When EFL Teachers Perform L2 and L1 in the Classroom, What Happens to Their Sense of Self?

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Abstract

We often hear from speakers of L2 that they 'feel different' when communicating through the medium of an additional language. While there has been much exploration of L2-mediated identity development in naturalistic settings, there is very little conducted within the instructed learning environment of EFL. The present study explores how nine teachers of English in Thailand (eight Thai and one Anglo-Australian) perceived their classroom performance of both first and second language. Through observation and interview, the study finds that teachers perceived that their classroom roles differed markedly according to whether they spoke in L1 or L2, and that what was opened up or closed down by L2 was influenced by a teacher's personal experience, as well as by their perception of a particular language's structure and its discursive status in the world.

Keywords: EFL, performance, identity, teachers, Thai

Introduction

The present study arises from a larger project conducted into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy in Thailand. It explored the use of L1 and L2 by nine teachers – eight local Thai and one expatriate Australian – all of whom were expert speakers of both English and Thai, by means of classroom observation and teacher interview. In an early interview, the Anglo-Australian teacher, who will be called Murray, spoke of:

> *... the pleasure of [learners] expressing themselves in a completely different socio-cultural context, using a completely different language... and how exciting! You're a different person.... You get new roles opened to you.*

This teacher further commented upon how his classroom interactions with students also differed according to whether when he spoke in Thai or in English:

> *In Thai, I'm more easy-going, relaxed, ruder, use techniques to relax students and myself. In English, I'm much more of a teacher – more serious, strict, regimented.*

So, while the initial focus of my project had been how L1 and L2 were used for pedagogic purposes, I now determined to additionally pursue with Murray and the other eight teachers how they perceived their own performance of both English and Thai in their EFL classes.

Background

These comments noted above had impacted strongly upon me for two reasons. The first was due to my own observation that teachers' use of two languages in class was a default mode in this EFL context (Forman, 2010, 2012) and that the move from L2 (English) into L1 (Thai) was often marked by a release of psychological tension which was visible in students' posture and sometimes audible in their breath. Secondly, I found that Murray's observation resonated with my own past and present experiences of learning second languages (principally Welsh, French and Thai), in the process of which I have variously felt 'othered', 'engaged', 'truer' and 'depersonalised', with such processes engendering feelings of tension, fear and joy.

There are few other phenomena which carry such deep potential as language learning does for stimulating changes in one's sense of self. Lin, Wang, Akamatsu and Riazi (2002, p. 307) have written about how L2 impels their 'quest[s] for expanded selves … to define who we are and what we shall become'. And Kramsch speaks lyrically of learners 'who take intense physical pleasure in acquiring a language, thrill in trespassing someone else's territory, becoming a foreigner on their own turf, becoming both invisible and differently visible' (2003, p. 256). This broad theme of 'potentiality' is played out in different ways in the work of, for example, Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Gillette (1994), Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), and Block (2007a & b).

In seeking to explore what happens when teachers present the self in a classroom setting, I draw upon the following perspectives of identity and performance, linking them to culture and education in Thailand.

Identity

In postmodern terms, identity is viewed as a process of becoming, rather than a state of being, and is associated with notions of performativity (Butler, 1990), subjectivity (Norton Peirce, 1995) and agency (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). The field of enquiry into identity may be said to be flourishing (see for example Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Lin, 2008). But it has also been suggested that discussion of identity has tended 'to spread disquietingly and amorphously to end up absorbing all the familiar independent variables of sociolinguistics we would ever talk about' (Hastings & Manning, 2004, p. 3).

The field of L2 learning itself has recently been 'flooded' with *naturalistic* accounts that explore speaker identity (Kramsch, 2009, pp. 2-3). However, there has been considerably less enquiry into the identity formation afforded by instructed L2 learning, and particularly in EFL contexts. By EFL contexts I refer to those where the target language is not a national language; where students have not been 'transplanted' as Sridhar puts it (1994), and where the foreign language is commonly learned as a subject, rather than as a medium of instruction. Block (2007a, 2007b) observes that theorising into EFL identity work has produced only a handful of papers – and even in these cases, nearly all have traced identity development in terms of learners' sense of self as *learners*, rather than as travellers into a second language/culture.

