It might be because the latter was conducted 6 years after the former; therefore, the exam style in Thailand might include more communicative skill rather than the heavy focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Teachers believed that the writing part should be included in the examination since writing consists of language use and organisation. This is in line with the study of Watcharapunyawong and Usaha (2013), which pointed out that writing skills included semantic and syntactic skills, which are considered rather difficult in the examination. However, learners claimed that having writing part in the examination actively prepared them better for the examination, despite the fact that learners were worried about fairness of grading since they claimed there was no standard form to check writing test. This is consistent with the study of Jianrattanapong (2011) which indicates that it is vitally important to create reliability by scoring at least two raters and following central criteria to clearly set students' writing needs. The other reason behind the heavy focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading for Thai learners little attention to speaking and listening skills; is that they primarily concentrate on their grades. Thai EFL learners in this study claimed that they paid little attention to speaking and listening skills because they primarily concentrated on their grades. As mentioned earlier, the English language examination in Thailand mainly focused on grammar, vocabulary and reading; thus Thai EFL learners in this study note that there were likely to ignore those skills that were not included in the examination. It seems that not only do Thai EFL learners give most of their attention to skills needed for the examination, but Thai EFL teachers also pay limited attention to speaking and listening skills. It might be more useful for Thai learners to regard communication skills as important skills to practise, together with other skills in the examination; otherwise, this might impede Thai EFL learners in improving their speaking and listening skills, both of which are considered seriously important for English language learning.

Furthermore, English language examinations in Thailand mostly promote memorisation or rote learning (Pan, 2009). Thus, the student's ability in the examination is evaluated by how well they can learn by rote instead of how well they can think critically. Both teachers and learners in this study viewed this issue as a problem with regard to the English language examination. They observed the need to evaluate English language skills by applying critical thinking more than rote system. Learners claimed that critical thinking is vitally important; however, they could not apply it when evaluating their ability in the examination. Interestingly, this finding is in contrast to the study of Lunrasri and Gajasen (2014), which point out that Thai learners apply critical-thinking skills in their English language examination in order to check their English proficiency, although they sometimes also use rote-memorisation skills. It seems more useful for Thai EFL learners to be evaluated by critical-thinking system since it is practical and can be adjusted to context outside classroom. However, Thai EFL learners pay little attention to critical thinking, for which they do not receive much training in the classroom. It is more typical for Thai EFL teachers to teach their learners to memorise things, rather than to think critically about context (Todd, 2008).

The other problem with regard to the English language examination is its inconsistency. Learners in this study suggested that the national or entrance examination should meet standard like IELTS or TOEFL examinations. The style of English language tests in the entrance examination changes almost every year, resulting in learner's difficulty in familiarising themselves with the style and preparing themselves for the examination. This finding is in line with the study of Todd (2008), which found that the English language entrance examination in Thailand leads to a confusing mishmash of unprincipled changes. It might be more beneficial for Thai EFL learners if the English language examination had the same standard as other international examinations in order to lessen the worry about the inconsistency of the English examination. However, none of the teachers in this study viewed the inconsistency of the examination as a problem of English language education at the upper secondary level.

Furthermore, learners in this study also pointed out that it might be beneficial to combine the interview test with the written test, so that learners could pay more attention to speaking skills as well as show their attitudes towards their studies. This finding is in line with the study of Jaturapitakkul (2013), which suggested that interview tests be arranged to assess cognitive ability. Interestingly, none of the teachers considered the inclusion of interviews in the English test as a problem of English language examination at the upper secondary level.

5.3.4 Time limitation and class hours

Unlike the class size issue, issues of time limitation and class hours are viewed as emergent themes, since neither have been explored in the previous literature review chapter and to the best of my knowledge, no research has previously been conducted to investigate the problems of time limitation and class hours. Time limitation and class hours are also critical with regard to English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand (Noom-Ura, 2013). There are usually about three to four hours per week spent on English language classes (Choi & Lee, 2008) and these are normally organised into 50-minute sessions (Darasawang, 2007). Both Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study suggested that in order to improve speaking and listening skills, Thai EFL teachers might need to encourage their learners to practise communicative skills in the classroom. However, teachers in this study claimed that they had too little time to create activities to practise communicative skills such as role-play and games. This finding is in substantial agreement with that of Islam & Bari (2012), who pointed out that they found it frustrating to implement the CLT method along with CLT activities in the classroom, since it is difficult in a large class to practise communicative skills in limited class hours. Thus, the activities might not cover all students to practise in one class hour. Unsurprisingly, due to the fact that Thai EFL teachers have limited time to teach in the classroom, they mostly focused on grammar, vocabulary, and reading, all of which are in the examination. However, this might be because Thai EFL teachers are not familiar with CLT implementation; thus, they cannot organise appropriate activities within class hours for learners to practise communicative skills. It might be more helpful for both teachers and learners to have a few more hours per week on English classes in order to create better classroom activities and achieve better classroom management.

5.4 Issues with regard to teachers

5.4.1 Teachers' characteristics, appearances, and lesson delivery

The issues of teachers' characteristics, lesson delivery, and appearances are considered as pre-determined themes, since they have been previously mentioned in this literature review chapter. Teachers' personal characteristics have an effect on English language education at the upper secondary level. As pointed out in the chapter two, the characteristics of EFL teachers, especially teaching style, teaching skills and personal traits, affect students' motivations and attitudes towards their language learning (Chen, 2012). Thompson (2008) also points out that a good rapport between teacher and learners is vitally important in education. This theme will

include teachers' personal trait-related characteristics, classroom teaching-related characteristics, and lesson delivery.

Teachers and students who participated in this study mentioned teachers' demeaning manner such as using unpleasant language with students and blaming the student for mistakes. This is in line with the study of Meksophawannagul (2015), which explores Thai learners' perceptions that their EFL teachers should not insult their learners in the classroom, and the study of Koutsoulis (2003), investigates Cyprus high-school students' views, claiming that they did not want their EFL teachers to spend time criticising their behaviour. It might be more beneficial if teachers encouraged their learners to improve their skills rather than discouraging them by constantly pointing out their failures.

Both teachers and learners in this study viewed lesson delivery as important in the classroom, since they claimed that some Thai EFL teachers seemed to hold boring classes that focused heavily on the textbook. Interestingly, while normally regarded as creating enjoyable classes, native-English speaking teachers could also create boring classes if they had ineffective lesson delivery.

Moreover, teachers pointed out that their EFL teachers' personal traits in terms of effective characteristics, including lenience, strictness, inactivity in the classroom, as noted in the study of Chen (2012), previously mentioned in chapter two. Both teachers and students in this study suggested that flexible teachers were preferable in the classroom since strict teachers put pressure on their learners. This finding is consistent with those of Baytur and Razi (2015), which indicate that Turkish students did not want their EFL teachers to be strict in the classroom. Moreover, learners commented upon the inactiveness and laziness of their teachers. Teachers were claimed not to revise their lessons, and not to be well-prepared. Students in this study believed that some Thai EFL teachers seemed to be ignorant about the need for preparation, probably due to the fact that they have not changed their teaching materials for a few years resulting in their laziness to revise the lessons before teaching. Furthermore, students in this study regarded older EFL teachers as inactive, claiming that some Thai EFL teachers they experienced were passive, only sitting at the teachers' desk explaining the lesson and not using blackboard, creating a boring class for their learners. The findings in this study are different from those of Chen (2012), and Wichadee (2010), both of whom view having good rapport between teachers and their learners, including friendliness of Thai EFL learners, as one

of the substantial personal traits. However, friendliness was not regarded as an important teacher characteristic for Thai EFL learners in this study. This might be because of the effect of hierarchy on Thai society; therefore, it is possible that the relationship between Thai EFL teachers and learners is rather distant. Furthermore, the findings in this study go against those of Chen (2012), Faranda and Clarke (2004), Meksophawannagul (2015), Shishavan and Sadeghi (2009) and Wichadee (2010), all of which consider fairness as highly important EFL personal traits, including being fair in grading and making unbiased assessment of what learners have learned. However, none of the participants proposed fairness as a preferable personal trait for EFL teachers.

Interestingly, this study suggested only the problems of teachers' characteristics and their lesson delivery in contrast with the findings of Meksophawannagul (2015), which points out problems of English language education at the upper secondary level with regard to learners' characteristics including their laziness, lack of responsibility, chatting and sleeping in the classroom, and, importantly, feeling embarrassed when making errors in front of their classmates, all of which impeded English language practice in the classroom.

Another issue of critical importance is the professional appearance of teachers -- i.e. how they dress -- which can have an impact on their credibility as teachers. This issue is regarded as an emergent issue since it has not been pointed out in this literature review chapter. Some Thai EFL teachers in this study viewed having a professional appearance as a problem of teachers' credibility, claiming that while their style of dress might not guarantee the quality of their teaching, it did raise their standing with learners. Older Thai EFL teachers in particular considered dress important. It might be advantageous for teachers to dress well in order to increase their credibility, since participants believed that a non-professional outfit has an effect on teachers' credibility, especially for young teachers. Learners might not pay attention in class if their teachers are not very respected; therefore, it is advisable that teachers dress professionally in the school. Faranda and Clarke (2004) also view the importance of credibility. However, they focused on the teachers' mastery of the English language rather than the appropriateness of their attire. Thai EFL learners in this study seemed to consider this issue to be rather unimportant compared with the problems of English language education, since none of them viewed the teachers' outfit as an important issue.

5.4.2 Shadow Education

In this study, the issue of shadow education is considered to be a pre-determined theme since it has been previously mentioned in the literature review chapter. It is vitally important to note that in this study, the term ‘shadow education’ has the same sense of ‘tutorial school’ or ‘cram school’. The number of tutorial schools has rapidly increased in many countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Korea as a result of the belief that taking tutorial courses gives students better opportunities to gain a place at selective universities, and the courses are sources of much-needed extra knowledge. This is in the substantial agreement with the study of Bray (2013), Liu (2012), and Dawson (2009) which variously indicate that the number of tutorial schools is increasing in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Cambodia, respectively. However, it is also important to note that the increasing number of tutorial schools does not always mean that society does not trust traditional schooling. Nonetheless, it seems that tutorial schools do make a positive contribution to students’ learning, such as improving their English-language ability and providing them with useful examination drills.

Moreover, Thai learners place importance on tutorial schools as much as their traditional schools, especially those at the upper secondary level, as also noted in Bray’s study (2013), which indicates that most learners who attend tutorial classes are likely to focus on the upper senior secondary level. Because of the struggle to get better grades at school and to pass the entrance examination to get into leading universities, especially for the subject of English, tutorial schools are continuously growing (Boonsaeng et al., 2010; Bray, 2010). This illustrates that studying only at a traditional school is inadequate for learners to achieve their aim.

The participants in this study classified tutors into two categories: tutors who are also teachers at a traditional school and hold tutorial classes after school, and tutors who run their own private tutorial schools. It is important to note that teachers from some traditional schools in Australia, Germany, and Singapore are not allowed to hold their own tutorial classes with tuition fees (Bray, 2010). With regard to private tutors having their own business, it was pointed out by participants in this study that a number of qualified EFL teachers choose to open a tutorial school as their own business, instead of applying to be an EFL teacher at a traditional school. This is because they can earn more money from their tutorial school, compared with their salary from a traditional school. This is in line with the findings of Bray and Kwok (2003); Noom-Ura (2013), which pointed out that some Thai EFL teachers need to offer extra tutorial classes after school because of their low salaries. It seems that tutorial schools are growing as a result of Thailand having a low-paid teaching profession, which brings benefits especially to those

teachers who have a good command of English. In this study, tutors in shadow education were represented separately.

Both Thai EFL teachers and learners agreed that tutorial schools were popular among Thai learners because of their heavy focus on grades at school and their high scores in the entrance examination. Moreover, both teachers and learners who participated in this study claimed that some teachers have different teaching styles between teaching at the traditional school and the tutorial school, even suggesting that teachers deliberately do not pay attention to their classes at the traditional school so that the students will pay for after-school tutorial classes. This is in line with Bray & Kwo (2014) and Milovanovich (2014), who claimed that some teachers from traditional schools intentionally reduce their teaching effectiveness in regular classes in order to stimulate the demand for tutoring. It might be beneficial for Thai EFL learners if their teachers had the same teaching standards for both traditional classes and tutorial schools. In this way, learners would benefit from receiving adequate instruction in the school classroom, together with supplementary exercises and revision in the tutorial classes.

In addition, teachers having tutorial classes are claimed by participants to prepare better teaching materials and put more effort into tutorial classes; thus, some learners prefer to study with them in a tutorial class where they receive better quality teaching. Accordingly, students who do not attend their teacher's tutorial classes seem to gain inadequate knowledge from their own teacher, which is unfair to them. The reason behind this issue is that teachers are not well paid at traditional school; therefore, they need additional income to make a living. Their low salary makes them work after school as tutors (Noom-Ura, 2013), which in Thailand is socially acceptable.

