

FOREIGN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ENGLISH TEACHING IN THAI SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate foreign teachers' perspectives on working in private schools in Nakhon Nayok Province, Thailand, through organizational culture, problems they encountered when teaching English in Thailand, and collaboration with Thai teachers. This was a descriptive research design combining quantitative and qualitative methods. A descriptive design with the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods was adopted in this study to improve information comprehension. A total of eleven foreign teachers were surveyed and four volunteers were interviewed. We used a Likert scale for the questionnaire and summarized key points for the interview as the research instruments.

The findings revealed that foreign teachers generally viewed the organizational culture positively, in terms of collegial support and the clarity of hierarchical structure. The challenges remain in two-way communication, decision-making, and professional integration. A major obstacle affecting their work was language and communication barriers with Thai students, staff, and parents, which created uncertainty in job expectations and concern about career growth. With respect to English teaching, foreign teachers demonstrated their teaching skills, especially in preparing teaching materials and designing lesson plans suited to students' proficiency levels. Both student motivation, limited technological resources, and insufficient English-language communication within the school were found to be obstacles to effectiveness.

As the interviews further impacted cultural differences in working performance, strong guidelines and support, through work permits and orientation programs were needed. Finally, foreign teachers have adapted to the preparation of instruction, although language barriers remain a challenge. Schools in Thailand could also improve their communication mechanism, support their systems for improving English-language education, and promote increased collaboration to increase the quality of English education.

Keywords: foreign teachers; organizational culture; English teaching; Thai schools; communication barriers; school collaboration; teaching challenges

Introduction

Compliance with the Ministry of Education's announcement of English education reform, to refer to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the policy for the academic year 2024 aimed to create immunity for students. The school has established a unified model for working together within the organization to ensure its quality and reliability. Obviously, to encourage teachers and educational personnel to carry out their tasks responsibly to themselves and to the school, they focused on coordinating cooperation from parents and supporting agencies in all sectors by publicizing their opinions on how to improve the quality of school education.

The Thai education system has recognized the need to shift its focus from traditional knowledge transmission to the development of six core competencies that are essential for success in the 21st century. According to the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC, 2021), these are the six core competencies that are essential for students to develop: critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation, digital literacy, global citizenship, and self-directed learning. This means that teachers and educational personnel contribute to driving the education system. In other words, all school personnel, including foreign teachers, shared the responsibility of driving the education system forward. The context of each school is different, depending on the context of its location and the different organizational cultures. For example, a rural school in northern Thailand would have a very different context from an international school in Bangkok. Organizational culture is a shared belief, values, behaviors, and norms that members of an organization adhere to, which might include work methods, communication, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships.

Teaching English in Thailand presents significant challenges. First, the substantial linguistic disparity between English and Thai has created a formidable obstacle for many students. Second, the current mass education approach, which often lacks personalized feedback and sufficient written practice, prevents effective English language acquisition. This led to confusion and reliance on Thai grammatical structures, further exacerbating learning difficulties. While these challenges were significant, the situation was not entirely hopeless. The ongoing curriculum was reformed, and the emergence of alternative quality programs offered potential solutions. By securing funding for these programs, educational institutions could attract and retain highly qualified English teachers, thereby enhancing learning outcomes for Thai students (Thep-Ackrapong, 2005).

In the educational management system in Thailand, many foreign teachers are hired to perform their duties in schools. Many foreign teachers faced challenges, motivation, and stress in working because of language differences, culture, and collaborative working with Thai teachers, including preparing and teaching English as EFL, as well as a variety of courses. Teachers had to remain abreast of contemporary pedagogical approaches to effectively cater to learners' dynamic needs. The implementation of innovative teaching methodologies and techniques was crucial for fostering student engagement and expediting the attainment of learning outcomes. Nevertheless, escalating expectations placed on teachers to enhance their professional development and assume expanded roles. These factors had a profound impact on teachers.

The findings from this study provide new perspectives that can help us better understand foreign teachers. In addition, Thai teachers or administrators would be able to advise them that we can work together. Given these difficulties, foreign teachers face various situations in schools. The researcher was strongly interested in foreign teachers' perspectives on the problems encountered and the influence of foreign teachers' work in the school. Research findings have been utilized to develop and cultivate an organizational culture of cooperation with foreign teachers and to teach English to foreign teachers in Thailand as effectively as possible.