If we consider identity issues relating to language *teachers*, there have of course been important studies, mainly located in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings and concerned with the political and professional status of Non-native English Speaking (NNES)

teachers who have often been marginalised (e.g., Braine, 1999; Mahboob, 2010). But studies of language teachers who are located in the very different world of EFL are rare (e.g., part of Duff & Uchida's 1997 study in Japan; Llurda & Huguet in Spain, 2003; Tsui in China, 2007; Atay & Ece in Turkey, 2009). Such studies of local EFL teachers evince different concerns, as might be expected, which often relate to teachers' own understandings of L2 language and culture. However, the issue of how language teachers' identity is impacted by their actual performance of L2 in classroom settings has not, to my knowledge, been explored to date.

Performance

In recent years, performance has been seen as embodying the construct of identity: that is, our repeated performances serve to sediment identity as it forms and re-forms. Thus Butler's notion of performativity (1990, 1993; see also Pennycook 2005) proposes that identity is the effect rather than the cause of our performance; a constellation of roles and desires which vary according to time and place. It must also be recognised that identity is constructed by the self *in conjunction with* others, and that when moving into a new language/culture, identity may become more 'marked', that is, more visible and audible – again, both to the self and to others. Moreover, classroom settings, as a result of their enhanced public and evaluatory dimensions, may render performance of L2 a particularly self-conscious process. A number of studies have drawn upon Baumann and Briggs' view of performance as providing 'a frame that invites critical reflection on communicative processes' (1990, p. 60) and applied this notion to 'classroom as theatre', or to exploration of 'ludic language play'. However, the connection which is sought in the present study, between classroom performance and identity, has not been a focus of that work.

Culture and Education

Located in the EFL context of Thailand, the research explores teachers' accounts of their performance in two languages, English and Thai. Because any language is both embedded in and produces culture, and because contrasts of performance roles in these two languages are central to the enquiry, I will set out a brief summary of elements of Thai culture, and its educational practices. It is difficult of course to speak of these matters without essentialising or stereotyping. How accurately can we attempt to compare, say, Anglophone and Thai cultures without reducing a complex, shifting picture to a simplified, static one? I attempt to do so here simply with the aim of recognising and understanding some of the cultural practices which imbue the classrooms of this study.

The Buddhist way, which is variously termed a religion and philosophy, occupies a significant visible and invisible part of the social fabric of Thailand, with 93.6% of participants of a large-scale survey self-reporting religion to be an important part of their lives (Komin, 1990; confirmed in 2015 by the United Nations Thailand). It is still Thai custom that young men spend at least one rainy season retreat (three months) in a monastery, in order to accrue merit for themselves and their families. Key cultural traits are reported to be those of social harmony, respect for age and status, desire for collaboration, and the maintenance of face (O'Sullivan & Tajaroensuk, 1997; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001).

Students in the present study and at other Thai universities generally exhibit the cultural traits referred to above, particularly perhaps those of harmony and collaboration. Boronsiri, Uampuang and Fry (1996, p. 60) comment, for example, that 'the most concrete visible influence of Thai culture on contemporary campus life is the prominence of students studying in groups', and note that one can rarely find a student studying alone.

Teachers in Thailand are held in high respect by students, parents and by society, with Simon describing the teacher's role as that of 'friend and helper of pupils in a master-disciple relationship' (2001, p. 340). Buddhism is also drawn upon in order to develop teachers' morality. Parkay et al (1999, p. 65) refer to Payutto's (1995) description of the character of the ideal teacher:

- 'endearing' or approachable
- worthy of respect in character and actions
- inspiring; exemplifies what s/he teaches
- can speak wisely, appropriately and caringly
- is patient
- can explain and guide students clearly
- does not lead students into areas lacking in worth or morality.

It is my experience that such a description would be regarded as appropriate by Thai teachers, students and the community.