Furthermore, both teachers and students in this study agreed that Thai EFL learners did not believe in the competence of their teachers at school. Teachers at traditional schools seem to be less credible. The learners chose to attend tutorial classes to build their confidence in language learning since they did not believe in their EFL teachers at traditional schools. Credibility is vitally important in language learning, because once learners lose faith in their teachers, it is hard for their teachers to regain that confidence. Therefore, Thai EFL learners are liable to attend tutorial classes since these tutors are more credible. This is in substantial agreement with the finding of Choi (2012), which claimed that teachers in tutorial schools are

more knowledgeable and more reliable, and therefore able to build learners' self-confidence. Thus, it is believed that shadow education is more highly valued than traditional schooling.

Both teachers and students in this study also pointed out a quite different reason for learners choosing to attend tutorial classes: fashion. Thai EFL learners indicated that they followed their friends without realising the benefits of tutorial classes. Interestingly, some learners in this study felt that their friends were wasting their money on tuition fees, since they were likely not to pay attention to the classes and even skipped classes. This finding is consistent with Bray's 2013 and 2009 studies, which indicated that some students enrol in tutorial classes only because all their peers do.

However, there are some areas where teachers and learners thought differently. Teachers mostly focused on the negative effects of shadow education on English language education, whereas most learners regarded studying English at tutorial schools as a positive.

Teachers in this study mentioned that some tutors from traditional schools ignored their duties at school. Instead, they spent more time at school preparing lessons for their tutorial classes. Even worse, teachers in this study claimed that some teachers from traditional schools shared the upcoming examination paper with learners attending their tutorial classes. They claimed that all these issues were destroying the English education system in Thailand, since most Thai EFL learners depend heavily on tutorial schools and view attending tutorial schools as necessary to pass the examination. This is in substantial agreement with the study of Milovanovich (2014), which indicated that teachers from traditional schools teach private tutorial classes in exchange for grades and the answers to examination questions. This issue is further discussed in section 5.7.2, 'exam release'.

Some issues were only mentioned by the Thai EFL learners in this study. Learners considered that their tutors' teaching practices were more effective than those of the teachers in the traditional schools. This is in line with the study of Bray (2007), which indicated that most EFL learners, especially in the higher grades, thought that the quality of the tutors was superior to the quality in traditional schools. This suggests that teachers at tutorial schools were felt to have more pleasing teaching practices. The learners claimed that their tutors had better teaching techniques than those from traditional schools, such as giving very useful tips to memorise vocabulary and explaining grammar more clearly. Interestingly, some learners compared the personalities of these two types of teachers. They suggested that the teachers at traditional

schools were passive, creating boring and sleepy classes. On the other hand, most tutors at tutorial schools were considered active, funny, lively and supportive, creating a more relaxed classroom atmosphere. This is also in substantial agreement with the findings of Bray's 2007 and 2013 studies, both of which pointed out that the tutors were able to help students to consolidate information and provide extra questions, while the school teachers had no time to do this. Therefore, the tutor's teaching practices and classroom management were regarded as being more beneficial to Thai EFL learners than those of Thai EFL teachers at traditional school. However, this finding is in contrast to the finding of Boonsaeng et al. (2010), which claimed that some tutors at tutorial schools also have some negative characteristics, such as speaking too fast and lacking teacher-student communication skills.

Tutors' more effective classroom management techniques mean that they can manage their tutorials very well, even where there are a number of learners in one tutorial, and their teaching practices are so effective that most learners enjoy attending tutorial classes. Learners also pointed out that tutors had good lesson preparation.

In contrast to the findings in this study, many studies (Bray, 2013; Bray, 2010; and Davies, 2004) have pointed out that students from higher-income families benefit more from shadow education than those from low-income families, since the former can more afford tuition fees, resulting in inequality in English language education between students who have a chance to attend tutorial classes and those who do not. However, it is interesting to note that some learners in this study suggested that attending tutorial schools would not guarantee a successful learning outcome, as also noted by Bray (2013), indicating that attending tutorial classes could increase pressure on learners and may not always be effective. Some of their friends had achieved very good examination results despite the fact that they did not attend tutorial classes. This seemed to depend on learners' determination to revise the lessons and keep practicing the exercises. This finding is in line with that of Cavet (2006), which found that Finland is among the highest-ranked countries in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) surveys, despite not having a strong tradition of shadow education. This suggests that attending tutorial classes may not always create positive outcomes, and learners who do not choose to attend tutorial classes can also have successful learning outcomes.

5.4.3 The quality of native English speaking teachers

This issue of native English speaking teachers is regarded as a pre-determined theme in the sense that it has previously been discussed in the literature, despite the fact that the term 'tourist teachers' emerged from the interviews. As pointed out by Mizell (2010) and Noom-Ura (2013), teaching quality is considered to be one of the most important factors in increasing learner achievement. Thus, it is important to note the quality of EFL teachers, including Thai and native English speaking teachers, as perceived by the teachers and learners in this study.

It appears to be the case that studying English with native English speaking teachers is advantageous for Thai EFL learners as pointed out by Grubbs, Jantarach and Ketterm (2010) and (Songsirisak, 2015), who indicated that learners viewed NES teacher as being more effective than NNES teacher and there are a considerable number of good things about NES teachers, such as interesting teaching methods and English language competence (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). It might be more profitable for Thai EFL learners to have a chance of studying English with native English speaking teachers, since they could then practice listening and speaking skills in a real situation (Songsirisak, 2015). Interestingly, teachers in this study also noted the advantage of studying English with native English speaking teachers, namely that learners could have an excellent opportunity to practice listening and speaking in the real situation with the native accent to familiarise English in the real context. This is in line with the studies of Callahan (2006) and Al-Nawrasy (2013). Moreover, there are also positive perceptions towards studying English with native English speaking teachers. In this study, the ability to teach Western cultural knowledge when learning reading passage was claimed by participants to be one of the benefits of studying English with a native English-speaking teacher, since they might share the culture of their country in the classroom. This is in the agreement with the study of Mahboob, (2004), who pointed out the strength of studying native culture with native English-speaking teachers. Songsirisak (2015) has also agreed with this point, indicating that most Chinese students preferred to study English with native English speaking teachers, due to the chance of learning culture. However, this result appears to go against the findings of Grubbs et al. (2010) and Ma (2012), who pointed out that native English speaking teachers might lack cultural knowledge to teach their learners; thus, they found it difficult to build good rapport with their learners. However, Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study were aware of the effect of cultural knowledge in English language learning in the classroom.

However, the problems with regard to NES teacher still exists in English language education in Thailand. Both teachers and learners in this study pointed out that owing to the fact that a number of non-qualified native English speaking teachers had been hired to teach English in Thailand, this issue of qualification was viewed as a critical problem with regard to the quality of the English teachers at the upper secondary level. This is consistent with the study of Choi & Lee (2012), and suggests that there are still many non-qualified EFL teachers in Thailand. Both teachers and students in this study suggested that it might be more beneficial to hire well-qualified native English speaking teachers for Thai EFL learners to provide the opportunity for learners to practice English skills with native speakers with correct pronunciation. This is in line with the studies of Kitjaroonchai (2013), who shows that the qualifications of teachers, as well as effective teaching methods, are vitally important factors to enhance the quality of English language learning.

Interestingly, the term ‘tourist teacher’ was largely mentioned to represent non-qualified native English speaking teachers. The problem was that they were hired despite not being effective teachers. Teachers in this study suggested that being native English speaking teachers did not mean that they could teach English effectively. Also, teachers in this study claimed that despite the high demand for native English-speaking teachers in English language education, there were still inadequate numbers of them; thus, a large number of ‘tourist teachers’ were still needed to teach English for Thai EFL learners. This problem is viewed as critical by both teachers and students in this study, indicating that teachers’ ineffective teaching approach and their inadequate knowledge of grammar seemed to be vitally important problems with regard to the quality of native English speaking teachers. This finding is in a substantial agreement of Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005), indicating that most NES teachers have difficulties of explaining grammar knowledge students. Indeed, participants also pointed out that some native English speaking teachers were unable to teach English effectively, since they did not graduate from a school of education; thus, they did not know how to teach effectively. Even worse, participants also claimed that teachers’ grammatical knowledge was insufficient to teach learners since as native English speakers, they might not be aware of the importance of grammar knowledge. This result is in agreement with the findings of the studies of Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) and Rao (2010), who noted that one of the problems with native English speaking teachers is that their classroom performance was somewhat poor, due to the fact that most native English speaking teachers were likely to experience difficulties explaining

grammar if they did not have a proper qualification, in spite of having an intuitive knowledge of how to use grammar correctly.

Substantially, only teachers in this study observed the fact that the school budget was one of the factors that impeded the hiring of well-qualified native English-speaking teachers. To illustrate, state schools are likely to have limited budget to hire native English-speaking teachers. This finding is in line with Atagi (2011), pointing out that in Thailand, secondary state schools have a limited budget, since a large proportion of the budget is allocated to primary schools; therefore, it might be expected that it would be difficult for secondary state schools to hire well-qualified native English-speaking teachers since most of these were likely to require a higher salary than native Thai EFL teachers. However, having a limited budget does not always mean that only ineffective native English-speaking teachers are hired as this depends on their determination, lesson preparation, and effectiveness.

5.4.4 Thai EFL teachers' recruitment system

In this study, the issue of the recruitment of non-native English speaking teachers is regarded as an emergent theme, since this issue has not been explored widely in previous research. The issue of the teachers' recruitment system primarily focuses on the recruitment of non-native English speaking teachers (Thai EFL teachers). Teachers in this study claimed that there were a number of low quality English language teachers in Thailand; this might be due to the fact that the Thai EFL teacher recruitment system is considered problematic.

Both Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study claimed that the issue of the recruitment system should be taken seriously, given that teachers play such a vitally important role in English language education. However, they shared different perceptions about this issue. Teachers in this study pointed out that only a written examination was apparently used to evaluate an EFL teacher's English proficiency. However, as claimed by teachers in the study, little attention was paid to either a teaching demonstration or a psychological aptitude test; this means that Thai EFL teachers did not need to prepare themselves for an examination of their practical teaching skills. The written test of English proficiency could not in itself guarantee the quality of teaching. It was apparent from the interviews that a psychological aptitude test was considered as vitally important in English language teaching. This finding is in accordance with the research of Wichadee (2010), which suggests that one of key markers of teacher effectiveness was the use of psychology in the classroom, related to interpersonal concerns and

effective motivation. It might be more beneficial for learners if EFL teachers applied psychology to handle situations in the classroom. As with the student examination, the Thai EFL teachers' examination mainly focused on grammar, reading, and vocabulary; hence, the rote learning system was also used by teachers wishing to attain high scores in the examination for the recruitment process. The result of this recruitment system was that some Thai EFL teachers were actually incompetent practically, and did not have the ability to teach effectively. Equally importantly, for teachers who did not graduate from the Faculty of Education, it was claimed that a professional teacher's licence could easily be purchased from the teachers' council of Thailand; surprisingly, this is legal. This demonstrates the non-standardised methods used to evaluate teachers' quality. Extra comments by participants in this study suggested that teachers should be given licenses only in their specialised field. This is in substantial agreement with the argument of Atagi (2011) that teachers should be licensed in their specialisation, especially foreign languages. Furthermore, due to the acceptance of graduates from other studies besides educational studies, a test may be needed to evaluate their ability to teach and to obtain a professional teacher's licence. This is also consistent with the study of Atagi (2011), which points out that the teacher's licence was given to teachers who had completed some training programmes, and was renewable every five years. Moreover, it appears that all teachers could be given a teachers' license by showing evidence of having attended some training programmes. The problem is that a number of in-service teacher training programmes in Thailand have been reported by Mizell (2010) as inefficient. Thus, it might be difficult to guarantee the standard of performance being met (Atagi, 2011).

The Thai EFL learners in this study also viewed this issue as a critical problem. However, due to the fact that Thai learners had little knowledge of the teachers' recruitment system, they did not comment on the system. Equally importantly, they simply mentioned that they needed a stricter teacher recruitment system, since they claimed that there were a number of low quality English language teachers. It might be more beneficial for English language education if EFL teachers were asked to take an examination for their evaluation at least once a year, in order to keep them active and up-to-date for lessons. Interestingly, as pointed out by the Thai EFL teachers and learners in this research, there were a number of incompetent English language teachers at the upper secondary level. It might be the case that there had been cheating occurring in the teacher recruitment system, as noted in Kanchanachitra (2014), who state that there was high competition for the positions of teachers in state schools; thus, cheating was possible. In order to lessen corruption, which is regarded as a chronic problem in the Thai

education system (Kanchanachitra, 2014), the teacher recruitment system, including the teaching test, psychological aptitude test and professional teaching license might be more strictly used, with the hope that there would likely then be more qualified EFL teachers at the upper secondary level.