Research Objective

The objective of the present study was to investigate foreign teachers' perspectives on working in Thai schools in terms of organizational culture, challenges in English teaching in Thailand, and collaboration with Thai teachers.

Research Question

1. What are foreign teachers' perspectives on organizational culture in the context of schools in Thailand?
2. What are foreign teachers' perspectives on teaching English in Thailand?

Literature Review

According to Phutachoti (2017), organizational culture is a pattern of ideas, opinions, understandings, and beliefs of individuals within an organization that have passed down and become norms that all personnel follow. Each organization has a distinct form of organizational culture.

Khamkornluecha (2017) stated that the unique identity of each organization serves as a principle passed down from generation to generation. It can change according to trends, situations, and the behaviors of individuals within the organization, resulting in a norm for individual behavior.

Elements and types of organizational culture

Prosser (1999) divided school culture into 4 types as follows:

1. Formal School Culture

This is a school culture that emphasizes strict organization and control, appropriate for contexts that require orderliness and efficiency in operations. However, there should be a balance between control and flexibility to promote a positive learning environment that meets the needs of students and personnel in the school.

2. Welfarist School Culture

This school culture focuses on "student welfare," which means that schools with this type of culture are prioritized. It emphasizes support systems, such as counseling and social services, to ensure that members feel valued and cared for.

3. Hothouse School Culture

This school culture has high expectations and focuses on academic success, the use of intensive teaching methods and high pressure. While this may suit certain groups of students, it must be managed carefully to avoid becoming a system that harms students who cannot adapt.

4. Survivalist School Culture

This reflects schools facing pressure and instability, where all operations focus on “survival” rather than growth or innovation. This culture often arises not from intention but from social, economic, and policy contexts that constrain the school.

		Social Control	
		high	low
Coexistence in Society	high	Hothouse School Culture	Welfarist School Culture
	Low	Formal School Culture	Survivalist School Culture

Figure 2: Types of school culture according to Prosser (1999)

English Language Teaching

English language teaching refers to the process of transferring knowledge and English language skills to students, with a focus on developing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills so that students can effectively use English to communicate. Teaching English is not just about grammar and vocabulary. However, it also includes building an understanding of the culture and context associated with using English.

In summary, Angwatanakul (1996) noted that language is a tool for communication and that the primary goal of language teaching is to develop learners’ communicative competence. This involves the ability to use language correctly and appropriately when interacting with others daily. It encompasses understanding when to speak, what to say, to whom, when, where and how. Thereafter, foreign language teaching experts proposed components of communicative competence to help learners achieve this ability.

Methodologies in English Language Teaching

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), important methods along with the theoretical underpinnings and applications in the classroom are as follows:

- Grammar-Translation Method: Reading and writing for use, focusing on grammar rules and vocabulary through translation.
- Direct Method: Teaching in the target language (oral learning and immersion, without translation).
- Audio-Lingual Method: This method focuses on repetition and drills for language patterns, with a primary emphasis on listening and speaking.

- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): This focuses on interaction and real-life encounters with the aim of improving the communicative competence of learners.
- Task-based language teaching (TBLT): TBLT focuses on the actual learning of meaningful tasks to foster real language use.
- Content-Based Instruction (CBI): Brings together language instruction and subject content and focuses on both language skills and content knowledge.
- Project-based learning (PBL): This involves students working on long-term projects where they have to use the language they learned in a real-world context.

The teaching methods highlight the need to learn language through a diverse set of approaches. When educators select the correct teaching and training methods, they can then teach appropriately according to learners' characteristics.

Research Design

This study was a descriptive approach and aimed to increase the understanding of information; both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used to analyze the data (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The researchers studied the perspectives of foreign teachers working in private schools in Nakhon Nayok Province.

Population and Participants

The population for this study consisted of 115 foreign teachers who work and teach English in private schools in Nakhon Nayok Province. The participants, a purposive sample of 15 foreign teachers who worked at private schools in Nakhon Nayok Province during the academic year of 2025, and four volunteers participated in individual interviews to provide in-depth details. They were subjected to the following conditions: foreign teachers were required to possess a minimum of one year of working and teaching experience in schools in Thailand.