The ambience of the classes observed in this study supported the cultural features described above. Students were attired according to the university's dress requirements – white shirt/blouse, and dark blue pants/skirt – and seated with ease, poise and apparent harmony. Teachers were also formally dressed. They remained standing or seated, but never leant on furniture or approached students. Material events were seen to embody respect: I observed that when students left their seats and passed the teacher's desk to write on the blackboard, each student made a *wai*. This is a gesture similar to the Indian *namaste* where palms are placed together at chest level, raised to the head at the same time that the head is lowered, and accompanied by a bow (male) or curtsey (female). It is a mark of respect initiated from junior to senior, and reciprocated unless, as here, the status differential is great. The tenor of communication between Thai teachers and their students was different from what I had experienced as a Westerner: it combined warmth with formality, care with distance. The atmosphere of classes, while sometimes animated, sometimes calm, was never, in this study, unsettling, provocative, nor, to borrow Canagarajah's terms, 'hyperactive' or 'supervoluble' 1999, p. 191).

Research Question

When EFL teachers in Thailand perform L2 and L1 in the classroom, what is the impact upon their sense of self?

Methodology

Site and Participants

The Thai university site, called Isara here, was well known to me as my workplace of some fifteen years earlier; and through continued contact with a number of colleagues who remained on staff.

Teachers

The English Department at the time of the research time had some twenty-one full-time teachers: fourteen Thai nationals and seven expatriates from English-speaking countries. Nine teachers responded to my request for volunteers, of whom four were already known to me. Of these nine teachers, eight were Thai and one was Anglo-Australian; five were female, and four male (Table 1).

All teachers in the study were qualified at Master's level, and three possessed doctorates. Their teaching experience ranged from 3 to 38 years. All had also undertaken postgraduate study overseas, mainly in the USA, but also in Australia and Singapore. The eight Thai teachers were expert speakers of English, whom I would rate at near-native speaker level. The single Anglo-Australian was similarly expert in Thai. Each teacher self-selected a pseudonym for use in this research project.

Table 1: *Teachers' Details*

		L1	m/f	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
1	Mr Chai	Thai	m	x			
2	Ms Bua	Thai	f		x		
3	Ms Nanda	Thai	f				x
4	Ms Mali	Thai	f				x
5	Mr Somchay	Thai	m				x
6	Ms Rajavadee	Thai	f				x
7	Mr Murray	English	m		x		
8	Mr Nuteau	Thai	m			x	
9	Ms Patcharin	Thai	f				x

Students

There was a noticeable range of L2 proficiency across the ten classes observed, ranging from four classes of relatively advanced English-major students, whom I would informally rate at bands 5– 6 on the IELTS scale (around 500– 550 TOEFL), to six classes of non-major students, the majority of whom I would estimate to be at bands 2– 3 on IELTS (around 350– 430 TOEFL). This distinction between sought-after 'Major' places, and 'general English' classes was an important one in the present study, and remains so across the Thai tertiary sector.

Data collection

The two main types of data in this study, lesson observation and teacher interview, were gathered as shown in Table 2. Although data were collected ten years ago, the research question explored here, concerned with teachers' sense of self when performing L1 and L2, is an entirely current one – particularly in the light of recent studies which highlight the ubiquity of L1 use across the globe (e.g., Hall & Cook, 2013), and the mixed feelings thereby engendered in teachers themselves (e.g., Barnard & McLellan, 2014).

Table 2: *Data Collection*

Stage of data gathering	Date	Data gathered
Visit (1) to Thailand	Jan 2002	• **Lesson observation** • **Interview (1)** : all 9 teachers
Prior to Visit (2)	My analysis of c. 5,000 words per teacher forwarded to each teacher in question (together with new questions).	
Visit (2) to Thailand	Mar 2004	• **Interview (2**): 8 of the 9 teachers
Post Visit (2)	Aug 2004 Jan-Feb 2005	• **Interview** of 9th teacher (in Sydney) • **Follow-up** clarification sought from Ajarn Rajavadee (email & phone)

Lesson Observation

I observed classes of nine teachers in the English Department of Isara University. All but one class was in the form of a 'double period' of just under two hours in length. For each teacher I observed one class, and in four cases, two classes were observed. Accordingly, in all, ten classes were analysed, taught by nine teachers, totalling nineteen hours' lesson time. Classes were audio-recorded, and accompanied by my written field notes.

In obtaining observation data, I did not rely upon predetermined categories, nor did I design a protocol for the purpose of this study. Lessons were attended to with two foci. The first was the ways in which the teachers used L1 and L2 in each lesson: the apparent functions and effects. The second was an attempt to capture something of the diversity of the EFL classrooms witnessed in order to present a more ecological picture.