5.4.5 Credibility of native English-like accent

In this study, the issue of credibility of accent was regarded as a pre-determined theme, since it was already apparent in the pre-existing literature. As noted in Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010), accents of speakers have an influence on their credibility for learners. It seems to be believed by most non-native English speakers that it is less credible to have a non-native English accent when using English, owing to the fact that an accent makes speech more difficult to process. Importantly, having a native English accent was considered good, beautiful, natural, correct, and authentic, whereas having a non-native English accent was considered to be the opposite (Jindapitak & Teo, 2013). According to Kachru's 3 circles, consisting of inner-circle countries, outer-circle countries, and expanding circles, representing countries where English is used as the first language, second language, and foreign countries, respectively, only those from the inner-circle countries were considered to use 'proper' English language. In Thailand, an expanding-circle country, speakers who possess complete mastery of British-like or American-like accents impress many Thais who would like to speak English fluently (Methitham, 2009).

Some learners in this study claimed that they preferred to study English with native English-speaking teachers, stating that they were more credible and the learners could then be familiar with the proper accents. This is in line with the studies of Scale et al. (2006); Arboleda and Garces (2012); and Jindapitak and Teo (2013) who suggest that EFL learners preferred learning from a teacher who had a native English accent, like those from inner circle countries. Learners claimed that familiarisation with a native English accent might be more beneficial for them to copy and practice 'proper' English. Interestingly, the studies of Sa'd and Modirkhamene (2015) also note that Iranian EFL learners were inclined to acculturate into the culture of native English-speaking countries by assuming the local accent; therefore, a native-like accent was considered to be their accent of preference. However, a few learners also pointed out that they preferred studying English with non-native English speaking teachers, since they found it easier to understand accents. Learners maintained that it might be more advantageous to study with Thai EFL teachers, with non-native accents, since they seemed to understand the lesson

better and they probably did not have to focus so much on listening skills. This issue is also in line with the previous studies of Celce-Murcia et al. (2007); and Kirkpatrick (2007), which suggested that a non-native English accent was also considered more intelligible than those from the inner-circle countries. Most learners pointed out the effectiveness of having a non-native English accent in their language learning with teachers' non-native English accent; however, none of the learners noted the advantage of having a non-native English accent, which is in contrast to the previous studies of Buripakdi (2008); and Jindapitak and Teo (2013), pointing out that some Thai people preferred having non-native English accent and were proud of having a Thai accent while speaking English. Despite the fact that most learners in this study considered credibility of accent to be important to English language education, there were two different perceptions towards native and non-native English accent preference with regard to teachers. It might be the case that EFL teachers' accents might have an influence on language teaching and learning; however, having the correct pronunciation might be more important than focusing only on having a native-like accent, as suggested by Arboleda and Garces (2012); and Sa'D and Modirksamene (2015), who have pointed out that having a native-like accent was not the most important factor in English language teaching. This was because even British or American people still had various different accents; thus, the aim of English language learners was to understand what they heard, regardless of whether the accent was pleasing or not pleasing, as noted in Hughes, Trudgill and Watt (2013).

5.4.6 Professional development or training

In this study, training was regarded as a pre-determined theme, since this issue had been mentioned in the review of previous literature. Professional development is generally considered vitally important for EFL teachers to improve their knowledge and skills to provide the best professional practice in order to raise their students' achievement levels, as noted in Mizell (2010). In Thailand, Thai EFL teachers attend training with the aim of continually expanding their knowledge. However, attending a training course does not always mean that teachers will definitely improve their professional practice, as pointed out by Jaboc and Lefgren (2002).

One of the problems with regard to training or professional development, as identified by the Thai EFL teachers in this study, was that spending money on a training course was not good value for money, and money could be spent on other more useful things since some teachers in this research claimed that they were not eager to change their traditional teaching styles or

to apply the knowledge learned from the training to classroom practice. This is in line with Mizell (2010) who stated that some training did not meet teachers' needs and that they probably found it unchallenging for their teaching practices. Moreover, the Thai EFL teachers in this study also noted the ineffectiveness of the training programmes they had attended. This is consistent with the findings of Atagi (2011), who also reported crucially important problems with training programmes in terms of insufficient time, quality of lectures, and applicability of what was presented. Instead, it might be more beneficial to spend the budget for training on other activities such as developing educational materials, some of which may be more beneficial to language learning. However, some teachers also pointed out the importance of the quality of training and that the topic should be relevant to the present teaching practice. Most teachers in this study claimed that most topics in the training provided were irrelevant and uninteresting; therefore, it might be the case that little attention was paid to the training programme. These teachers also pointed out that it might be more beneficial for them to provide training to meet teachers' needs, to draw their attention and to improve their teaching practice in the classroom. However, that the training does not match the way teacher needs does not always mean that training is ineffective. The problem mentioned by teachers in this study might be because they simply do not want to change their teaching styles. However, most training is aimed at motivating them to do that. It might be more useful for teachers to open their mind to the provided training since this probably benefits their teaching techniques. This is in line with Atagi (2011), suggesting that the in-service teacher training programmes be taken in approved courses at the approved institutions in order to strengthen the programmes and help provide continuous development of teachers, including subject knowledge, teaching techniques, and personal development.

From this study, it appeared that training was a problem in English language education as perceived by these Thai EFL teachers. They suggested that money could be spent in more appropriate ways and that relevant and interesting topics be provided for teachers in the training programme so that this might yield the greatest benefit for English language education. However, none of Thai EFL learners mentioned this issue from the interview. This might be due to the fact that Thai EFL learners in this study did not know the issue of professional development and training programme provided for Thai EFL teachers.

5.4.7 Out-of-field teachers and work loads

These issues are considered as emergent themes, since they have not figured largely in the previous literature. The issues of out-of-field teachers and workload are two of the problems which were perceived as impeding English language teaching and learning at the upper secondary level. Atagi (2011) points out that owing to the shortage of teachers as well as the ways schools manage human resources, out-of-field teaching and workload negatively affected the quality of teaching. The discussion will start with the issue of out-of-field teaching, followed by teachers' workload issue.

Out-of-field teaching is defined as the practice of teaching in a subject field, or at a level of schooling for which a teacher has neither a major nor a minor qualification. Ingersoll (2001) and Jerald and Ingersoll (2002) have claimed that one of the critical problems in education is out-of-field teachers, some of whom teach core subjects but not their specialised subject, especially at secondary level in the United States. In the present study, out-of-field teaching emerged as one of the major Thai education problems, caused primarily by the shortage of EFL teachers. The current teaching license allows teachers to teach any subject area at all levels (Atagi, 2011). Most out-of-field teachers are assigned to teach many core subjects, including English at the secondary level (Punthumasen, 2007; Siribanpitak and Boonyananta, 2007; Salleh and Darmawan, 2013).

In this study, only Thai EFL teachers viewed out-of-field teaching as important. Interestingly, only teachers whose majors were in non-English languages such as French, German, Chinese, or Japanese were assigned to teach English. Not specialising in English caused them many difficulties since they claimed that they lacked confidence in teaching English and, importantly, they fretted about the ineffectiveness of their teaching. They needed to prepare much more than they would have needed to prepare for their major subject. The findings that show out-of-field teaching as a critical concern are in line with the Malaysian study of Salleh and Darmawan (2013). It might be more helpful for teachers to teach only their own major subject since they are likely to be more specialised, better-prepared, and confident.

Of equal importance, workload stress has been regarded as one of the negative influences on teaching efficacy and unsatisfactory outcomes for teachers (Collie et al., 2012) and teaching is considered a stressful job (Chaplain, 2008). Göksoy and Akdag (2014), in investigating the concept of workload found a perception that the teacher's workload was above the normal rate in the workplace. Thai EFL teachers in the present study viewed teachers' workload as a crucial difficulty that impedes their teaching effectiveness. This is in line with the study of Tran (2015),

which found that high-school teachers who experienced workload stress were likely to fail in managing students' behaviours and in engaging students in learning. Moreover, a teacher's workload can include working in administrative, financial and activities affairs, affairs in addition to teaching their students (Punthumasen, 2007); therefore, as claimed in this study, Thai EFL teachers did not have sufficient time for lesson preparation. This finding is in accordance with the study of Göksoy and Akdag (2014), which indicate that Turkish teachers were expected to do duties apart from teaching and lesson preparation such as paperwork and correspondence, guard duty, administrative meetings and home visits, all of which were regarded as time-consuming. It might be helpful for Thai EFL teachers if they could focus mainly on classroom practice and lesson preparation, and did not have to spend their time doing other irrelevant duties. Teachers in this study also suggested that the school hire an administrative officer to do administrative duties. Interestingly, none of the students in this study considered the teacher's workload as a problem for English language education at the upper secondary level.

5.5 Teaching methods and materials

Both teaching methods and materials are regarded as pre-determined themes with regard to English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand due to the fact that these themes were mentioned in the literature review chapter.

5.5.1 Teaching approaches and style

According to the Education Act (1999), the teaching approach to English language education in Thailand has undergone a radical change from the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method, and the school curriculum should also change from teacher-centred to learner-centred. The aim is to use English for oral communication (Tayjasanant and Bernard, 2010, Saengboon, 2014). Consequently, Thai EFL teachers might need to familiarise themselves with the new teaching approach. However, some Thai EFL teachers still continue to apply the traditional approach or GTM in the language classroom.

5.5.1.1 GTM and CLT practice in English language classroom

In this study, teachers and learners confirmed that teachers hardly apply CLT in the classroom. Teachers in this study pointed out that they primarily focus on teaching grammar,

vocabulary, and reading, and they also admitted paying little attention to speaking and learning. This is in accordance with the study of Orafi and Borg (2009), which point out that EFL teachers in Libya still use traditional teaching approach, and the study of Prapaisit and Hardison (2008), which have found that Thai EFL teachers still employ class grammar and vocabulary explanation in English language classes. Some teachers in this study shared the reason behind their teaching practice of GTM – they said that it was due to the focus on examinations and grades. They claimed that their learners were not interested in studying communicative skills, including speaking and listening. This finding is in line with the study of Pan and Block (2011), which indicated that Chinese teachers and learners still prefer applying GTM in the classroom, despite the awareness of the importance of CLT, since they primarily focused on the exam-based syllabus. This finding is in contrast to the study of Lunrasri and Gajaseeni (2014), which note that Thai EFL teachers are likely to focus on CLT in English language classes, and the study of Deenamor et al. (2010) cited in Lunrasri & Gajaseeni (2014), which claim that, as Thai EFL teachers, they used CLT to teach listening and speaking skills in the classroom and their learners appeared to improve their communicative skills. It might be more useful for Thai EFL teachers to combine GTM and CLT in English classes so Thai EFL learners could practice all English skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, teachers need to collaborate with other educational stakeholders to make the most effective CLT method to meet their learners' needs.

Despite the fact that Thai learners indicated that their EFL teachers still applied GTM in English language classes, learners in this study claimed that they would like their EFL teachers to teach CLT in the classroom. They could see that CLT could help them apply communicative skills in their daily life outside classroom, especially when communicating with foreigners. This finding is consistent with the study of Lunrasri and Gejaseni (2014), which point out that, because of the coming of ASEAN community, Thai EFL learners are motivated to practise more communicative skills in English language classes. Learners in the study might realise the importance of communication skills that they might need to use in real context. The studies of Suwannarak and Phothongsunun (2009) and Khamkhien (2010) both note that Thai EFL learners in this study claimed they were unable to use English properly in real situations since they lacked listening and speaking skills. They also admitted putting effort into practicing their communicative skills. Moreover, they still claimed that they found it boring to study only grammar and vocabulary and would like their EFL teachers to apply CLT in the English language classroom. This finding is in line with the study of Punthumasen (2007), which has

found that the GTM method is not attractive –it makes learners feel bored and frustrated in their efforts to learn English.

Interestingly, Thai EFL learners in this study also pointed out the ineffectiveness of both GTM and CLT in the classroom, since they found that some Thai EFL teachers in their experience have inadequate knowledge of grammar and so are unable to teach grammar effectively. Thus, they claimed that they needed more efficient EFL teachers. This finding is in substantial agreement with that of Saengboon (2014) and Wanchai (2012), which suggested that more qualified EFL teachers were needed at all levels of education since one critical problems with regard to teaching method is that of Thai EFL teachers' insufficient English proficiency. It is crucially important for Thai EFL teachers to be well-equipped with the skills to speak English.

5.5.1.2 Lack of cultural knowledge

In this study, Thai EFL teachers noted that cultural knowledge should be included in English language teaching. An emerging issue which seemed to be one of the critical problems with regard to teaching practice is that these Thai EFL teachers lacked cultural knowledge in the classroom. The teachers who participated in this research pointed out that cultural knowledge should be taught together with other English language skills, especially in reading, to better understand the context. This result fits with the findings of the previous studies of Choudhury (2014); Jafarzadeh and Simin (2014), who indicate that despite the fact that linguistic knowledge might have an effect on one's reading, cultural factors played a more vitally important role in the process of reading. This might be the case that some Thai EFL teachers lacked the opportunity to go abroad to see the real culture of English speaking countries; therefore, it might be difficult for them to teach or share their cultural knowledge directly from their own experience. It has been noted by Ellis (2008) that EFL teachers should share their cultural experiences with their learners in order that these may enter another culture. This is also in line with Songsirisak (2015), who point out that Thai EFL teachers tend to have a limited knowledge of Western countries; thus, they could not provide sufficient cultural knowledge about the West to their students. Participants pointed out the reason why cultural knowledge was worth teaching might be that there were many reading passages that discussed the culture of native English-speaking countries. Hence, it might be beneficial for Thai EFL learners to learn English skills together with cultural knowledge, since cultural knowledge has an influence on vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading and translation (Choudhury, 2014). However, Thai EFL teachers in the present study appeared to attach a great deal of importance

to cultural knowledge in that although they did not have an opportunity to go abroad; however, they were attempting to discover cultural knowledge from other sources, such as surfing the Internet, reading books, or asking native English speakers to explain the culture to their EFL learners. Extra comments from teachers in this study suggested that they be sent abroad to learn culture or attend the beneficial programme, which might give them more opportunities to experience the real culture, which would be beneficial for their learners.