Research instruments

The online questionnaire consisted of three parts: 1) personal information, 2) working in the organizational culture, English teaching in Thai schools, and 3) challenges working and teaching, as well as the three open-ended questions. This questionnaire was developed to determine how organizational cultural perspectives and attitudes within schools and in English play a significant role in working with various nationalities in the workplace and with Thai students. Additionally, it sought to understand how foreign teachers deal with those problems. There were ten items per section. The researcher used five-point Likert scales to rank the degree of the participants' perspectives. The instrument was assessed by three experts, and the results, which ranged from 0.67 to 1.00, confirmed its acceptability. The instrument was piloted with 9 non sampled foreign teachers, and the result was found at the level of 0.76

The interview questions consisted of broad and open-ended questions to gain in-depth insights from the four volunteers to participate. This approach allowed us to study the differences in attitudes among the interviewees and observe their reactions to find the most

valuable information. The interviewer could also add questions during the interview, and participants had the opportunity to speak freely on the topics.

Data collection

The online questionnaire was distributed to foreign teachers of English. After receiving 11 completed responses, there were four participants from the same group volunteered for interviews to gain more insightful information. All the interview questions were in English, as the participants were foreign teachers, allowing them to express their ideas freely. The entire conversation was subsequently transcribed, focusing on key points, into English after the interview.

Data analysis

In this research, the researcher used IBM SPSS Statistics to analyze the data. The data collected through the online questionnaire were analyzed by percentage and frequency, and the mean was used to calculate the results. The interview data supported the findings from the questionnaire. The process began with transcribing all the interview recordings into English. Key points from this information are summarized below. Finally, the data relevant to the study's objectives and research questions were presented, both to support the questionnaire results and to directly answer the research questions.

Results

1. Findings on participants' personal information

Table 1 Participants' personal information

	Information	Frequency (<i>n</i>)	Percentage (%)
1. Gender	Male	2	18.20
	Female	9	81.80
	LGBTQ+	0	0.00
2. Age	Less than 25	1	9.10
	25-34	6	54.50
	35-44	2	18.20
	45-54	2	18.20
	55 and above	0	0.00
3. Country of Origin	Philippines	5	45.50
	Myanmar	3	27.30
	Russia	1	9.10
	Canada	1	9.10
	South Africa	1	9.10
4. Educational Background	Bachelor's Degree	8	72.70

	Master's Degree	2	18.20
	Doctoral Degree	1	9.10
5. Year(s) of teaching experience	1 - 3 years	4	36.40
	4 - 6 years	4	36.40
	7 - 9 years	0	0.00
	10 years and above	3	27.30
6. Teaching hours per week	Less than 10 hours	0	0.00
	10-15 hours	1	9.10
	16-20 hours	5	45.50
	21-25 hours	5	45.50
	More than 25 hours	0	0.00
	Total	11	100.00

The researcher had only 11 respondents. Six questions were asked about personal information from the participants. Each question was presented in terms of frequency and percentage. Among all 11 participants, most were female ($n = 9$, 81.80%) in the 25-34 years age group. Most of the foreign teachers who the respondents had worked with came from five countries, namely, the Philippines, Myanmar, and other countries, such as Russia, Canada, and South Africa. Among the 11 participants, more than half ($n = 8$, 72.70%) held a bachelor's degree, two ($n = 2$, 18.20%) held a master's degree, one ($n = 1$, 9.10%) held a doctoral degree and had teaching experience in Thai schools for 1-3 years ($n = 4$, 36.40%) or 4-6 years ($n = 4$, 36.40%), and 27.30% had approximately 10 years or more of experience. Finally, half of the respondents had teaching hours of 16-20 hours and 21-25 hours per week, and only one had 10-15 hours per week of teaching.

2. Findings on the perspectives of foreign teachers

The second part reported the perspectives of foreign teachers on organizational culture, English teaching, and challenges working and teaching in Thai schools. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of the statements. The results are presented as descriptive statistics of Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) of the respondents' feedback.

Table 2 Perspectives toward Organizational Culture

Statements	Mean (M)	SD	Level
I receive support from my colleagues.	4.09	0.94	High
I feel respected and valued within the school's organizational culture.	4.00	0.89	High
I understand the hierarchy and chain of command in the school.	4.55	0.52	Highest
The school's decision-making processes are transparent to me.	3.45	1.04	Moderate

Statements	Mean (<i>M</i>)	SD	Level
There is open communication between foreign teachers and Thai administrators/staff.	3.55	1.29	High
The school administrators value the contributions of foreign teachers.	3.64	1.29	High
My supervisor gives me feedback.	3.64	1.29	High
The school administrators support foreign teachers' professional development adequately.	3.27	1.10	Moderate
A two-way communication between school administrators and foreign teachers is clear and effective.	3.45	0.93	Moderate
I have a positive and collaborative working relationship with my Thai colleagues.	3.91	1.14	High
Total average mean score	3.75	1.09	High

