EFL Education Policy Implementation: A Look at English Classroom Instructional Focuses

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Abstract

Due to the impacts of globalization and modern technologies, most countries have developed the quality of English language education in a form of core curriculum innovation. However, success of the innovation is not determined by the innovative policies but the crucial stage of curriculum implementation. This research was conducted using descriptive micro-analysis of classroom interactions, to identify English pedagogical focuses in a Thai classroom, and to examine the extent to which the classroom instructional focuses were congruent with the expected learning outcomes prescribed in Thailand's latest reformed EFL core curriculum. An EFL class, consisting of 37 students, in a public secondary school in Thailand was selected as the site for data collection. A corpus of six hours of EFL lessons was analyzed. The results showed that form-focused instructional exchanges occurred most frequently, whereas only a few meaning-focused and form-meaning-focused instructional exchanges were found. The form-meaning focused instructional exchanges were found to provide opportunities for the students to use English to express personal meaning, rather than just as a language drill. However, there was

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a large gap between English used for communication in the classroom and the four strands of learning expectation prescribed in the core curriculum. To close the gap, pre-service and in-service teachers should be trained not to place too much emphasis on language form, but to integrate an understanding of linguistic and cultural diversities between English and the local language, and to stimulate learners' awareness of common life skills that can be shared among different subject areas.

Keywords: Language Policy, Pedagogical Focus, Curriculum Implementation, Teacher Training

การนำนโยบายการศึกษาภาษาอังกฤษมาปฏิบัติ: การศึกษาจากสาระการเรียนเรียนรู้ที่มุ่งเน้นในห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ

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บทคัดย่อ

เนื่องจากผลกระทบของโลกาภิวัตน์และเทคโนโลยีที่ก้าวหน้า หลายประเทศได้พัฒนาคุณภาพการศึกษาภาษาอังกฤษโดยการพัฒนาหลักสูตรการสอนแกนกลางของประเทศ อย่างไรก็ตาม ความสำเร็จของการพัฒนาการศึกษามิได้ขึ้นอยู่กับนโยบายแต่ขึ้นอยู่กับการนำนโยบายมาปฏิบัติ งานวิจัยนี้จัดทำขึ้นโดยวิธีการเก็บข้อมูลบทสนทนาระหว่างครูและนักเรียนจำนวน 37 คน ในห้องเรียนภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนมัธยมศึกษา ประเทศไทย จำนวน 6 ชั่วโมง และวิเคราะห์การสนทนาเพื่อระบุสาระการเรียนรู้ที่ถูกเน้นย้ำในช่วงการเรียนการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ และวิเคราะห์ความแตกต่างระหว่างสาระการเรียนรู้ในห้องเรียนกับสาระการเรียนรู้ที่ระบุในหลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษแกนกลาง ผลการวิจัยแสดงว่าการสอนที่เน้นโครงสร้างภาษาอังกฤษเกิดขึ้นบ่อยครั้ง ในขณะที่การสอนที่เน้นการสื่อสารและเน้นทั้งการสื่อสารและโครงสร้างเกิดขึ้นน้อยครั้ง ถึงแม้ว่าในช่วงที่มีการสอนที่เน้นทั้งการสื่อสารและโครงสร้างนักเรียนจะมีโอกาสได้ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษในการแสดงความคิดเห็นส่วนตัว มิใช่แค่การฝึกภาษาอังกฤษ แต่ก็ยังมีความแตกต่างอย่างมากระหว่างสาระการเรียนรู้ที่มุ่งเน้นในห้องเรียนกับสาระการเรียนรู้ที่ระบุในหลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษแกนกลาง เพื่อลดความแตกต่างครูผู้สอนควรได้รับการอบรมเพื่อเข้าใจว่าไม่ควรเน้นการสอนไวยากรณ์อย่างเดียวแต่ควรจะสอดแทรกความรู้ด้านวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกันและทักษะจำเป็นที่สามารถนำไปใช้ร่วมกับการเรียนวิชาอื่นได้