5.5.2 Textbooks

As mentioned in this literature review chapter, the textbook is also a critical problem for English language education at the upper secondary level. Textbooks play an important role in language classrooms (Richards & Rodgers, 2007). In fact, Ur (1998) and Harmer (2001) both suggest that textbooks are among the most effective language learning resources available, as they are cheaper than computer software and language kits. However, this study suggested a number of problems with respect to textbooks in English language education at the upper secondary level.

The problem that many textbooks did not meet the needs of learners' needs was viewed as vitally important by Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study. They suggested that they were likely to include uninteresting and irrelevant topics, causing many learners to feel bored and lack attention in the class. This finding is in substantial agreement with those of Allen (2008), Diniah (2013), Yilmaz and Aydin (2015), which suggest that textbooks be selected according to learners' needs within the curriculum. It might be beneficial for learners to study with textbooks that suits learners in terms of interesting context and adequate grammar knowledge in order to attract and sustain their attention in the classroom.

The other problem with the quality of textbook is that some textbooks are not at the correct level for the students being taught, so teachers might not be able to provide appropriate content for their learners. This study also confirms that when textbooks do not meet learners' levels, Thai EFL teachers might need to provide more information for their learners. Teachers and learners viewed the limited knowledge provided in textbooks as a critical problem. Due to the fact that Thai education system is exam-oriented, most Thai learners heavily focus on passing the entrance examination (Darasawang, 2007). However, many textbooks still do not provide adequate knowledge for learners for their national examination. This finding is consistent with that of Tok (2010), who noted that nearly half of Turkish teachers in their study found textbooks

insufficient and impractical since there was only little vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Interestingly, extra comments by the teachers suggested that teaching materials should be slightly higher in their learners' level of difficulty in order for learners to learn new vocabulary and grammatical rules. It might be more beneficial for both teachers and learners if textbook selectors choose the appropriate textbook level without biased consideration, and that the version used is updated in order to hold their attention in the class.

Some teachers in this study pointed out that many textbooks seem not to follow the recommendations of the National Education Act (1999), wherein CLT is the major focus. However, some English language textbooks used in Thai schools still concentrate on the grammar translation method, so they found it difficult to apply communicative language teaching as promoted in the national education policy. This finding is in line with Farooqui (2008), Diniah (2013) and Namaghi et al. (2014), who suggested that selecting the right textbook to match the curriculum and learners' needs was an important factor in language learning. Thus, textbooks should be approved by authorities and follow the official syllabus. However, this finding is in contrast with the study of Ahmadi and Derekhsham (2014), which pointed out that because of the emphasis of Communicative Language Teaching in Iranian curriculum, the primary focus of the textbook selected is on speaking and listening skill instead of reading and writing. It might be beneficial for teachers to combine Communicative Language Teaching with the Grammar Translation Method provided in many textbooks in order to follow National Education Act (1999). However, none of the learners in this study commented on this issue of textbook not following the national education policies.

Furthermore, there are other issues about textbooks that emerged during this research. These issues are defined as emergent issues, since they have not been previously mentioned in the literature review chapter. Teachers and learners in this study regarded the consistency of the textbook as a critical issue, impeding the effectiveness of language teaching and learning. Some participants in this study claimed that they used textbooks from different publishers at each level, meaning there were significant differences in terms of content and difficulty as the learners made progress. This might be more practical and of greater benefit to learners if they studied textbooks from the same publisher at each level, in order for the contents to be consistent.

5.6 Issues with regard to culture, beliefs, and values

The previous chapter mentioned that culture, values, and beliefs have an influence on English language education at the upper secondary level; therefore, this issue is regarded as pre-determined theme. According to Foley (2005), cultural background may give rise to problems in language learning; therefore, it is possible that Thai culture affects English language education in Thailand. Due to the fact that learners were taught to pay great respect to their teachers, who were regarded as having a high status and as second parents, learners tended to play a passive role in the classroom, impeding communication practices (Foley, 2005; Hengsadeekul et al., 2010). Moreover, Prapphal (2004) also points out that, owing to their passive role in the classroom and lack of communication practice, learners probably lacked confidence in using English. Furthermore, it was believed that teachers provided the best knowledge to their students; thus, they were not aware of autonomous learning, since they would read and do only what the teachers assigned them (Sitthitikul, 2010; Dueraman, 2013).

As was noted in the literature review, culture, beliefs and values are regarded as pre-determined themes of the problems of English language education in Thailand. In this study, three sub-themes emerged as part of the culture, beliefs and values affecting English language teaching and learning in Thailand.

5.6.1 Shyness

Shyness is one of the issues within English language education with respect to culture, values and beliefs. Mohammadian (2013) points out that shyness was regarded as an undesirable personality type among Western people; however, this study suggests that shyness may be a rather critical issue in English language education in Thailand. Typically, most Thai EFL learners are shy and dare not speak English. Wilhelm and Pei (2008) argue that shyness is another major reason why Thai learners are unwilling to speak in the classroom, especially due to the heavy focus on accuracy of pronunciation and accent in Thai EFL education.

Shyness appears to be an important factor that impedes the willingness to speak, especially in the English language classroom. Both teachers and learners in this study claimed that there was a heavy focus on accuracy, and that this is the reason why Thai learners were unwilling to speak, especially in the classroom, due to the fact that they were shy of using the wrong grammar in front of their classmates. Thus, they chose not to speak English, and kept silent in

the classroom due to their shyness at using inappropriate English in public. This problem is also in line with the previous studies of Hinenoya and Gatbonton (2000); Noom-Ura (2013); and Mohammadian (2013), who note that shyness impeded willingness to speak English since EFL learners were likely to be passive in the classroom and suffer from the fear that they might use the wrong grammar in front of their classmates. These results can also be compared with the situation in Iran, where the report of Bashosh et al. (2013) show that EFL learners who were shy seemed not to initiate interactions with others. Thus, it might be the case that learners preferred to keep silent, rather than to be disapproved of or rejected by others, a point which has been noted in the previous studies of Saunders and Chester (2008).

Owing to learners' shyness, EFL teachers might find it difficult to practice speaking skills in the classroom, impeding communication skills development. Due to the shyness of the Thai EFL learners, the classroom was rather passive; learners were likely to keep silent in the classroom, and it was difficult for EFL teachers to encourage them to speak. Teachers claimed that little attention was paid to oral communication in the classroom and Thai EFL teachers found it difficult to encourage their learners to speak English given that most learners chose to stay silent in the classroom.

Compared with EFL learners in other countries, shyness also appears to have an effect on Iranian EFL learners' willingness to communicate. As highlighted by Mohammadian (2013), shyness is a great disadvantage due to the fact that EFL learners are not willing to volunteer to answer questions and did not practice oral communication in the classroom. Hinenoya and Gatbonto (2000) also point out that shyness might have an effect on EFL learners in Japan, where learners hardly express their ideas in the classroom. However, being shy does not always impact on academic achievement, as noted by D'Souza (2003), who has found that shyness did not influence Indian students' learning outcomes. Even so, Thai EFL teachers who participated in this present study claimed that shyness was affecting English language education with respect to teaching practice and classroom management. It might be more beneficial if learners focused more on fluency than on accuracy, or were at least be willing to communicate, since they might have greater opportunities to practice speaking whether or not their English was correctly used. This has been noted in Bashosh et al., (2013), who show that EFL learners needed both the ability and the willingness to speak, both of which are the main goals of language instruction. Furthermore, it might be advantageous for them to prepare themselves for speaking tests. This is in line with the studies of Namaghi et al. (2015), who indicate that

the English speaking scores of learners depended on their degree of shyness. However, EFL teachers might be aware of the fact that learners are shy, which does not always mean that they are incompetent in speaking, since they might be shy to speak English in the classroom or in the exam environment. However, they might be highly competent in speaking in the real context, as noted by Namaghi et al. (2015) who state that shy learners should not be judged as incompetent in speaking skills just because of this.

Additionally, phobia of foreigners also emerged during this study with regard to the belief of shyness. Both Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study agreed that fear of foreigners also has a major impact on English language education at the upper secondary level. Participants in this study claimed that most Thai EFL learners are likely to be shy with foreigners; therefore, they might not speak to them, although they have an opportunity to do. The findings of this study were consistent with those of Meksophawannagul (2015), indicating that Thai EFL learners often did not dare to speak English with foreigners, since they were worried about being judged on their accuracy as well as being shy. Both teachers and learners in this study agreed that speaking English with native English speakers in a real context was an excellent opportunity to practise speaking and listening. However, Thai EFL learners are not likely to be eager to speaking with foreigners because they are worried about grammar and vocabulary accuracy, and they are also afraid that they may not fully understand what the foreigners say, as pointed out by participants in this study. This issue might be regarded as being important due to English being used as an international language, English is hardly used in daily life in Thailand. Therefore, it might be more beneficial if Thai EFL learners have an opportunity to speak with foreigners; they should be aware that this is a chance to practise their listening and speaking skills, instead of keeping silent when they meet the foreigners. Consequently, apart from studying with native English speaking teachers, due to their shyness and phobia of foreigners, it is difficult for Thai EFL learners to practise oral communication

5.6.2 The belief of hierarchy

As noted in chapter 2, the pre-determined issue of hierarchy was also a problem for English language education at the upper secondary level, with respect to culture, beliefs, and values. Thai EFL teachers in this study pointed out that the problem of hierarchy impeded language learning in the classroom. Due to their highly respected status of teachers, learners hardly ever shared their opinions in the classroom and kept silent, and teachers claimed that they found it difficult to obtain feedback regarding learning outcomes from their learners.

Similarly, Thai EFL learners in this study also found that hierarchy has an effect on English language learning since learners dare not ask any questions of their teachers due to their high respect for elder people's beliefs. Thus, learners claimed that they were quite passive in the classroom, and they did not want to share their opinions with their teachers. Therefore, learners claimed that they did not have enough opportunity to practice speaking in the classroom. This is in line with the studies of Wilhelm and Pei (2008) and Hengsaddeekul et al. (2010) who indicate that learners were unwilling to share their opinions since they felt safer and more comfortable with playing passive roles in the classroom. The effects of hierarchy also influenced the Korean classroom, as noted in Windle (2000), where the hierarchy always placed the teacher at the top in the traditional Korean classroom. The Thai EFL teachers who participated in this study believed that assumptions about hierarchy were quite strong in Thailand, causing learners to be obedient and to pay high respect to their teachers, such that they always keep silent in the classroom.

Interestingly, teachers and learners mentioned the belief that hierarchy could possibly come from the Chinese belief in the Confucian tradition, which has had an influence in Thailand for a long time (Auethavornpipat, 2014). The influences of the Confucian tradition include the belief that the teaching was the most respected profession and asking questions of the teacher was regarded as having potentially negative results (Windle, 2000). Therefore, most students were rather passive and kept silent in the classroom, probably impeding the effectiveness of learning, including problems of memory and lack of opportunity to practise communication skills. This issue is also pointed out in Coe et al. (2014), who state that it was vitally important for learners to be active in the classroom in order to remember things and that this could help to increase learning effectiveness; thus it might be beneficial for learners to be more active in the classroom. However, there is also an emergent issue mentioned only by teachers. Aside from the effect of hierarchy on the interaction between teachers and learners, this study also identifies a hierarchical relationship between old and young teachers, with younger EFL teachers being reticent to express their opinions during group discussions. Due to the belief in hierarchy although young teachers had equal authority to the old teachers in the schools, old teachers mostly took control of the discussions among teachers. Older EFL teachers, therefore, controlled everything, resulting in a failure to share opinions among colleagues. Due to the hierarchy system in Thai culture, young teachers participated in group discussions, but hardly shared their opinions because of their fear of being rude and disrespectful to older teachers. Interestingly, this also affected English language teaching and learning, as the opinions of

young teachers were limited and were not shared, despite the fact that they could probably generate beneficial ideas for their learners. It might be more useful if all teachers felt they had equal authority to share their opinions on their teaching to increase the teaching effectiveness for their learners, since younger teachers might also share many interesting ideas, which were advantageous to their learners. Nevertheless, the strong belief in the hierarchy might be more influential in young teachers; thus, some positive ideas might not be included in real classroom practice, probably bringing about teaching ineffectiveness.