The results from Table 2 indicate that foreign teachers generally view the organizational culture favorably. The highest mean score ($M = 4.55$; $SD = .52$) was for the item "I understand the hierarchy and chain of command in the school," which was rated at the highest level. This demonstrated strong clarity regarding institutional structure. Furthermore, teachers reported high levels of interpersonal success, specifically feelings of "receiving support from my colleagues" ($M = 4.09$; $SD = .94$) and respect and value within the school's organizational culture" ($M = 4.00$; $SD = .89$). These findings suggest a supportive and collaborative internal environment.

Table 3 Perspectives toward English teaching in Thai schools

Statements	Mean (<i>M</i>)	SD	Level
The curriculum, specifically English subjects, provided by the school is appropriate for students.	3.64	0.67	High
The English language assessment methods used in my school are fair and effective.	3.73	0.79	High
Thai students have motivation to learn English.	3.27	1.10	Moderate
I receive adequate resources (e.g., teaching materials, technology) for teaching English.	3.36	0.92	Moderate
The school encourages me to stay current with educational trends by providing training in various areas.	3.55	0.93	High
I am satisfied with my overall job conditions at this school (e.g., workload, working hours, facilities).	3.73	0.65	High
I design my lesson plans to suit students' different learning styles and abilities.	4.36	0.67	High
I am adequately prepared to teach English to Thai students with various proficiency levels.	4.27	0.65	High

Statements	Mean (<i>M</i>)	SD	Level
I prepare my teaching materials that are suitable for learners' grade level.	4.45	0.52	High
I collaborate with Thai English teachers on lesson planning and teaching strategies.	3.64	0.92	High
Total average mean score	3.80	0.87	High

According to Table 3, foreign teachers highly agreed with English teaching in Thai schools (total average mean score = 3.80; SD = .87). Foreign teachers demonstrated high professional competence, reported the highest mean scores for preparing suitable teaching materials ($M = 4.45$; SD = .52), designing adaptable lesson plans ($M = 4.36$; SD = .67), and feeling adequately prepared for students of various proficiency levels ($M = 4.27$; SD = .65). They also expressed satisfaction with their overall job conditions and effective collaboration with Thai colleagues.

Table 4 Perspectives on the challenges in working and teaching in Thai schools

Statements	Mean (<i>M</i>)	SD	Level
Language and communication barriers with Thai staff or parents are a significant challenge.	4.00	1.00	High
Cultural misunderstandings with Thai colleagues occur frequently.	3.36	1.12	Moderate
Communication from the school administration regarding teaching procedures and expectations is unclear.	3.45	1.13	Moderate
Facing workplace challenges makes me worried about my career growth.	3.55	0.93	High
The school does not provide specific places that facilitate English language activities.	3.33	0.87	Moderate
The low quality of classroom technology does not support my teaching.	3.00	1.25	Moderate
My overall workload does not allow me to manage my teaching.	3.20	1.03	Moderate
Cultural misunderstandings with Thai students occur frequently.	2.18	0.87	Low
I find it challenging to encourage students to speak English freely and confidently in class.	2.64	1.03	Moderate
Teachers experience reduced teaching time due to the demands of extracurricular activities at school.	3.30	0.95	Moderate
Total average mean score	3.20	1.10	Moderate

Table 4 shows that foreign teachers' perspective regarding the challenges faced in Thai schools was rated as "moderate" (total average mean score = 3.20; SD = 1.10), suggesting that while difficulties exist, they are manageable. The most significant issues at a high level were related to communication and career anxiety. Specifically, "language and communication barriers with Thai staff or parents" ($M = 4.00$; SD = 1.00) was the primary obstacle.

This challenge contributed to the second highest-rated concern: “Facing workplace challenges makes me worried about my career growth” ($M = 3.55$; $SD = .93$). Other challenges rated as “moderate” include low-quality classroom technology ($M = 3.00$; $SD = 1.25$), managing overall workload, and a lack of clarity in communication with the school administration. Notably, the level of cultural misunderstanding among Thai students was low ($M = 2.18$; $SD = .87$).