Teacher interview

At the time of my first visit to Thailand in 2002, each of the nine teachers was interviewed for approximately one hour on one or two occasions after their lesson. Interviews were conducted face-to-face on site, and audio-recorded, with the researcher concurrently making written notes. Interviews were semi-structured, with the aim of guiding but not constraining discussion. Key questions had been mailed to participants before the visit took place in order to allow time for reflection. In March 2004, a second visit was made to Isara

for the purpose both of seeking participants' feedback upon the analysis conducted to date, and to explore various issues which had emerged in the data. As a prelude to the second visit, teachers were sent three documents: my analysis of their earlier 2002 lesson and interview, each of which ran to some 5,000 words, some questions directly related to that teacher, and a set of key questions applicable to all participants. On this follow-up visit, I interviewed eight of the nine teachers, again on one or two occasions. The ninth teacher had returned to Australia to undertake postgraduate study, and I was able to interview him in Sydney in October 2004. (See Appendix for full set of Interview prompts.)

I mention here one issue which had important implications for the main question of the study: the medium of communication selected for interviews. I as the researcher/interviewer was a native speaker of English, with only a basic proficiency in Thai. When preparing to interview Thai teachers, I knew that although they were expert speakers of English, there would certainly be more abstract or personal dimensions which would come more easily when construed in Thai rather than English. However, to conduct these interviews in Thai would require the services of an interpreter; and it was difficult to see how this could be arranged without loss of face. Moreover, I was not sure where I might find someone locally whose L2 proficiency exceeded that of my participants. I made the best of things, therefore, by staying with English and attempting to couch interviews in the most supportive and culturally-sensitive ways as possible, as well as by mailing teachers ahead of time with planned interview questions.

I took care to word this particular question as follows:

(5) Performing in English

Some people have written about how they feel different when they communicate in their second language – they may speak in different ways and about different topics.

Can you compare the way you communicate in Thai and the way you communicate in English in the classroom?

For example:

- – Do you feel like you are performing in English?
- – Do you take on different kinds of roles in English and Thai?
- – Do you speak/behave in different ways in each language?

Data analysis

Lesson observation

All Thai language spoken by teachers was transcribed and translated into English. Selected parts of lessons where teachers spoke in English were transcribed, and the remainder summarised. Audio-tapes, lesson transcriptions and field notes were searched for patterns of pedagogy, initially to investigate teachers' use of L1 and L2, and also more broadly, to identify emergent points of interest.

Teacher interview

Interview data was transcribed in full, and similarly searched, in an iterative fashion, for themes of salience or significance to the teachers or to me.

Initial analysis of both lessons and interviews provided some fifty-nine motifs, which could be grouped into several major themes. One of these, that of teachers' views about performing L1 and L2 in class, is the basis of the present paper.

Results

Even with the precautions outlined above, I found that ensuing interview discussions on this topic were not easy. However, in the case of seven of the nine teachers, valuable responses were generated; in the eighth case, a minimal and dissident response was obtained; and in the ninth, discussions became confused, with imminent loss of face, and so I dropped the topic.

In the next section I will present pertinent data taken from interviews with the eight responding teachers, together with a short commentary; following this will be a broader discussion of points of interest. In the tables below, comments are reproduced verbatim, and are numbered within each language. Thus E1 = the first comment relating to English; T2 = the second comment which relates to Thai; and so on.

1. Mr Chai was Thai, in his late 20s, and had recently completed doctoral studies in the USA. His observed classes were innovative, informal, relaxed.

Table 2. *Mr Chai*

L2 [English]		L1 [Thai]	
E1	more open; less hierarchy	T1	my role… is very respectable; I have to keep distance a little bit
E2	I feel that students are my friends	T2	I have to use some words not too harsh
E3	a culture [which] doesn't treat people at different levels; everyone is just equal	T3	it's like you're sharing your Thai-ness
E4	wide range of topics	T4	cannot have a wide range of topics

It is clear that for Mr Chai, English functions to open up his communication with students, both in field (topics) and tenor (role relationships). In Thai, on the other hand, he follows the more conventional role of a teacher, which is high in status and great in power distance. I was intrigued by Mr Chai's comment that in Thai he had to use 'some words not too harsh'; and I interpret this both culturally and linguistically. A central concept in Thai culture, as noted earlier, is that of 'face'; in particular here, the maintaining of 'negative face', that is the avoidance of 'troubling' someone (Komin 1990). Thus it behoves lower and higher status speakers alike to be moderate in manner and speech so that harmony prevails. Linguistically, in Thai there are a range of devices to realise these semantics,

which include circumlocution, euphemism, as well as various mitigating 'particles', any or all of which Chai may be referring to here.