5.6.3 The overacting manners of having native English accent

The issue of overacting when having a native English accent is regarded as show-off and overacting manners in Thailand, impeding the improvement of speaking skills, especially among learners' classmates. In addition, both Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study agreed that wariness about "overacting" with a native-like accent was one of the problems preventing Thai EFL learners from practising speaking skills in the classroom. Teachers and learners in this study claimed that classmates would laugh at learners speaking with a native-like accent, although that accent was correct and appropriate. It may be said that teachers and learners had rather similar opinions with regard to beliefs about overacting with a native-like accent. To my best knowledge, no other studies in Thailand have found this. It might be the case that it is a distinctive belief in Thailand and participants claimed that it might be beneficial for Thai learners to erase this belief from their mind since it does impede them from practising speaking skills, especially for those having a native-like accent. Interestingly, compared with the issue of the credibility of accent, Thai EFL learners claimed that they preferred to study with native English speaking teachers. However, they dared not speak English with a native-like accent and would laugh at those having that accent, despite the fact that they believed it was more credible to have a native-like accent while speaking English. Thai EFL teachers who participated in this study mentioned the belief amongst students that speaking in an accent close to that of a native English speaker would be perceived by their classmates as overacting and result in them being mocked, thus causing difficulties for EFL learners when they practiced their speaking skills, especially in the classroom. This is also in line with the studies of Sa'd and Modirkhamene (2015), who show that Iranian EFL learners might believe that they sounded 'foolish' or 'funny' to others when they tried to resemble native English speakers. Equally importantly, these Iranians also claimed that they hardly ever attempted to produce a native-like accent. Furthermore, the Thai learners in this study maintained that it might be safer for them to keep silent and try not to speak English in the classroom since their classmates

tended to laugh at them. Even outside the classroom, people would also gossip when hearing others speaking English with a native-like accent.

5.6.4 The belief of education studies and teaching profession

One cultural issue that emerged in this study was that attitudes towards EFL teaching as a profession were generally negative. Although Thai people pay high respect to teachers, attitudes towards education studies as well as teaching profession were negatively mentioned. Interestingly, this issue was pointed out by both the teachers and students themselves.

Both teachers and learners pointed out that the negative attitudes towards educational studies and teaching profession were one of the critical issues of English language education at the upper secondary level. Teachers gave the importance of negative attitudes towards both educational studies and teaching profession. However, learners mainly pointed out negative attitudes towards teaching profession. To start with, from the interviews, probably being affected from low salary given to teachers in Thailand, it might be the case that teaching profession earns little money compared to other profession where English language skills are needed since participants claimed that teaching profession was low-paid despite having high respect from other people. Thai EFL teachers who participated in this study also claimed that the teaching profession was regarded as having a high status in Thailand, but is low paid. Everyone paid high respect to all teachers, regardless of the age of teachers. For example, learners' parents who were much older than some young teachers still paid high respect to younger teachers. This belief is in agreement with the findings of the previous studies of Windle (2000), which show that in Korea it was believed that teaching was the most respected profession. However, in contrast to Thailand, the teaching profession was considered one of the most well-paid jobs in South Korea (Centre on International Education Benchmarking, 2015). This issue of having high status of teacher is also in substantial agreement with that of Atagi (2010) in that *Wai Kruu* (teacher) Day is an annual ritual where Thai students show their respect to their teachers. Furthermore, teachers in this research also pointed out that for students who took the entrance examination, the Faculty of Education is often their last choice and they might only follow this route if they received low scores in the examination. In Thailand, The Faculty of Education at Chulalongkorn University was ranked first among education programmes. However, the entrance examination scores by students in the Faculty of Education are among the lowest at the university (Atagi, 2011). As a result, it might be the case that some Thai EFL teachers were not highly qualified, and so provided poor quality language

teaching. This issue revealed that learners who obtained high entrance examination scores probably did not choose to study at the Faculty of Education. Consequently, the quality of EFL teachers from educational studies was considered relatively low compared to those from the Faculty of Arts who majored in English as noted by Thai EFL teachers who participated in this study. This might be the reason why educational studies were not popular among learners who had high scores. From the statistics in (OHEC, 2006, 2012,2013), the highest scoring students in Faculty of Education had similar scores of those the lowest scoring in the Faculty of Arts. Additionally, it might seem that educational studies were not really competitive for learners compared to other studies. Thus, it is possible that students who graduated from educational studies were said not to have sufficient knowledge to be efficient language teachers despite their qualification. Furthermore, they also pointed out that despite the lack of teaching skills, learners from the Faculty of Arts were believed to be more acceptable in terms of their knowledge of English than those from the Faculty of Education. However, those from the Faculty of Arts often chose to work in other, better-paid, professions, such as being a flight attendant, translator, or secretary. Thai EFL learners in this study also heavily focused on the teachers with not many qualifications due to the fact that those who were highly qualified chose to work in other professions. This is in line with the research of Dhanasobhon (2006), who indicate that Thai people seemed to believe that very intelligent people would be more likely to choose to work for a private company or in the tourism business, or work as a flight attendant rather than being an English language teacher. English language education at the upper secondary level might have been much better if attitudes towards education studies and the teaching profession were more positive, in order that more learners would probably choose to complete education studies despite attaining high scores in the entrance examination, which would be likely to create better quality teachers. This is in line with the study of Atagi (2011) who point out that teaching profession does not attract the brightest students in Thailand. However, this might still provide more opportunities to have higher quality EFL teachers. English language education might be better if people have more positive attitudes towards educational studies and teaching profession and teacher salary continually increases in order that more smart people would like to be an English language teacher instead of choosing other profession such as flight attendant. Money might influence on learners when they think about their future career, affecting learners' decision which subject they choose to study in their Bachelor Degree, also having effect on the quality of teachers, significantly causing the problems of English language education with regard to the increasing number of ineffective teachers. However, these findings are in contrast with the study of Sintanapanya et al (2014)

surveying the attitudes towards teaching profession and the study showed that most Thai teachers demonstrated positive attitudes towards their teaching profession, being proud of being teachers and believing in their learners' potential. As mentioned in the interviews, there was also apparent advantage of becoming teachers especially in the state school that it offered a secure job for life and most teachers felt pride and prestige to be teachers since they are civil servants; therefore, they were also people who really wanted to be teachers, as noted by Thai EFL teachers in this study. This finding is in accordance with the studies previous done by Atagi (2011) in that teachers are civil servants (*karatchagan*) which literally means to serve the King; leading them to pride and prestige coming along with the position and teachers believed that being civil servant means more than occupation.

5.7 Issues with regard to linguistic difference and language interference

This issue of linguistic difference is considered to be a pre-determined theme in this study since it has been widely explored in the previous literature review chapter. In this study, this issue also has effect on English language education at the upper secondary level. Generally speaking, there are four skills of English, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As pointed out in Wiriyachitra (2002) and Pongsiriwet (2002) that there are a number of problems of all skills in English language learning. All skill problems were mentioned in previous chapter; however, only speaking and writing skill problem were pointed out in this study. The major concerns of speaking skill problems between Thai and English are pronunciation, accent, and intonation (Goodwin, 2001 and Lazaraton, 2001).

In this study, due to the difference between Thai and English pronunciation and grammar aspects, participants claimed that Thai EFL learners might be familiar with translation from Thai to English; therefore, the sentences are likely to be wrongly constructed. As previously mentioned, Thai EFL teachers and learners who participated in this study regarded speaking and writing skill as critical problems of English language education with regard to linguistic problems. Due to the heavy focus on examination where reading and grammar are mainly focused; therefore, reading skill is not the critical problem for Thai EFL learners. With regard to the issue of speaking and writing problem, it may be more beneficial to Thai EFL learners to have speaking and writing assessment in the English language examination to make them aware of the importance of these skills, together with reading and grammar.

5.7.1 Speaking

Generally speaking, the speaking skill is considered as one of the problems with regard to linguistic difference, including pronunciation, intonation, accent especially for those from expanding circle countries (Goodwin, 2001; Lazaraton, 2001).

Thai EFL teachers and learners who participated in this study pointed out that Thai EFL learners are likely to have speaking problem with regard to pronunciation since consonant sound and ending sound are very different between Thai and English. This is in line with Kanokpermpoon (2007) and Numpoon, Chumpavan & Srinaowaratt, (2012), pointing out that most Thai EFL learners' pronunciation and stress syllable are regarded as potential problems when practice speaking. Equally importantly, it is likely that Thai EFL learners also focused on the accuracy of grammar while producing English conversation since Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study claimed that they were also worried about the use of correct grammar such as the usage of past tense and plural forms. It might be more beneficial for learners themselves if they focus more on fluency than accuracy since the heavy focus on accuracy probably impeded the speaking practice. Moreover, participants also claimed that it might be more beneficial if Thai EFL teachers encourage their learners to practice more oral communication.

5.7.2 Writing

Writing is also perceived as a significant skill to develop in order to master a target language. Watcharapunyawong & Usaha (2002) point out the difficulties of writing skill that it requires both semantic and syntactic knowledge. Therefore, the inadequate linguistic knowledge or limited language proficiency has effect on second language writing quality (Weigle, 2002). Prior knowledge is therefore vitally important to have writing competence. The previous chapter also mentioned the problems of writing skill, including interference of first language with regard to direct translation, differences of syntactic rules between Thai and English, and the transfer of the Thai system to English writing. In this study, the issue of translation is pointed out as noted in the previous chapter. However, the additional issue of writing pointed out by Thai EFL teachers and learners is that Thai EFL learners were likely to use karaoke language in the writing since they found it difficult to have direct translation from Thai to English. Moreover, punctuation is also the problem with regard to writing since Thai linguistic does not have punctuation whereas English has a number of punctuation rules. This is in line with the studies of Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007; Sattayatham & Ratanapinyowong,

2008; Jenwitheesuk, 2009, indicating that most Thai EFL learners might encounter the problems of the interference of the first language, including direct translation and syntactic rules. Moreover, this problem also occurred in Spanish high school, as noted in Solano et al. (2014) study that most Spanish interference had negative influence on developing writing skills in English language education. Moreover, Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study also pointed out that most Thai learners are likely to translate Thai into English, bringing about the significant interference when creating written texts in English. This issue is also in line with Solano et al. (2014), pointing out that most Spanish EFL learners were likely to think in Spanish and translate words or sentences into English causing troubles in their writing. Moreover, it might make the better learning if Thai EFL learners practice writing skill regularly to continually improving writing and it might be more beneficial if Thai EFL learners are aware of Thai language interference such as linguistic difference, punctuation, and vocabulary while producing the writing.

5.8 Issues with regard to surroundings

5.8.1 Lack opportunity to use English in daily life

The emergent issue of there being little opportunity to use English in daily life has effect on English language learning at the upper secondary level in Thailand as noted by Thai EFL teachers and learners in this study. As an EFL country where English is used as an international language, both teachers and students in this study also agreed that Thai EFL learners might have only a few chances to practise English in the real context. The findings of this study are in substantial agreement with those of Noom-Ura (2013) and Meksophawannagul (2015), pointing out that Thai EFL learners lack the opportunity to use English in their daily lives and are not confident about using English outside the classroom. Interestingly, further comments by Thai EFL learners in this study suggested that surroundings at their school had an influential impact on encouraging learners to use English in their school. For example, learners in this study claimed that if they had a chance to choose their own school, they would definitely study at international schools where they believed learners had more opportunity to use English with native English speakers among the teachers, or even with their classmates. It might be more beneficial for Thai EFL learners to have the opportunity to use English in the real context and to be familiar with using English with classmates outside classroom that is likely to increase the effectiveness of speaking skill. However, the problem is that it has very high tuition fees compared with those in state schools in Thailand.

5.8.2 Lack opportunity to go abroad

The emergent issue with regard to surroundings is that Thai EFL teachers do not often have a chance to go abroad; therefore, they are likely to find it difficult to teach cultural knowledge as noted by Thai EFL teachers in this study. Furthermore, participants claimed that some Thai EFL teachers at the upper secondary level, having never stayed abroad for academic purposes, have not had a chance to experience English usage in daily life. In addition, it might be more beneficial for both Thai EFL teachers and learners to have experience in a native English-speaking country for a period of time to familiarise themselves with the usage of English language and culture. Aside from the benefits for the Thai EFL teachers, their learners can also profit from their experience. This is in accordance with the studies previously done by Talley & Hui-ling (2014), indicating that Taiwanese students are likely to share their intercultural experiences based on their travel abroad in the classroom, enabling their classmates to understand better cultural knowledge. However, it is also important to be aware that spending time in a native English-speaking country does not always mean that the Thai EFL teachers will be more academically proficient in English; however, at least they can experience English in a real context as well as the real culture, and as a result, Thai EFL learners might derive benefit from their experience.