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Introduction

As is the case in many countries in Asia, English has an official role as a compulsory foreign language subject in the Thai Basic Education Curriculum that all students studying at schools under the basic education system must follow. In Thailand, there is the latest reformed core curriculum for English as a Foreign Language (EFL), B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008). The core curriculum for EFL prescribes learning outcomes, the general focus of which is to develop learners' English proficiency and communicative competence to a standard that the students in each grade level (grades 1 to 12) are expected to achieve (OBEC, 2008). The underlying principle of the present core curriculum is that English is a tool for successful communication in the era of globalization and modernization. Thai students who have fulfilled the requirements of compulsory English courses are expected to have the ability to use English to access modern technologies, and to achieve educational and professional advancement internationally. This principle of learning and expected achievement in language learning shows a reformed movement of English education policy in Thailand towards more communicative rather than structural outcomes, and it has influenced classroom teaching and learning to develop in parallel. However, the success of the reform movement is not determined by policy, but the final stage of classroom implementation when teachers, learners, and resources combine and interact to create actual learning opportunities (Johnson, 1994). Therefore, it is important to investigate the social interactional activities that occur amid classroom instruction and determine the aspects that correlate to or contrast with the core curriculum's intentions. Therefore, this research studied EFL classroom interaction in a Thai secondary public school in rural Thailand in order to identify the pedagogical focuses and to determine the extent to which the focuses are coherent with those suggested in the core curriculum.

Literature Review

Instructional Focuses

In discussion of language pedagogy, there are typically two common instructional focuses which are: focus on form and accuracy (*form-focused instruction*) and focus on meaning and fluency (*meaning-focused instruction*) (Nunan, 1993; Ellis, 1997; Seedhouse, 2004). The former is an explicit method of language teaching that aims to draw learners'

attention to linguistic features, and to direct them to produce an accurate form of the language. In contrast, meaning-focused instruction is a strong version of communicative language teaching (Howatt, 1984). It mainly attempts to provide opportunities for learners to acquire language skill through natural communication rather than direct instruction.

According to Seedhouse (2004), in a classroom context when the pedagogical focus is on form and accuracy, the teaching and learning content is in the form of specific linguistic features (i.e. phonology, grammar, vocabulary meaning and spelling, and discourse). The teacher's role is to transmit linguistic information, and the students' role is to practice producing accurate language items without using them in context. Form-focused instruction is also found to influence patterns of interaction in the basic three-turn structure of teacher initiation – student response – teacher feedback (IRF) (Mehan, 1979; Sinclair, 1982). Teachers often use display questions that ask about known information to initiate students' responses, while teacher's direct evaluation and follow-up questions that ask for students' clarifications are often appeared in the third turn position Macbeth, 2004; Lee, 2007). The teacher's control of topic initiation, turn-taking, and giving feedback is common. In contrast, when the instructional focus is on meaning and fluency, learners are encouraged to use the target language to exchange personal information or opinions, rather than to talk about language form. The learners can initiate topics and manage interaction among themselves in teacher – student or student – student interaction, or in group or pair interaction.

Some researchers have suggested language instruction that integrates form and meaning focuses (*form-meaning focused instruction*) (Long & Robinson, 1998; Long, 1991) by using methods that could lead to purely meaning-focused classroom discourse but, from time to time, attention to form arises. Form-meaning-focused instruction can be described in a pattern of three obligatory moves of a teacher- or student-initiated question to trigger a specific linguistic item, a response to the question, and feedback including one optional move of student-uptake (Ellis, 2001, p. 421). Nassaji and Well (2000) identify six functions of the third-turn corrective feedback, which are: evaluation, justification, counter-agreement, clarification, meta-talk and action. While Ellis (1991) proposed two forms of feedbacks which are reactive and proactive feedbacks. Functions of the third-turn feedback are attributed to two main conceptual roles of the teacher, i.e. teacher as primary knowledge giver, and teacher as the manager of the discussion.