2. Ms Bua was Thai; in her mid-30s; and had completed doctoral studies in the USA. Her observed classes were dynamic and engaging.

Table 3. *Ms Bua*

L2 [English]		L1 [Thai]	
E1	[can say] some things that I probably cannot say in Thai or I shouldn't say in Thai.	T1	In Thai, especially for the [= because of] different status, we beat around the bush and then get to the point.
E2	if students want to speak to me in English, they use English very directly.	T2	Even the way you write...It is well documented...is indirect in Thai.
E3	I feel more comfortable.		

We meet a similar 'opening up' effect of English communication here with Ms Bua. Her comment about Thai indirectness of speech (T1) will ring bells with any Westerner who has spent time in Thailand or with Thai students. Again, this is seen in Thai discourse moves, where direct requests, explanations and so on are not favoured, as well as in Thai grammar, where mitigation is prevalent ('Not quite arrived' and 'Married already or not yet?' are examples encountered early by most foreigners). The teacher's comment about student directness in English, however, is a little surprising to me; and it is hard to know how much this may be a result of cultural opening up; or how much due to limited competence in the L2. We also need to consider that although both teacher and students are using L2, they already share an L1 and culture. Would Thai students be similarly direct with a non-Thai teacher when using English to communicate? In my own experience, no.

3. Ms Nanda was Thai, aged late 50s, and had studied overseas for a relatively short period. She occupied a high status position in the university; her teaching displayed both confidence and verbal expressivity.

Table 4. *Ms Nanda*

L2 [English]		L1 [Thai]	
E1	[speaking English] can open up a different part of our personality	T1	[use Thai in order to] take a break, relax
E2	it's not the real you, not the real students, not the real teacher, because we are still non-natives	T2	I know you [students] understand what I'm saying
E3	[you] slow down your pace of speaking		

Again we meet the sense of L2 English as opening up the self; but on the other hand, Ms Nanda draws our attention to the performance quality of L2, where neither teacher nor

students can show their 'real' self. What is 'real' is of course debatable, but I interpret the teacher's remark as linked to what has been classically described as a 'disparity between the "true" self as known by the language learner and the more limited self as can be presented at any given moment in the foreign language' (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 128).

I also include this teacher's comment about the slowing down of speech because although it might appear unimportant, so much of what we present to the world rests in how we say it. Slowness of speech would usually indicate, in this pedagogic context, the teacher's adjustment to students' L2 proficiency. But psychologically, slowness is also associated with other, more restricted kinds of expression such as those constructed when talking to the very young, aged or infirm. Thus this manner of speaking may be regarded as weighing more on the inhibiting rather than liberating side of the scales.

4. Ms Mali was Thai, aged in her 50s, and had completed a doctorate in the USA a considerable time earlier. She was a teacher of some gravitas.

Table 5. *Ms Mali*

L2 [English]		L1 [Thai]	
E1	If we speak English amongst Thai, it's not natural; we are pretending	T1	If we would like to get down into the deep meaning, I prefer to use Thai
E2	it makes me uncomfortable [because] I don't know if students understand or not		
E3	it takes time to find the words		

The previous teacher's comment about pace in English is echoed by Ms Mali. Moreover, there are elements of tension here, for this teacher cannot be sure if her L2 communication is successful with all students; and she also feels the artificiality of using L2 in this foreign language setting, where students and teacher share a first language and culture. We may be reminded again of the often underestimated differences between EFL and ESL contexts; the latter usually multilingual, with transplanted learners whose L2 speaking development is a high priority for meeting their resettlement needs in the new country, but the former usually sharing a first linguaculture, and studying the L2 at a distance both geographic, and sometimes discursive. Ms Mali's comment about Thai offering 'deep meaning' can also remind us of the embeddedness of L2 within the greater semantic depth of L1.

5. Mr Somchay was Thai, aged in his 50s, and had undertaken master's studies overseas a considerable time earlier. His lessons were traditional, calm, quiet.