5.9 Issues with regard to corruption

This emergent issue of corruption also has an effect on English language education at the upper secondary level. The issues with regard to corruption will be analysed as follows:

5.9.1 Textbook Selection

It is vitally important to note that some textbooks used in the classroom do not always meet students' needs, including some irrelevant and uninteresting topics due to the fact that they are mostly written for a global market (Allen, 2008). Textbook selection is therefore important for Thai EFL teachers to choose for their learners. Choi & Lee (2008) have pointed out that the textbook at the primary and secondary level in Thailand was normally selected by appointed book selection committees; however, textbooks were selected by national regional governments or governmental agencies in some countries such as China, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. There is the issue of textbook selection with regard to corruption between the publishers and the teachers who have the authority to select the textbooks for each school. Corrupt publishers are therefore another concern identified by Thai EFL teachers in this study,

as some publishers collude with senior teachers who were appointed to choose the textbooks for schools. This means that sometimes textbooks might be ordered even if they are not appropriate for the learners. It may be the case that the publisher pays them to select their textbooks used in each school regardless of the quality and the appropriateness, as noted by Thai EFL teachers in this study. It might be more beneficial if textbook selectors are aware of benefits their learners might gain from the selected textbook rather than choosing money to benefit themselves, since choosing appropriate teaching material is vitally important for English language education at the upper secondary level. As pointed out that Entrance examination is a major concern for Thai EFL learners; thus, teachers should be aware of the appropriate of the textbook to make the best benefit for their EFL learners.

5.9.2 Exam release

As mentioned in the previous issue that some Thai EFL teachers from the traditional school have tutorial classes after school mainly due to the low pay in schools, as noted by participants in this study. Accordingly, due to highly competitive business of tutorial schools, some Thai EFL teachers attract their learners to attend their tutorial class by sharing the upcoming school examination, including formative, mid-term, and final examinations. Thus, due to the belief of heavy focus on grades mentioned in previous issue, participants claimed that Thai EFL learners choose to attend tutorial classes taught by their schoolteachers to obtain the examination hint released by their own teachers. When learners get high scores, they still continue to attend the tutorial classes in order to keep their high scores in every examination. Thai EFL teachers in this study also noted that teachers should have ethical consideration and teach their learners at their best ability, and learners should also pay attention to class and revise lesson regularly to get high score, not having examination hint before exam period. This is because even though learners get high scores in school examinations, it might be difficult for them to pass the entrance examination if they are used to being given the examination hints; thus, they do not try to learn by themselves.

5.10 Summary of the discussions

From the discussions, the problems of English language education perceived by Thai EFL teachers and learners in the upper secondary level in Bangkok can be classified according to two categories: pre-determined problems, existing in previous studies and emergent problems. The following will present pre-determined and emergent problems in this study.

Pre-determined problems include:

1. Large class size
2. English language examination
3. Teachers' characteristic and lesson delivery
4. Shadow education
5. The quality of native English speaking teachers
6. Credibility of accent
7. Professional development or training
8. Teaching approach and style
9. The quality of textbooks
10. Shyness
11. The influence of hierarchy system
12. Lack of opportunity to use English in daily life
13. Language interference and linguistic difference including speaking and writing skill

Emergent problems consist of:

1. Time limitation and class hours
2. Low salary of teachers
3. Thai EFL teachers' recruitment system
4. Out-of-field and work load
5. The belief of negative feeling of Thai students towards classmates having negative native-like accents
6. The negative belief of educational studies and teaching profession
7. The fear of foreigners
8. Lack of opportunity to go abroad
9. The corruption of textbook selection process
10. The corruption of school examination release

A number of issues are identified as problems in the English language education in Thailand. However, there are some key problems which have an influence on the cause of other problems, consisting of low salaries, ineffectiveness of education curriculum and policy, and the heavy focus of examinations. The problem summary and analysis from these three problems will be summarised to answer research questions in chapter 6.

5.11 Summary

This chapter presents the interpretation of the findings, together with the opinion to explain the meaning of the results. It also provides an outline of issues of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand, each of which included English language education policies, teacher, teaching approach and materials, the influence of culture, value, and belief, linguistic differences and language interferences, surroundings, and corruptions. In this chapter, the explanation of the study has moved the readers' deeper understanding of the research problems forward from the research introduction.

The conclusion of this research, the research implications, the research contribution, the limitation of the study and recommendation for future research will be presented in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction and overview of the chapter

The aim of this research was to explore the views and perceptions of Thai EFL teachers and learners at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, Thailand about English language education. This chapter presents a summary of the outcomes of this exploration, together with a comparison of the perceptions of Thai EFL teachers' and learners', as previously noted in chapter 4 and 5. The contributions of the study, its implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research will also be discussed.

Overview of this chapter

6.2 Summary of Thesis

6.3 Overview of research findings

6.4 Contributions

6.5 Implications and recommendation for future research

6.6 Limitations

6.2 Summary of thesis

The thesis began by reviewing existing research into the perceptions of teachers and students towards English language education at different levels, both in a global and in a Thai context. An understanding of the existing literature requires an appreciation of the differences between a top-down and a bottom-up approach. In educational research, a top-down, or deductive, approach tends to adopt a narrower focus involving the testing of hypotheses. This approach has been used by researchers to investigate issues of English language education by testing participants' perceptions against pre-defined, problematic criteria. A bottom-up, or inductive, approach, on the other hand is more exploratory and open-ended and is used to investigate problems in English language education by exploring participants' perceptions without any lead questions or pre-defined problems. The aim is for participants to share their perceptions freely without being 'steered' by pre-existing hypotheses of the researchers. Most previous research in this area has tended to apply a top-down approach to investigate the issues in English language education, using a variety of methodologies such as questionnaire and interviews. Conversely, studies using a bottom-up approach have been less frequently

employed, and little attempt has been made to determine issues of English language education on the basis of teachers' and learners' perceptions. Therefore, the current study attempted to investigate the problems of English language education at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, by primarily focusing on the importance of teachers' and learners' perceptions, and its findings are based on how the participants viewed such education. One of its main contributions, therefore, lies precisely in this alternative approach to investigating these issues, an approach which, as exemplified by the review of literature, has been under-employed in past research.

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore perceptions regarding English language education. In-depth interviews were conducted with 16 Thai EFL teachers to explore their perceptions of English language education at the upper secondary level while 10 focus group interviews were used to investigate Thai EFL learners' perceptions. This study also conducted a comparison of perceptions between teachers and learners to see whether they viewed the problems similarly or differently, as this might be beneficial for policymakers in designing educational curricula, given that the bottom-up approach was used to investigate participants' perceptions while policymakers generally design top-down educational policies (Li, 2010). The purpose of this approach was to obtain rich data regarding the comparative views of Thai EFL teachers and learners. In this way, policymakers might see the problems from different perspectives, which may contribute to a better understanding of the issues of English language education.

The overall research questions that have guided this case study were:

Question 1: What are the perceptions of Thai EFL teachers at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, concerning English language education in Thailand?

Question 2: What are the perceptions of Thai EFL learners at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, concerning English language education in Thailand?

Question 3: How do these groups compare in terms of their perceptions concerning English language education in Thailand?

6.3 Overview of Research Findings

Research question 1: What are the perceptions of Thai EFL teachers at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, concerning English language education in Thailand?

Teachers' perceptions in this study reflect both macro and micro issue in English language education. In this study, macro problems represent problems having impact on government, policy, and the education system generally, whereas micro problems are problems related to schools, classroom practices, and teachers.

Briefly, compared to the globally relevant problems identified in various previous research studies, as discussed in the review of literature chapter, a number of issues were identified, some expected and some emergent that is, unique to this study. These have been fully discussed in the previous chapter. To summarise at this point, the issues which could have predicted from previous research include class size and teacher's characteristics, which can be considered as two of the most important problems identified in this study since all teachers considered them as critical problems, followed by the issues of native English speaking and non-native English speaking teachers, shadow education, linguistic difference and language interference, the examination system, professional development, the quality of textbooks, teaching approaches, and the hierarchical system, respectively. Moreover, there are also emergent issues concerning teachers' perceptions, including teachers' recruitment system, low salary, negative attitude towards education studies and the teaching profession, time limitation and class hours, being considered overacting when producing a native English-like accent, and the surroundings. Furthermore, there are also some topics which were mentioned only by the teachers in this study, including professional development, out-of-field teachers, teachers' workload, the lack of cultural knowledge in classroom practice. Importantly, some fresh issues emerged from the second interviews, including out-of-field teachers and teachers' workload.

Substantially, due to the fact that Thailand is an EFL country, most issues with regard to English language education are rather similar to those explored in the research literatures which have emerged from other EFL countries, and some extra comments on each issue have been provided. However, there are insights into some issues which are different from those discussed in the existing literatures. For example, with regard to teachers' characteristics, friendliness has been considered as a positive in the literature; yet, it was not considered as significant in this current research, probably due to the influence of the hierarchical system of Thai society; thus, all teachers seemed to be respected by rather than friendly to their students. Moreover,

regarding shadow education, most Thai EFL teachers in this study shared negative perceptions of after school tutorial classes which they felt had a negative effect on the Thai education system whereas a lot of positive points about these were raised in the literature.

From a number of issues of English language education in Thailand identified in this study, some key problems which had an influence on the cause of other problems can also be summarised. This section will outline these problems, based on the teachers' perceptions. Due to the fact that teachers are direct policy implementers, a majority of problems perceived by teachers were related to the education system, and to school policy, together with some classroom practice issues. The issue of money, low salaries was an emergent problem in this study. However, this issue has a powerful effect on a number of other problems. The problem of shadow education is mainly the result of the low salary of teachers, as pointed out by participants in this study, since Thai EFL teachers from mainstream schools need to have tutorial classes after school to earn extra money for their living. Potentially, some teachers appeared to be ignoring their duties at school in order to prepare lessons for their tutorial classes after school, causing some Thai EFL learners to attend these classes due to their better quality of teaching and the possibility of doing better in the upcoming school examination. Moreover, in regards to the problem of low salaries, participants maintained that many Thai people had negative attitudes towards educational studies and the teaching profession, resulting in a shortage of people with a good command of English becoming EFL teachers. Those who were proficient in English were, it was claimed, likely to choose other professions with higher salaries. Moreover, due to the limited budget of schools, participants in this study noted that it was rather difficult to hire a qualified native English speaking teacher on a low salary, especially in public schools. Thus, most native English speaking teachers were regarded as tourist teachers who were not qualified and had inadequate knowledge of grammar, and lacked teaching skills.

Moreover, the ineffectiveness of education curriculum and policy seemed also to be having a massive impact on other problems. The problems of professional development and the quality of textbooks shared a similar problem in that the topics provided in the training programme and those in the textbook did not meet users' needs, and were not interesting. This might be because policymakers did not involve teachers when preparing training sessions and selecting the textbook. Furthermore, the problem of large class sizes was a direct result of an ineffective education policy, since this, participants claimed, was causing a great deal of trouble for

teachers and learners in the classroom. They suggested that a policy that involved limiting the number of students in one class would result in better classroom management. Apart from professional development, the quality of textbooks, and large class size, participants in this study also claimed that time limitation and class hours were issues caused by ineffective education curriculum and policy. Due to the limited class hours specified per week in the policy, Thai teachers were finding it difficult to provide communicative activities in the classroom, since it was not possible for them to prepare all skills lesson to fit the limited number of class hours for their learners. Moreover, the issue of out-of-field teachers was also problematic since majoring in other second languages, mostly including French, German, Chinese, and Japanese did not always mean that these teachers were able to teach English effectively, resulting in the poor quality of teaching. Teachers in this study claimed that they had been assigned to teach English despite being non-English major graduates; thus, they lacked confidence in teaching and had to work harder in lesson preparation. Another important effect from the ineffectiveness of the education system related to teachers' workloads. Not only did teachers teach at school, but they also had to do other duties such as being administrative officers or financial officers, together with teaching. Teachers further commented that they had little time to prepare their lessons due to heavy burdens, and also suggested hiring officers to do these duties instead of them.

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of Thai EFL learners at the upper secondary level in Bangkok, concerning English language education in Thailand?

This study investigated students' perceptions through interviews with 10 focus groups, with one member of each group subsequently being randomly selected to take part in an individual interview. In contrast to the teachers' perceptions, the students were more concerned with the micro problems of their English language education. However, just because these are micro problems does not mean that they are not important and deserving of being taken into consideration by policy-makers.

As this has already been fully discussed, no differentiation will be made between pre-determined and emergent issues; rather, all of the important problems as perceived by students will be summarised. Class size, teachers' characteristics, the examination system, and teaching approach were four of the most critical problems of English language education, as perceived by students in this study. The credibility of teachers' accents, shadow education, shyness,

negative attitudes towards educational studies and the teaching profession, time limitation and class hours, the quality of textbooks, and the belief that it would be considered as overacting when producing a native English-like accent were also issues that were significant for the students. Problems about teachers' low salaries, the recruitment system and NES teacher's qualifications were not likely to be students' concern and only a few of them mentioned these issues. In contrast to the teachers' perceptions, none of the students considered the issue of professional development, out-of-field teachers, and teachers' workload as problems of English language education.