For example, Long (1991) suggests that reactive feedbacks focusing on language form are given when learners produce an utterance containing an actual or perceived error, not only to evaluate but also to lead learners to negotiation of both meaning and form. Ellis (1991; 2001) added that preemptive focus on form could also be used to trigger leaners' attention to, and discussion about, language form even when no actual communication problem has yet occurred. Table 1 compares the three major instructional focuses in terms of teaching and learning content and interactional patterns.

Table 1: Comparison of Different Instructional Focuses

Instructional Focuses	Teaching/Learning Contents	Patterns of Interaction
Form-focused instruction	Linguistic related topics such as phonology, grammar, vocabulary (meaning and spelling), discourse	- Teacher-controlled interaction - A three-turn structure of: *Initiation-Response-Feedback*
Meaning-focused instruction	Non-linguistic topics such as personal information, personal ideas, opinions and feelings	- Student-controlled interaction - Random structures, similar to: *ordinary face-to-face conversation*
Form-meaning-focused instruction	Both linguistic and non-linguistic topics	- Student and Teacher-controlled interaction - Integration of random structure and a three-turn structure of: *Trigger-Response-Uptake*

Source: Data for instructional focuses and teaching/learning content from Long (1991) and Ellis (2001), and for patterns of interaction from Seedhouse (2004)

Instructional Focuses in the Core Curriculum

There are major strands and standards of language learning stated in the reformed core curriculum for EFL, B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008) which prescribe four elements of language that classroom instruction should encompass (OBEC, 2008):

1) *Language for communication*: learners learn foreign languages for listening, speaking, reading and writing, exchanging information, expressing feelings and opinions,

interpreting, presenting information and viewpoints on various matters, and creating interpersonal relationships appropriately.

2) *Language and culture*: learners learn foreign languages to understand similarities and differences between local and international languages and cultures, and to develop appropriate application.

3) *Language and its relationship with other learning areas*: learners learn foreign languages to form the basis for further development with other learning areas and to broaden the learners' world views.

4) *Language and its relationship with the community and the world*: learners learn foreign languages to apply them in various situations in the local and global societies.

These elements of language were designed by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the policy makers, then served as a teacher's guide to develop lesson planning and classroom teaching and learning activities. To achieve the standard of English education quality in Thailand, the MOE has a regular education quality assurance policy to ensure that these four main elements of language are implemented as a framework and embedded in English instruction in Thai classrooms.

Implementation of the Core Curriculum

What makes successful curriculum innovation is the coherent and decisive outcomes from the four stages of curriculum development and implementation which include: curriculum planning, program specification, program implementation, and classroom instruction (Johnson, 1994). At the classroom instruction level, due to internal and external detrimental factors, teaching in practice could be largely different from what the policy makers idealistically planned in the curriculum. The internal detrimental factors include teachers' perception and ability to implement a required change, while the external factors are the context and conditions in which teachers must implement the change. These factors are described as follows:

Teacher's perception and ability: based on teacher's perception and ability, the occurrence of any educational innovation is not revealed through the written document but in how teachers actualize and respond to the proposed changes in classroom

instructional planning and practice (Fullan, 2001).

The socio-cultural context: "curriculum implementation might not be possible if the context is not taken into consideration" (Morris, 1996, p. 120). This means that curriculum maybe implemented differently based on their teaching/learning contexts. For example, Tudor's (2001, p. 35) study suggested that students in urban areas in Malaysia had more chance to be exposed to English than those who lived in rural areas and rarely had the chance to use English when they left the classroom. Therefore, the roles of English and the teaching methods might not necessarily be the same in these different contexts.

Resources: without sufficient resources such as materials, human, finance, training, and time (Everard & Morris, 1996), teachers would potentially face difficulties with the new curriculum implementation. A number of researchers (e.g. Lamb & Coleman, 2008; Hayes, 2010) have pointed out the significant achievement disparities between well-resourced urban schools attended by socio-economically privileged groups, and poorly-resourced urban and rural schools attended by the less privileged students "which have led to English being seen as the preserve of the urban elites" (Hayes, 2010).