Table 6. *Mr Somchay*

L2 [English]		L1 [Thai]	
E1	it's more planned rather than just spontaneous	T1	I can speak my mind
		T2	I think the students feel closer to me in Thai

I will discuss Mr Somchay's view below, along with that of Ms Rajavadee.

6. Ms Rajavadee was Thai, aged early 50s, and had undertaken postgraduate study overseas a decade earlier. Her lessons took a traditional approach, especially with grammar, and were marked by energy and zest.

Table 7. *Ms Rajavadee*

L2 [English]		L1 [Thai]	
E1	I don't feel open when I use English in class.	T1	I feel relief; they [students] feel relief; we understand the same thing now
E2	[using English] in class is for the benefit of the students		

Comments by both these teachers (5) and (6) support those of Ms Mali in respect of the 'monitored self' which emerges with their use of L2 in the EFL classroom – a performance which we may expect to be more planned, pedagogically-focussed and thus restricted in some ways. Similar, again, are the closer tenor relations afforded by communication in the shared L1. The prevalence of *affect* in teachers' remarks may not be unexpected, if we accept that the interpersonal drives learning. What is perhaps unexpected, though, is its ready acknowledgment at interview by teachers who appeared to hold quite traditional power-distance relations with their students. As indicated earlier, my experiences in this study (and elsewhere in Thailand and S E Asia) led me to see kinds of teacher-student relationships were quite different from those with which I was familiar in Western contexts; combining distance with care. For example, most Thai teachers held strict expectations of student behaviour (e.g., of dress), but at the same time offered flexibility on matters such as student lateness to class.

7. Mr Murray was Anglo-Australian, in his 30s, and bilingual in Thai. His lessons were intensely communicative, with personal engagement at a high level throughout.

As noted earlier, it was Mr Murray's comments that initiated this paper, and he also played a valuable role in discussion by enabling comparison with his Thai colleagues. I have chosen to classify Mr Murray's comments *by L1/L2*, as with the Thai teachers above; rather than*by Thai/English* as would also have been possible. In other words, I prioritise the L1/L2 *status* of the language instead of the language itself.

Table 8. *Mr Murray*

L2 [Thai]		L1 [English]	
T1	easy-going, relaxed, ruder	E1	much more of a teacher
T2	a fun language, and it's really easy to make wicked jokes in, so why not!	E2 E3	more serious, strict, regimented a lot more organised
T3	you're a different person; you get new roles opened to you.		

L2 here (Thai, for this teacher), gave an 'opening out' similar to that experienced in L2 (English) some of his Thai colleagues, and again, similarly to those colleagues, he was a more conventional teacher in his L1 (for him, English). I believe that Murray exemplifies what is not an uncommon sight in EFL teaching across Asia – the expatriate teacher whose classroom behaviour is less formal, and often more playful, than that usually expected of local teachers. In a different sense from Kramsch's intention, but to borrow her words: Murray is enjoying 'the privilege of the non-native speaker' (2003), and what it affords for his own presentation of self.

I would also like to draw attention to Murray's perception that Thai is a 'fun language' in which one can make 'wicked jokes'. This teacher spoke further of the propensity for word-play within Thai, in particular for spoonerisms and puns, noting that Thai phonology extends substitution not only of phonemes of words, but to lexical tones (confirmed by Komin, 1990, p. 234). Here we can see how what Murray perceives as L2 structural differences can lead to different roles being explored within that language. So in his case, it may be not only the experience of any L2, but also in part the structure of L2 which enables different roles to be explored; as well, of course, as one's own position as a 'foreign' speaker of that language.

8. Mr Nuteau was Thai, in his 40s, and had studied one year overseas some time ago. His lessons were particularly well organised and structured, with traditional teacher-student roles.

I record below Mr Nuteau's view, which was in distinction to the other teachers in the study:

I believe it [relationship with students] depends on the personality of the teacher not the language used.

The teacher expanded on his point as follows:

If the teacher seems to be hostile to the students, even if you use English or Thai, your hostility will show up … I never show any negative feelings to them … Remember, it's because they don't know, they come to the classroom.