From the summary of problems perceived by students, it might be seen that students paid attention to teachers, including teaching practices, classroom environment, teachers' teaching effectiveness and also focused on both school examinations as well as the national entrance examination; however, hardly did they mention the policy system or a teacher's qualification. This might be because they primarily focused on teacher quality in the classroom. In the following section, the key issue, which appeared to underpin many other student problems, will be outlined.

It is important to note that participants in this study were students at the upper secondary level; thus, the school examination as well as the national entrance examination were likely to be their primary focus. Consequently, the problems, perceived by students were mostly related to the examination and its styles.

Some other problems arose as a result of this heavy focus on the examination and grades. Owing to the fact that the major parts of the English language examination in Thailand consist of grammar, vocabulary, and reading skill. Participants in this study claimed that most Thai learners pay attention to only English skills in the examination. Therefore, communicative skills were largely ignored in the classroom. Although some students suggested including speaking skill in the examination, they were still worried about class size. They found it difficult to practice communicative skill for everyone in one class owing to the large class size and the time limitation and class hours. This also had an effect on student's lack of autonomous learning and communicative skill in the classroom. Furthermore, due to the heavy focus on the examination, the quality of the textbook was also a problem since students commented on the inadequate presentation of grammar and vocabulary in some textbooks, which did not cover the content of their examination, particularly the national entrance examination. This also

affected a teacher's teaching approach. Despite being advised in the national education act (1999) to focus on communicative skills, EFL teachers mostly used the grammar translation method rather than communicative language teaching in the classroom, due to the primary attention on English skills demanded in the examination. Moreover, most students heavily focus on grades and passing the examination; therefore, attending tutorial classes after mainstream school was needed to build their confidence for the examination since school teachers were regarded as less credible. Even worse, some students admitted taking a tutorial class as their teachers shared the upcoming examination in this class; thus, they attended the tutorial class hoping for hints for the school examination.

From research question one and two, some important issues have been linked to the literature previously mentioned in chapter two, including Noom-Ura (2013), Kitjaroonchai (2013) and Choi & Lee (2008), all of which have investigated the issues of English language teaching in the upper secondary level, as perceived by teachers. With regard to teachers' and students' perceptions, some issues in this study have been pointed out as those in the influential literature (e.g. teaching technique; the quality of textbook; class size; class hours, teachers' workload, shyness of students). Interestingly, from the interviews, participants in this study did not include the problems with regard to students (e.g. student's lack of motivation, patience and confidence); however, findings in Noom-Ura (2013) considered this problem as a high level issue of English language education in the upper secondary level. Moreover, the issues of the lack of parents' support as well as government support are also the problems in Choi & Lee (2008) whereas none of the participants in this study regarded these issues as important problems of English language education. Equally importantly, some issues were considered as problems in this study; however, they do not emerge as problems in the literature, including teachers' recruitment system, the low salary of teachers, shadow education, out-of-field teachers, and the credibility of accent.

Research Question 3: How do these groups compare in terms of their perceptions concerning English language education in Thailand?

From the findings of research questions 1 and 2, there are some similarities and differences in the perceptions of the problems of English language education in the secondary level between these Thai EFL teachers and learners from various state schools in Bangkok. It may be summarised that teachers focus on both macro and micro problems, whereas learners pay most

attention to micro problems. Teachers primarily commented on the education system and policy, whereas the learners mainly focused on problems with regard to teachers, their classroom practices and the examination.

From the findings, it seemed that participants in this study did share some similar perceptions regarding the problems of English language education in Thailand; however, teachers and learners had a different perspective for highlighting some problems. The following list summarises the prominent problems which emerged from both teachers' and learners' perceptions of English language education in Thailand.

Class size and teachers' characteristics emerged as critical issues since all participants mentioned these issues in both the first and second interviews. With regard to class size, it might be seen that the number of students in one class in public school is very large, causing problems in teaching practice and classroom environment. The issue of class size seems to affect the policy ineffectiveness since it depends on the nature of the school; if all schools were standardised in this regard, it may be that the issue of class size would be less divisive. It is recognised, though, that simply reducing class sizes across schools is very much a long term issue, although in this study it was unanimously cited as a problem by both teachers and students. Teachers' characteristics was also a crucial problem perceived by both teachers themselves and students in this study. It might be beneficial for teachers to be aware of their own characteristics and manners in the classroom since these might be having a great impact on their teaching and the classroom environment, either encouraging or discouraging students. However, compared with the influential studies (Noom-Ura, 2013; Kitjaroonchai, 2013; Choi & Lee, 2008), the issue of teachers' characteristics was not considered as one of the problems of English language education. This might be because English language teachers were investigated in these studies; therefore, teachers might not consider themselves as a problem.

However, there were also differences in teachers and students' perceptions in this study. Problems with regard to out-of-field teachers and workload, professional development, cultural knowledge, and the corruption involved in textbook selection, were mentioned only by the EFL teachers in this study. This might be because learners have little knowledge of the education system and policies, since all these problems were directly related to the teachers themselves.

Regarding the issue of shadow education, it might be expected that teachers might have negative perceptions of teachers holding tutorial classes since such classes could be perceived as directly critical of the effectiveness of mainstream education. In contrast, apart from very few negative perceptions towards tutors, most students in this study expressed positive perceptions in terms of the characteristics of tutors and their lesson delivery at tutorial school, which attracted them to attend tutorial classes. It is likely that tutors in tutorial classes were more credible than mainstream teachers for a number of reasons given by students. Interestingly, despite the fact that shadow education was perceived as a dominant issue in this study, this issue was not shown to have a great effect on English language education in these influential studies (Noom-Ura, 2013; Kitjaroonchai, 2013; Choi & Lee, 2008).

All the teachers in this study seemed to see the qualifications of NES teachers as one of the critical problems. They further commented on the NES teachers' quality of teaching, especially grammar knowledge owing to the fact that most NES teachers do not possess a TESOL or TEFL degree. Despite pointing out the issue of the shortage of NES teachers, none of the participants considered their qualifications as a problem of English language education. Instead, participants identified the lack of qualified NNES teachers as a problem (Noom-Ura, 2013; Kitjaroonchai, 2013). Differently, it seemed that the students did not consider the issue of NES teachers' qualifications as a crucial problem. Instead, they were interested only in their teaching practice and the credibility of their English accents, as suggested in the finding that studying English with NES teachers from inner-circle countries was preferable; however, teachers in this study did not regard the credibility of accent as an important concern. This might be because, as NNES teachers, they might have been feeling inferior to NES teachers in terms of speaking skill, including pronunciation and native English-like accent.

In conclusion, it is likely that teachers and students had both similarities and differences in their perceptions of English language education. It can be claimed that some problems, including the issue of culture, beliefs and values such as shyness and the hierarchy system, and the linguistic difference of Thai and English and language interference, were not directly related to educational policy, teacher, and their teaching practice. Thus, it might be difficult to solve these problems, since they focused on Thai culture and Thai language. However, the majority of the problems of English language education were related to the education system and to the teachers themselves. Therefore, this study might be useful for policymakers in raising awareness of these problems and helping develop better understanding of their policy

implementers including teachers and students. This is because policymakers might design the educational policy from theory; however, this study gives them feedback of how the policies are applied in the real practice, which should also be taken into consideration. This does not mean that all policies are poorly designed; nevertheless, it might be better for policymakers to listen to both teachers' and students' perceptions to receive feedback, which might help improve English language education in Thailand. Moreover, due to the problems with regard to teachers such as teachers' characteristics, teaching approach, and classroom practice, all EFL teachers should consider students' concern and response, and also take these problems into account to adjust themselves to create the better classroom environment, the more appropriate teaching practice, and the preferable personalities, which might result in improving the English language education.

6.4 Contributions

This study fills some gaps in the previous research into the perceptions of teachers and learners towards English-language education in Thailand. This section discusses how the study contributes theoretically, empirically, and methodologically.

6.4.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study has contributed some insights into the problems of English-language education in Thailand at the upper secondary level, as perceived by Thai EFL teachers and learners. As noted in Gibson (1983), perceptions are defined as sensory mechanisms through which humans receive and interpret information about the world, based on their experience and prior knowledge. The aim of this study was to investigate problems in English language education, through an exploration of the perceptions of teachers and students explored. Such perceptions were considered salient and the appropriate vehicle for investigation in this study because of the detail they could provide, and because information from the viewpoints of key participants in the educational process has been explored comparatively rarely in past studies. This study primarily focused on teachers' and learners' perceptions, gleaned from their teaching and learning experiences. Naturally, other approaches might also have been used: classroom observation, pre-test/post-test measures, and document analysis have all been employed in other research. However, the approach in this study also demonstrated theoretical benefits in terms of the look into realities under construction that it has afforded. An interpretive view of the construction of reality would, however, place great emphasis upon the

ways in which key participants played a role in building the reality of the experiences they were immersed in. Understanding these experiences might, therefore, only be fully achieved through an exploration of how this constructive process had unfolded. Thus, participant perceptions were very salient in meeting the aims of this research.

6.4.2 Empirical contribution

This study further reinforces the importance of teachers' and learners' perceptions. The study was not about identifying the problems of English-language education *per se*, but rather the issues that Thai EFL teachers and learners perceived to be problems. Currently, there is limited empirical data on the issues of English language education in the Thai context. The findings in this study include problems previously found in other research (both in Thailand and globally), and emergent issues identified by participants in this study.

Some findings have emerged which are similar to those in previous studies, albeit through the use of a different research approach. This study, however, has also provided extra insights into the issues arising. For example, some of the teacher characteristics suggested as preferable in the present study have also emerged as such in previous studies. Yet, due to the influence of the Thai hierarchical culture, students in this study did not consider friendliness as an important teacher characteristic, and young teachers also commented on the older teachers' control when sharing opinion and making decisions and suggested they could learn from older teachers in this regard. Despite being one of the most problematic issues of education, some innovative insights into the class size problem are presented in the findings in that teachers suggested standardising all schools to decrease the problem of class size in distinguished schools. With regard to examinations, most issues from previous studies have related to the style of examination and the focus on grades. Nevertheless, students in this study added an extra comment on the inconsistency of the examination, and that it would benefit from being standardised like international examinations such as TOEFL and IELTS. Moreover, problems regarding textbooks have emerged in former studies; however, teachers and students in this study share the similar issue of the consistency of the textbook in that it should be selected from the same publishers to make the context coherent. From these examples of additional details in pre-determined issues, and the emergent data from the findings, it suggests that exploring the perceptions of teachers and students to investigate problems of English language education has proved important in this study and may continue to be important in future

educational research studies, perhaps simply because of the richness of data that it can provide. Importantly, to the best of my knowledge, the empirical data – i.e. the issue of corruption, the issue of negative perceptions towards educational studies and the teaching profession, and the issue of negative feelings of Thai students towards classmates who have a native-like English accent, the corruption of textbook selectors when choosing textbook, have not been identified by previous Thai educational studies into English-language education problems. This study also compares the distinctively different perceptions of teachers and learners in order to understand the difference in how teachers and learners perceived issues as problems.

From an international point of view, it might be maintained that this study, with its modest number of participants, was conducted within a particular context in Thailand; therefore, it cannot be concluded that all the data provided are always applicable in other contexts. Despite these limitations, the problems of English language education in Thailand uncovered in this study could also be applied to ESL and EFL teachers and learners (e.g. Vietnam, China, Indonesia for EFL countries and Malaysia for ESL countries) since the educational background of these countries was similar to that in Thailand. Equally importantly, with regard to culture, belief, and value, Confucian belief has a wide influence on many countries in Asia such as China and Vietnam; therefore, policymakers and teachers from these countries could be aware of the problems concerning this belief, and they could adjust educational policies. The possibilities of problems in this research might be relevant to other educators in the broader EFL context in other countries, especially those in other Asian countries where the influence of culture in English language education is similar to that in Thailand.

6.4.3 Methodological contribution

Even though some limitations in terms of the methodological approach may be found, this study has also provided some important contributions to the area of inquiry. As presented in the literature review, studies that explore perceptions have tended to adopt a quantitative approach, using the positivist paradigm, whereas some studies have used a qualitative approach using interpretivist paradigm.

Importantly, despite focusing on perceptions, most educational research in Thailand primarily focuses on a context specific or top-down approach (e.g. Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; Cheewakaroon, 2011; Warawudhi, 2013); however, little attention has been paid to a bottom-up approach in order to investigate the problems of English language education in Thailand.

Therefore, I used a bottom up approach by focusing upon Thai EFL teachers and learners' perception of the problems of English language education in the upper secondary level. Moreover, most educational studies in Thailand conducted a study of the problems in the university level (e.g. Pawapatcharandom, 2007; Cheewakaroon, 2011), some of which were conducted in many different provinces in Thailand. Rather, this research explores perceptions of Thai EFL teachers and learners at the upper secondary level, primarily focusing on various state schools in Bangkok. This study might be among the first research literatures to use a bottom-up approach to explore perceptions of English language education from Thai EFL teachers and learners in the upper secondary level from various state schools in Bangkok.