Based on previous research results, it was found that most teachers did not simply construct language instruction in the same way that the policy makers intended them to do, but they implement, adapt, or reject the curriculum innovations based on their own perceptions and other context-specific factors (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 1992; Carless, 1999). Thus, the results affirm the idea that classroom practice is a crucial stage of innovative curriculum implementation that should be studied to determine what actually happens in the classroom in terms of language teaching/learning.

The Present Study

This present study aims to reveal if there is any mismatch between the curriculum intentions and the classroom implementation. There are three research questions as follows:

1. What are the instructional focuses of English as a foreign language teaching in a Thai secondary classroom?

2. What are the instructional activities and contents and patterns of interaction of the interactional exchanges with different instructional focuses?

3. To what extent are the instructional focuses congruent with the focuses prescribed in the core curriculum?

Research Method

This research was descriptive in the sense that it describes naturally occurring interactional phenomena in a narrow scope of investigation without experimental manipulation (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989). According to Drew and Herritage (1992), a micro-study of classroom interaction helps reveal actual pedagogical focuses which are achieved and enacted through discursive interaction between the teacher and the students. Therefore, the present research applied descriptive analysis to analyze the classroom interactions and reveal instructional focuses.

Research Setting and Participants

An EFL class in a public secondary school in rural Thailand was selected as the site for data collection. This school was selected because it is one of the large-scaled school (the number of students from 600-1,500) under the OBEC, located in a rural tourist area. They are equipped with resources for language learning, such as a library and a computer room. The class consisted of 37 students (14-15 years old), with 25 female and 12 male learners. They had been learning English for more than five years; however, their English proficiency was still at a basic level. The teacher was a female Thai teacher of English who had more than ten years of English teaching experience.

Data Collection

Given the complexity of studying the ongoing process of enacted classroom interactional focuses, the adoption of a case study approach seemed particularly suitable (Carless, 2001). Six one-hour EFL lessons, taken place over six weeks before the mid-term examination, were observed and video-recorded. Some lessons were excluded because ELT was not a focus, and only Thai was used for communication. For ethical concerns, the teacher and the students were informed of the video recording and asked to ignore the camera and perform as usual. The researcher used pseudonyms for the teacher and the students in the data presentation. The recorded data were transcribed for data analysis.

Data Analysis

There are four stages of analyzing the corpus of six-hour lesson, the aim of which is not to generalize the result but to find out social construction of classroom instructional focuses. First, the researcher reviewed the transcribed data and identified instructional exchanges in a corpus of six hours of EFL lessons. The second stage was to identify the exchanges which are: *form-focused, meaning-focused, form-meaning-focused instruction* (Ellis, 1997; Seedhouse, 2004). Two external reviewers, both were Ph.D. candidates in TESOL, were assigned and provided with a framework based on Ellis (1997) for pedagogical focus identification. The identification results showed 96% agreement between the two reviewers. Quantification of the three instruction focused episodes was provided to present the gross results of their occurrences. The next stage was to extract some interactional exchanges with different pedagogical focuses and analyze in detail the focused teaching/learning content and activity, and the interactional patterns of: (1) participant organization, (2) turn-taking, (3) use of L1/L2, (4) sustained speech, and (5) corrective feedback. A micro-analytic study of L2 classroom interaction was adopted to analyze relationship between pedagogy and interaction. According to Seedhouse (2004, p. 310) "the core institutional goal, that the teacher will teach the learners the L2, both rationally and inevitably affects the way in which L2 classroom interaction is accomplished". Finally, the classroom interactional focuses before mid-term examination were compared with the core curriculum's expected learning outcomes.

Results

Instructional Focuses of EFL Teaching in a Thai Classroom

From the total 6 hours of EFL lessons before the mid-term examination, *form-focused instructional exchanges* occurred most frequently with a total of 248 exchanges, whereas only a few *meaning-focused* and *form-meaning-focused instructional exchanges* were found, with totals of 27 and 8 exchanges respectively. The form-focused instructional exchanges were divided into 240 dialogues and 8 monologues. Almost all meaning-focused instructional exchanges were monologues in that only the teacher spoke while the students responded non-verbally, while the form-meaning-focused instructional exchanges were all dialogues.