This particular teacher had elsewhere affirmed his encouraging but formal relationship with students, disclosing, for example, that he enforced a strict dress code whereby students who wore sandals instead of shoes to his class would have marks deducted; and

expressing dislike of male students' long hair. It seems then that for this teacher, tenor relations were rather distant in both languages.

Discussion

Teachers' perceptions will now be examined in more detail, initially with regard to their views of performance of L2, then of L1, and finally in respect of patterns across both languages.

L2 in the Classroom

There are some interesting complexities apparent in teachers' views of L2 performance. Seven of the nine teachers noted significant differences in performance according to language. Three teachers (1, 2, 4) indicated that when using their L2, they felt more open, more relaxed, more equal, and could say things they would normally be less likely to say in L1. Those teachers' views accord with that of a teacher in Atay and Ece's study (2009, p. 28), who reported:

> *I feel more convenient when speaking in English. I become more talkative. I feel I can speak about every subject, even about the taboo(s).*

Similarly, perceptions of English as allowing 'relaxed informality' were held by all three L1 groups – French, German and Japanese – who participated in Ellwood's study of international students enrolled at an Australian university (2004, p. 128).

On the other hand, four other teachers in the study (3, 4, 5, 6) noted an 'unreality' or unnaturalness of the roles and relationships enacted in L2. For the latter, in fact it was in L1 (Thai) rather than in L2 (English) that they could relax. Perhaps, rather like the classic dual view of anxiety in its facilitating or debilitating forms, L2 classroom performance could pull teachers 'either way'. That is, when a speaker moves away from the comfort and security of her/his first language into the relative 'otherness' of the second, s/he may experience either opening or closing of roles/interactions in that language. (Possible explanatory factors are discussed further below.)

A second interesting paradox arises. On the one hand, there is reported a sense of closeness which may result from students and teacher 'conspiring' to communicate in another tongue: *I feel that students are my friends* [when communicating in English] (Mr Chai); *[I can say] some things that I probably cannot say in Thai or I shouldn't say in Thai … more direct* (Ms Bua). On the other hand, it is also the case that Thai teachers' L2 communication must be modified in order to reach their students: *It makes me uncomfortable [because I don't know if students understand or not* (Ms Mali); *It's more planned than just spontaneous* (Mr Somchay). Thus again the effect can go one of two ways: for there is tension between solidarity offered by a 'joint adventure' on the one hand, but on the other, a power differential between teacher and students which has increased because of the disparity in each party's L2 proficiency.

Lastly, there is the affective impact experienced when performing L2. As noted in the opening of this paper, the Australian teacher had spoken of the *pleasure* and *excitement* resulting from speaking in *a completely different socio-cultural context using a completely different language*. The responses of the Thai teachers, on the other hand, did not display such emotion. There are a few ways in which to interpret their

stance. Possibly the Thai teachers' experiences of L2 were simply different – that is, less deeply felt. Or perhaps more probably, their responses reflected Thai cultural conventions which limit the expression of personal feelings in the public domain (Komin 1990). Alternatively, there may be a third factor which was alluded to earlier: the limitations of interview data having been obtained only in English.

L1 in the Classroom

When Thai teachers spoke of their roles in L1, they usually emphasised its overall ease of communication: *I feel relief; they feel relief* (Ms Rajavadee), *I can speak my mind* (Mr Somchay); its solidarity effect: *…you're sharing your Thai-ness* (Mr Chai), *I think students feel closer to me in Thai* (Mr Somchay); indirectness: *We beat around the bush and then get to the point* (Ms Bua); and conventionality: *My role as a teacher is very respectable* (Mr Chai). These perceptions may be seen as being a product of teachers' existing interpersonal relations with students being enacted within familiar Thai pedagogic discourses. That is, whereas the use of L2 may afford a reduction of teachers' normally distant status, and opens up changed 'speakings' in the classroom, the use of L1 is associated with conventional tenor relations, which by their familiarity require less attention and energy on the part of teachers and students. The view of Mr Murray, as the sole Anglo teacher, was similar in one of these respects – that of conventionality. For him, too, when reverting to his L1 (in this case, English) Mr Murray became *more serious, strict, regimented*, thus fulfilling the traditional expectations of a teacher's management role and status. (Further comparisons cannot be made between Mr Murray and his students, due to the absence of a common L1 between them.)