Conclusion and Discussion

This research investigated foreign teachers’ perspectives on the working environment in a Thai school context across three main objectives: organizational culture, challenges in English teaching, and collaboration with Thai teachers. The in-depth analysis revealed significant conflicts between the potential and skills of foreign personnel and systemic and organizational management limitations, with the most important findings summarized as follows:

1. The school successfully created structural stability through a clear hierarchical culture and fostered a strong unity, where foreign teachers felt respected and supported by colleagues. However, this structure led to severe operational constraints, particularly in terms of the transparency of decision-making and the effectiveness of two-way communication with administrators. This deficiency was influenced by national culture (De Albuquerque Moreira, & Borba Rocha, 2018). The resulting administrative ambiguity was a key driver of concern regarding career growth and posed a risk to teacher retention (Davis, 2019).

2. Foreign teachers possessed high professional competence in designing flexible and student-centered instruction, particularly in material preparation. However, this capacity was severely obstructed by the language and communication barrier, which was rated as the greatest challenge. This barrier was not limited to the classroom but prevented the full integration of foreign staff into the entire school community, thereby confirming the sustainable resolution of issues such as low student motivation.

3. Collaboration between foreign and Thai teachers was strongly related (high support) but failed to achieve complete functional integration. The absence of formal communication channels and the severe language barrier undermined the detailed cooperation and coteaching necessary for implementing modern English methodologies, such as task-based instruction and team teaching (Vega, 2010). Consequently, existing collaboration has remained merely “social assistance,” restricting foreign teachers’ potential to fully contribute to long-term curriculum development and instructional quality enhancement.

4. The limitations of student-centered teaching methods, although foreign teachers employed student-centered teaching to combat low student motivation, were supported by high material design skills and aligned with Thai educational reform (Sukavatee & Khlaisang, 2023), these efforts were severely constrained. The lack of an effective two-way collaborative system prevented the integration of vital insights from Thai teachers or parents, primarily because of the language barrier. This limited the scope of motivation strategies, made them unsustainable for resolving systemic engagement issues and ultimately prevented the full realization of student-centered goals.

In summary, these challenges impacted the professional performance of foreign teachers, and the quality of English instruction in the school did not stem from the competence of the personnel. Instead, they were rooted in systemic, administrative, and communication gaps at the organizational level. Therefore, increasing educational quality and retaining skilled personnel could begin by reforming the administrative system and establishing formal, two-way communication mechanisms to mitigate the language barrier and allow foreign teachers to leverage their expertise fully and sustainably.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this research had certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results and implementing the recommendations.

1. This study focused exclusively on foreign teachers working in private schools in Nakhon Nayok Province. The data were collected from a limited number of participants. Owing to constraints where some private schools do not employ foreign teachers, the actual number of survey respondents was only 11.

2. The study utilized a purposive sampling method due to constraints related to the population size and accessibility of participants.

3. Owing to limitations in geographical scope and the small sample size, the findings of this study cannot be definitively generalized to represent the opinions of foreign teachers working in other types of schools or in other provinces across Thailand.

Recommendations

The recommendations were divided into two parts: practical recommendations for implementing the research findings and suggestions for future research.

1. Practical recommendations for Thai schools

- 1.1 Schools should systematically provide English summaries of all key meetings and announcements to foreign teachers. A highly English-proficient coordinator should serve as a bridge between foreign teachers and the Thai administration/staff.

- 1.2 Schools should provide official and systematic assistance with visas and work permit documentation. Furthermore, they should conduct orientation programs that specifically educate staff on local culture and expected operational procedures to reduce career anxiety.

- 1.3 Increasing investment in modern teaching resources and technology to support the effective use of active teaching techniques Promote extracurricular activities or English competitions to increase student motivation and practical language usage.

2. Recommendations for Further Study

- 2.1 Future research should expand the scope to include foreign teachers in other provinces or different types of schools (e.g., public or large international schools) to increase the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

- 2.2 Qualitative research should be conducted to investigate the ability of Thai administrators and Thai teachers to collaborate with foreign teachers. This approach provides balanced, two-sided data crucial for improving cooperation.

2.3 Action research should be conducted to test and evaluate the effectiveness of an intercultural communication training program implemented for both Thai staff and foreign teachers, with the aim of mitigating the systematic communication barriers identified in this study.

2.4 For researchers interested in conducting more in-depth studies on this topic, incorporating an intercoder reliability analysis following any additional interviews is recommended. This procedure significantly enhances the academic rigor and trustworthiness of the qualitative data analysis derived from the interviews.

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