Language Content and Activity, and Patterns of Interaction of the Interactional Exchanges with Different Instructional Focuses

Form-focused Instruction

From the data, the form-focused instructional exchanges focused on practicing and assessing language features, such as pronunciation, spelling and translation, and grammar. Also, the teacher modeled language pronunciation for the students to imitate.

Table 2: Language Content and Activities of Form-focused Instructional Exchanges

Instructional Focus	Language Content	Language Activity
Form-focused instruction	English language features (pronunciation, spelling and translation, grammar)	Practicing and assessing language features learned through language drills and exercises
		Imitating the teacher's pronunciation of English words or sentences

Source: Researcher's own data

In detail, the teacher frequently used display questions – the type of questions that ask for known information (Long & Sato, 1983) to elicit information about English language form. English was used for communication, but only minimally (i.e. utterances containing only one word, phrase, or sentence). The extracts below show how the teacher used display questions to elicit students' knowledge of word stress and word meaning.

Extract 1: *(T=Teacher, Ss=More than one student)*

T: Congratulations
Ss: Congratulations
T: How many syllables are there, con-grat-tu-la-tions
Ss: (*silence*)
T: → Which syllable is stressed?
Ss: (*silence*)
T: la, stress the syllable la

Extract 2: *(T=Teacher, Ss=More than one student)*

T: ⟶ Match these questions and answers. What does it mean, to match?
Ss: (*silence*)
T: ⟶ When your outfits match, what does match mean?
Ss: Same
T: Yes, very good. Match the question with the answers that have the same idea.

The two exchanges, initiated by the teacher, were whole class participation. Extract 1 shows a monologue exchange in which the teacher's question about word stress ("*Which syllable is stressed*?") was followed by silence, and the teacher gave the answer without prompting. In Extract 2, the first turn is started with a display question that asks for the learners' knowledge of the meaning of 'to match'. Following the silence, the teacher gave a clue ("*When your outfits match…*") to prompt and facilitate the students to answer her question.

Extract 3: *(T=Teacher, Ss=More than one student, S=Single student)*

T: ⟶ Stay, say it three times.
Ss: Stay, stay, stay
T: ⟶ Stay, is it a noun or a verb?
S: Verb
T: ⟶ Yes, the past tense form of stay is stay with -ed.

Extract 3 shows the teacher-initiated exchange of the teacher's modeling of English word pronunciation ("*Stay, say it three times*") followed by repetitions of the words by the whole class, and the teacher's question about the part of speech. The individual student's answer was followed by the teacher's confirmation and elaboration on the past tense form of the word 'to stay'.

Meaning-focused Instruction

Overall, meaning-focused interactional exchanges are monologues. The teacher gave instructions in English (e.g. *next, again, point and read, look at the first page, I'd like you to write in your book.*), and the students acted accordingly without verbal response. The other language activity was students' presentation about their holiday activities.

In both activities English was used for social interaction; students followed the instructions and gave presentations in English. However, the data show that English used for giving instructions was minimal, and the students did not use English creatively when giving presentations.

Table 3: Language Content and Activities of Meaning-focused Instructional Exchanges

Instructional Focus	Language Content	Language Activity
Meaning-focused instruction	English for social interaction	Following the teacher's instructions in English
		Giving presentations in English

Source: Researcher's own data

Form-meaning-focused Instruction

In general, the form-meaning-focused instructional exchanges focused not only on English for communication but also accurate form of language use. The dialogues were in both forms of individual and whole class participation.

Table 4: Language Content and Activities of Form-meaning-focused Instructional Exchanges

Instructional Focus	Language Content	Language Activity
Form-meaning-focused instruction	English for social interaction and language form	Answering short-answer questions in English with the correct form of English
		Giving presentations in English with the correct form of English
		Asking for permission in English with the correct form of English

Source: Researcher's own data

As summarized in Table 5, some exchanges were in the form of short-answer questions (e.g. *Are you tired? Are you bored? Did you have lunch?*) about personal information asked by the teacher, followed by limited word utterance responses from the students, and the teacher's corrective feedback focusing on language form. The others were the students' minimal presentations and social communication in English with a focus on language form. Examples of form-meaning focused instructional exchanges are shown below.