As a research methodology, teachers' in-depth interview and students' focus group interviews were conducted to explore perceptions of teachers and students. There is criticism about the use of focus group which suggests that some participants in a focus group might not share their perceptions, probably due to shyness or the control of other members. Thus, the weakness can be found that data might not represent the perceptions of all students. However, as a researcher, I am aware of this limitation and have encouraged all members in a focus group to participate in the interviews in order to gain insights from as many students' perceptions as many as possible. Regarding the teachers, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore their perceptions; however, a limited number of 16 teachers were interviewed. Thus, I kept in mind that their perceptions cannot represent all secondary teachers in public schools in Bangkok. The teachers were interviewed twice to confirm their perceptions and gain greater detail of their thoughts. Despite having weaknesses, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews were considered to be appropriate research methodologies in this study to investigate the perceptions of teachers and students, since the data from the findings both confirmed the problems suggested in previous research, providing supplementary details of each problem, and suggested some new empirical insights into the problems of English language education at the upper secondary level. The teachers in this study were of various ages and their teaching experiences ranged from less than 5 years to more than 25 years; therefore, the findings have produced a broader view of emerging issues. A second interview was also conducted as a means of validating the initial findings. This methodology has not been extensively implemented in previous studies. Most findings from the second interview are consistent with those from data in the first in the first interview; thus, this can confirm trustworthiness and credibility of the data presented in this study.

As a bilingual researcher, speaking both Thai and English, it was advantageous for me to tackle the language issues during the data collection stage. In this instance, the language issues pointed to the benefit of my using participants' strong language (i.e., Thai) to elicit responses with regard to participants' perceptions rather than using English since, as an EFL country, English is used as a foreign language; therefore, most participants might not have been confident in conveying their ideas in English. Importantly, considering that the researcher and participants in this study were all Thais, sharing a similar language and cultural background, the interactions during the data collection process seemed to provide solid and trustworthy data.

6.5 Implications of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has suggested several potential implications for the community in terms of research and education.

6.5.1 Implication for research

The findings of this study should encourage researchers to explore the areas of teachers or students' perceptions at other education levels in regard to the specific problems that have emerged from this study. Moreover, the findings in this study include both predetermined problems (i.e. problems noted from previous studies) and emergent problems (i.e. problems that emerged from this study), using a bottom-up approach; therefore, it is recommended that future research applies a top-down approach to explore these emergent issues in depth. For example, conducting research focused on a specific emergent problem from this study might provide deeper and richer data of the focal points of the issue. This might be beneficial for educational studies in Thailand, since these emergent issues have not been explored thoroughly in a wider Thai context.

To help develop English language education in Thailand, future research might investigate teachers and learners at other educational levels, such as primary, lower secondary, and university levels, together with different kinds of schools from different parts of Thailand such as private schools or bilingual schools, since policymakers generally design the curriculum for all levels of English language education in Thailand, not only for the Bangkok context. This might present more insights into the problems of English language education in Thailand, helping policymakers to develop more effective English language programmes, curriculum, and policies.

As this was a qualitative study using interviews to explore the perceptions of Thai EFL teachers and learners, the study lacked numerical data, meaning that it could not ascertain how widespread were the perceptions expressed by the small samples of participants involved. Researchers might beneficially follow this up by using a survey questionnaire to provide numerical data since it might demonstrate different findings in terms of prioritisation of the problems. This would provide greater variety and validity in terms of participants' perceptions of English language education in Thailand. Moreover, due to the fact that teachers and students can have particular viewpoints on their experience, exploring their perceptions is not always based on facts which has always to be borne in mind. Thus, it might be useful to consider carrying out classroom observations to check how the suggested problems in English language education manifest themselves in real classroom practice.

This study focused on teachers' and learners' perceptions of the problems of English-language education in Thailand. Future research could also explore the issues regarding recommendations and suggested solutions in order to provide a better understanding of English language education in Thailand.

6.5.2 Implication for Policymakers

From the study, it seems likely that teachers and learners' perceptions of English language education were not sought when the national education policy and curriculum were designed, since a number of issues in English language education were still found despite having been explored in many previous studies over a long time. The challenges for policymakers are to be aware of the problems originating from educational policies and the curriculum, including teaching approaches and materials, professional development, and national English language examination. Recommendations for policy makers are as follows: With regard to professional development, policymakers need to find ways of asking for teachers' opinions on desirable training programmes if schools are to provide teachers with the training that most benefits them. Training that meets teachers' needs might better enhance the quality of teaching. Based on the findings in this study, it might be beneficial to introduce communicative strategies in training sessions to encourage teachers to be familiar with communicative language teaching, together with the grammar translation method.

Regarding examinations and teaching approaches, it is suggested that policymakers include a writing test and an oral interview in the entrance examination so as to encourage students to

pay more attention to speaking and writing skills, apart from the grammar and reading skills tested in the national examination. If the examination were to include attention to these two skills, communicative language teaching approaches might be more applicable to the classroom, since students might focus more on practising speaking and writing skills. Furthermore, the examination might go beyond a reliance on rote learning and memorisation to include an element focusing on critical thinking skills, since for the students at the upper secondary level, this could better equip them with skills for English language learning demands at the tertiary level.

Equally important, one of the most prominent issues in Thai English language education appears to be that of the low salaries paid to teachers, which has an effect on other problems. Some issues originating from the issue of low salaries include shadow education, corruption, the quality of native English speaking teachers, and negative views of educational studies and the teaching profession, all of which are among the problems leading to the inadequate number of competent EFL teachers in Thailand. Despite the fact that, it is, of course, rather difficult simply to increase teachers' salaries, the government should at least be aware of how this problem has had an effect on English language education. In spite of the limited budget for salary increases, it might be beneficial if the government were to provide some fringe benefits in addition to money, in the hope that more people who have good command of English would choose to become EFL teachers, which would be highly beneficial for English language education in Thailand.

Of course, it is true that the findings from the limited number of participants in this study cannot be generalised; however, teachers' and learners' perceptions should also be paid attention to since they are policy and curriculum practitioners and their perceptions of national education curriculum and policies could potentially provide guidance and useful feedback for policymakers to develop more effective English language education in Thailand.

6.5.3 Implications for EFL teachers in Thailand

From the study, it may be seen that participants' perceptions with regard to teachers, their teaching practices and approaches, and their characteristic and lesson delivery are included in the major part of the findings. The followings are the recommendations for EFL teachers:

With regard to teachers' characteristics and lesson delivery, it might be advantageous if teachers listen to students' voice in terms of teachers' characteristics to gain feedback of their quality of their teaching. For example, prominent teachers' characteristics mentioned in this study include inactiveness, strictness, and laziness of teachers. Teachers might not be aware of their personal traits, their teaching practice, and whether or not it is practical and appropriate. Teachers may find that changing themselves may create a better classroom environment

Concerning teaching approach, apart from teaching grammar, teachers might consider applying more communicative language teaching or communicative strategies to encourage students to practise communicative skills, to help students gain more confidence in speaking English. Although the heaviest focus in the national exams is on reading and grammar, being able to communicate using English in real situations is beneficial to all students since Thailand is an EFL country; therefore, students have little opportunity to speak English on a daily basis. Thus, classroom environments could better facilitate Thai students to practise communicative skills, since despite the concentration on grammar and reading, this study also suggests the importance of speaking and listening skill.

Teachers could become more aware of how these problems affect English language education at the upper secondary level by listening to learners' perceptions. In doing so, teachers may realise the problems and better understand learners' feedback of their teaching practice and classroom environment, both of which might lead to better syllabus design, better classroom environment, and a way to help achieve school improvement.

To summarise, this study began with the statement of a problem, namely that Thai learners have very low scores in English subjects in both national and international examination despite spending 12 years learning English. The implications of the study suggest the pressing need for policymakers and EFL teachers in Thailand to take teachers' and learners' perceptions into consideration when planning how to improve the achievement in English of Thai students.

6.6 Limitations

The limitations of this study include participant selection, and the number of participants in this study is quite small, only 16 Thai EFL teachers and 10 groups of students, each consisting of 4-5 students, making it impossible to generalise the findings to wider populations, even within secondary schools, or within Bangkok. Moreover, participants in this study were

voluntarily selected from only state schools in Bangkok; thus, the study did not cover private schools and international schools in Bangkok. Due to the limited number of participants from only state schools in Bangkok, the outcomes by themselves will be unlikely to have major impact, although the issues raised would benefit from wider investigation.

The second limitation lies the data collection methods, including in-depth interview and focus group interviews which were used to elicit data from teachers and learners in this study. Due to the bottom-up approach used to explore participants' perceptions, it is possible that the participants might not have been aware of some issues from their prior experience, since there was no leading question from the researcher during the interviews. Thus, participants' perceptions about English language education presented in this study might not have covered all issues from their experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Phase 1 of Data Collection

Demographic background

- 1) Ask the name of the interviewee
- 2) By way of context, can you tell me the number of years of
 - a. Teaching English experience (for teachers)
 - b. Learning English experience (for students)

Appendix B: Phase 1 of Data collection

Interview 1:

- 1) Based on your experience, do you think if English language education is important in Thailand and (if yes) how is it important?
- 2) Based on your experience, do you think English language education meets international standard?
- 3) Based on your experience, what problems of English language education have you encountered?
(During the interview, the researcher encouraged interviewees to share more responses about the problems without any lead answer)
- 4) Based on your experience, is there any recommended solution for these problems?

Appendix C: Phase 2 of Data Collection

Follow-up questions: Interview 2

- 1) Based on your experience, do you think **problem A** (data from first interview) is one of the problems of English language education?
Ask question about problems based on data from the first interview
- 2) If yes, how could that issue be a problem?
- 3) From your experience, apart from these problems, is there other problem you have encountered?
- 4) From your experience, is there any recommended solutions?

Appendix D: Sample of Interview Transcript

Speaker	Speech
Napapach	จากประสบการณ์การสอน เคยเจอปัญหาอะไรเกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษบ้างหรือไม่
T1	ห้องเรียนใหญ่มาก เด็กจะรวมกันเอง นั่งหลังๆ คุ่มยาก ถ้าไม่สนใจคือจบเลย ห้องเล็กดีกว่า ครูต้องใส่ใจเด็กไม่สักแต่ว่าสอน เราใส่ใจ
Napapach	นอกจากนี้ มีปัญหาอื่นบ้างอีกมั๊ยคะ
T1	ครูฝรั่งถ้าดีก็โอเค แต่บางคนไม่รู้จักวิธีการสอนเลย ไม่โอเคครูอังกฤษสอนไม่ค่อยเป็น เลือกรูปแบบ ทำอย่าง แยะ บางทีไม่มีตีชะกว่า
Napapach	จากประสบการณ์การเรียน เคยเจอปัญหาอะไรเกี่ยวกับการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษบ้างหรือไม่
S1	ให้เงินเดือนครูน้อย ใครจะอยากมาเป็นครู ต่างประเทศเค้าให้ครูกะหมอปอพอกัน คนอยากเรียนหมอเพราะเงินเยอะแยะ ไม่ได้อยากจะช่วยคน แต่อย่างครูเป็นอาชีพที่สำคัญ เค้าให้เงินต่างกันเยอะ อย่างไทยจะให้ความสำคัญกับครูน้อยไป คนที่เป็นครูก็เลยไม่ได้เก่ง เป็นบางคน
Napapach	คิดว่าเป็นปัญหาอย่างไร
S1	การวัดครู หละหลวม ต้องการครูมาสอนแต่มาตรฐานไม่สูงพอ เกี่ยวกับความรู้ ไม่ได้สนใจเรื่องวุฒิ อยู่ที่การถ่ายทอดความรู้

Appendix E: Participants Information Sheet and Consent Form

Information sheet

Purpose of the study: I have to carry out a research study for my Ph.D. The study is concerned with Thai teachers and students' perceptions of English language education in the upper secondary level.

What will the study involve?: The study will involve teachers' individual interview and students' focus group interview as the research methods of data collection

Why have you been asked to take part?: Participation is voluntary. You are required to sign a consent form. Ideally, you will get to keep the information sheet and a copy of the consent form. You have the option of withdrawing before the study commence or discontinuing after data collection has started. The data you provided will be deleted should you discontinue your participation.

Will your participation in this study be kept confidential?: I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the thesis. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the thesis will be entirely anonymous.

What will happen to the participation you gave?: The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of thesis, they will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed.

What will happen to the results?: The results will be presented in the thesis. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read for future students on the course. The study may be published in a research journal.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?: I do not envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. It is possible that attending a sequence of follow-up interviews can cause distress.

Who has reviewed the study?: The Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick.

What if there is a problem?: At the end of interviews, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling. If you subsequently feel distressed, we can take a break for a few moments.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me:

Napapach Padermprach (Email: N.W.Padermprach@warwick.ac.uk.)

2nd Year PhD student, Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

CONSENT FORM

Research Project:

The problems of English language education at the upper secondary level in Thailand: The perceptions of Thai EFL teachers and learners in Bangkok.

Please Initial Box

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I agree to take part in the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to the interviews being recorded. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Signature

()

Date