Extract 4: *(T=Teacher, S=Single student)*

S: Good morning teacher and friends. My name is Maninee. Last Saturday I visited my cousin. It was a great day. I have happy time. Thank you attention.
T: ⟶ Again, thank you for–
S: Thank you for attention.

In Extract 4, the student gave a very short and patterned individual presentation in English. The presentation was followed by the teacher's indirect corrective feedback on language form in the form of an incomplete sentence ("*Again, thank you for–*"), and the student completed the sentence.

Extract 5: *(T=Teacher, Ss=More than one student, S=Single student)*

S: (*asking to go out in Thai*)
T: ⟶ May I–
S: May I go out, teacher
T: ⟶ Yes, you may. What do you say when you ask to go to the toilet?
Ss: May I go to the toilet.
T: May I go to the toilet, that's right.

In Extract 5, the student genuinely asked for a teacher's permission to go out. The teacher prompted an English translation in the form of an incomplete sentence ("*May I–*"), and the student completed the sentence. The teacher also elaborated on that by teaching how to ask for permission in polite English to the class.

Extract 6: *(T=Teacher, Ss=More than one student)*

T: ⟶ How to introduce yourself? Before giving a presentation, how do you introduce yourself?

Ss: Good morning teacher and my friends. My name is.

T: ⟶ Yes, and how to finish a presentation?

Ss: Thank you for your attention.

In Extract 6, rather than reactive feedback, the teacher gave preemptive feedback by asking display questions about how to open ("*...Before giving a presentation, how do you introduce yourself?*") and close a presentation properly in English ("*Yes, and how to finish a presentation?*") before the students gave their presentations.

Mapping of the Classroom's Instructional Focuses and the Core Curriculum's Intentions

From the data, there are some congruencies between the classroom's instructional focuses (during six-week before the mid-term examination) and the focuses prescribed in the core curriculum.

Table 5: Mapping of the Classroom's Instructional Focuses and the Core Curriculum's Intentions

Core Curriculum Focuses		Instructional Exchanges		
Strands	Focuses	Form-focused	Meaning-focused	Form-meaning focused
1. Language for communication	1.1 English interpretation	✓	✓	✓
	1.2 English for presentation	✓	✓	✓
	1.3 English for exchanging information	×	×	✓
	1.4 English for expressing feelings and opinions	×	×	✓
	1.5 English for developing interpersonal relationships	×	×	×
2. Language for communication	2.1 Social manners of native speakers	×	×	×
	2.2 Similarities and differences between languages and cultures of native speakers and Thais	×	×	×
3. Language and culture	3.1 Search, collect, and present data related to other learning areas	×	×	×
4. Language and its relationship with the community and the world	4.1 English in various situations, both inside and outside the classroom	×	×	×
	4.2 English as a tool for learning from various sources for further education	×	×	×

Source: Researcher's own data

As shown in Table 6, there are only four focuses of the Language for Communication strand that match the classroom instructional focuses, whereas the rest of the strands and focuses are not evidenced in the corpus of EFL instruction in the Thai classroom. The form-meaning-focused instructional exchanges, when they occur, appear to provide opportunities for the students to focus on more aspects of language use than the other instructional exchanges that focus only on form or meaning.

Discussion

The results show that explicit instruction focusing on linguistic form is the predominant pedagogical activity in the Thai EFL classroom. The marked pattern of pedagogical interaction is a form of IRF – the teacher gives information about linguistic form and the students practice producing them, then direct corrective feedback is given by the teacher. This is an instructional pattern parallel to the teaching of English language in other contexts (e.g. Wang, 2008; Canh & Barnard, 2009). However, most researchers (Mehan, 1979; Hall, 2010) argue that IRF is the pattern occurring only in the context of teaching and learning; it would constrain learners' development of using English outside the classroom for daily communication if the IRF were the only practice.

Although there is also evidence that the teacher occasionally focused on meaning, either intentionally by using planned activities or unintentionally by using unplanned activities. English used by both teacher and students was only in minimal amounts. In other words, they produced utterances consisting of only one word or one sentence. Despite the minimal use of English, the students had the opportunities for practicing language for communication other than language drills during these exchanges in which personal meaning was the focus. For example, they had a chance to follow instructions in English, give presentations in English, and express their feelings in English. As Batstone (2012) suggests, it is essential to develop learners' knowledge of language form and the ability to implement this knowledge in practice, albeit with limitations, because language use allows learners' grammatical knowledge to progress. However, English for communication is only one of the four strands prescribed in the national Thai EFL curriculum as learning achievements that this group of students are expected to achieve.

Ideally, the national EFL curriculum is designed by the Thai government sector to identify national standard of English competency and guide the schools about how to teach, and what to achieve in English language learning. However, the national policy makers also realize not all schools can implement the core curriculum in the same way since there is a difference in sociocultural background. The notion of school-based curriculum (OBEC, 2008), allows for schools' policy makers and teachers to adapt the core curriculum and design their own curricula and syllabi to suit their learners' needs and classroom contexts, but it does not mean that schools teachers can turn away totally from the national standard of language teaching and learning. The teaching that focuses predominantly on language form, as shown in the present research results, is incompatible with communicative needs, and likely to impede the ongoing national process of education reform (Nomnian, 2013).

Drawing upon the gap between classroom instructional focus and the curriculum's intention, there are some suggestions for English instruction in the Thai classroom and similar EFL classroom contexts that wish to move towards more creative methods of teaching and learning. *First*, to help learners appreciate local and global cultures, the teacher should promote an understanding of linguistic and cultural diversities between English and the local language, and the role of English as a Lingua Franca (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Nguyen, 2011). The focus of instruction, rather than demonizing English language as an agent of neo-imperialism and highlighting the unrealistic attainment of near-native speaker status, should emphasize learner awareness and appreciation of a multilingual identity– the idea that people can use English in their own ways, for their own communicative purposes.

Second, to integrate English with other subjects, it is necessary for the teacher to raise learners' awareness of common life skills (e.g. critical thinking, problem-solving, communication skills) (Trilley & Fadel, 2009) that can be shared among different subject areas. For example, when the individual presentation task was used, the teacher could raise the learners' awareness of how to open/close the presentation in different situations or cultures, either by explicit teaching or having preemptive feedback (Ellis *et al.,* 2001). Also, the students could choose a topic from their science class to give a presentation in an English class. In this way, it is plausible that the teacher develops three strands: language for communication, language and culture, language and its relationship

with other subject areas. When learners manage their own decisions about the topic and content for presentations, this helps them to develop the fourth strand of language and its relationship with the community and the world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one of the key factors of successful educational reformation is the factor of teachers: their teaching and learning experience, their beliefs about language teaching and learning, and their existing language and pedagogical knowledge. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1988), curriculum development is primarily about teacher development because it is teachers who decide whether the curriculum's objectives can be executed or not. To achieve the national standard of English teaching and learning, one of the priorities in the MOE's plan that needs to be conducted properly before implementing any innovative ideas into the curriculum is providing ongoing professional training for English teachers. The training should encourage teachers to see themselves as a part of innovation, and innovation as a part of themselves. It should also promote teachers' intrinsic motivation; the rewarding feeling of being teachers who help others to learn, and role models of those who use English to project their multilingual identity. English teachers should see that teaching and assessment of the English language is no longer about the accurate use of English as the be-all and end-all throughout the country, but it is about how to teach English that serves their learners' needs. If expectations of the curriculum are too far remote from their reality, effort needs to be expended in in-service teacher education and teacher training in the local contexts, to stimulate an understanding of curriculum intentions and to prepare teachers who can take an active role in implementing the core curriculum. For further research, it should be noted that the teaching practice can be a result of many influential factors (e.g. learners, classroom resource, time), hence it is interesting to interview teachers to find out what factors that influence their pedagogical focuses and teaching practices.

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