L1 and L2 Compared

The reported liberating effect of operating in a second language seemed to be associated with three factors amongst this group of teachers: *age*, *recent/extensive experience of L2*, and *formality of classroom tenor*, all of which, by and large, were also associated with each other.

Thus it may be noted that the three teachers – Mr Chai, Ms Bua, and Mr Murray – who had spoken most enthusiastically about the opening up effects of the L2 on their classroom performance, were also the youngest in the group (aged from late 20s to mid 30s). Moreover, I can report that their L2 proficiency was very high, with Mr Chai and Ms Bua having recently undertaken doctoral study in English in the USA, and Mr Murray having lived and worked in Thailand for the previous ten years. Additionally, according to my classroom observations, it was these three teachers who held the most interactive and least traditionally formal relationship with their students. On the other hand, Mr Nuteau, who did not perceive a difference when performing L2, and Ms Patcharin, who did not respond to this question, were amongst the most senior participants in the study; had not recently studied in an Anglophone context, nor for longer than a year; and displayed a high degree of formality in their classroom stance. It seems possible, therefore, that in order for an L2 'opening' to occur , there needs to exist a certain level of interactivity and reduced formality in the language classroom (or vice versa), and that such classroom features are more likely to develop when a teacher is younger and has recently spent extended time in a foreign

country. (In suggesting this, I do not propose that 'younger is better', but simply note what appeared to be a pattern in the lessons observed.)

Another major point relates to how teachers perceived English, with various freedoms being ascribed by Thai teachers to that particular language. Thus, Mr Chai commented of English that *there is less hierarchy…it doesn't treat people at different levels; everyone is just equal*. And Ms Bua noted that *if students want to speak to me in English, they use English very directly*. My interpretation here is that Mr Chai and Ms Bua were referring in part to the effects of structural and/or discursive differences between the two languages. In Thai, for example, there is an elaborate system of address which depends on age, status and solidarity/distance. The single-choice English pronoun 'you', for example, compares with at least six everyday choices in Thai (which include 'younger sister/brother', 'grandfather/grandmother', 'teacher'), and another six or so less frequently used options. In addition, there are a number of 'particles' to express formality in Thai which do not have equivalents in English (Khanittanon, 1988). Moreover, some teachers believed that the discursive *content* of what could be said in English differed from what was possible in Thai. For example, Mr Chai noted that using English offered *a wide range of topics*; and Ms Bua, that she *can say some things that I probably cannot say in Thai or I shouldn't say in Thai*. These comments support the opening effect of English, here by particular contrast with the greater verbal restraint which operates in Thai culture (O'Sullivan & Tajaroensuk, 1997). It is also possible that when L2 speakers perceive English in these ways, they have been influenced by global discourses which position it as the language of modernisation, globalisation, and sometimes democracy.

But can these perceived differences be ascribed only to the particular nature of English – its linguistic features; its discursive position/role in the world today? Or could some, at least, be associated with a move into *any* L2? The presence of Mr Murray as the sole native speaker of English in the study can offer some insights here.

If it were the specific nature and role of English itself that prompted Thai teachers' perceptions, then Mr Murray's views about English would presumably have been similar to those of his Thai colleagues – but in fact the reverse was true. For whereas some Thai teachers felt that when using English they felt more open, and others that there was an 'unrealness' of role, the English speaking teacher himself felt *more serious, strict, regimented* when communicating in English. Mr Murray's anomalous position suggests, therefore, that differences in English and Thai may have been perceived by teachers only in part because of the qualities of English itself; and that in part it may be the 'foreignness' of any L2 linguaculture which offers a newness of role. In short then, it is the *intersection* of language type, discursive status, and roles which serves to shape performance possibilities.

Conclusion

The present study has established a belief held by nearly all teachers that their performance, roles, and affective states do vary according to whether they speak English or Thai in the classroom. Analysis brings out some implications of L1-L2 performance for teachers' roles and identities. Selection of language can be seen to inevitably function as role choice, with bilingual options now constituting a wider and qualitatively different repertoire of one's identity. Such a view must render illusory a simple notion of language as

code (as in code-switching) and points to the blending or contrast of L1/L2 which creates new performance possibilities, and new dimensions of self.

Implications for pedagogy are two-fold. A journey into another language is a journey into other ways of seeing the world: for language, as Halliday notes, 'actively construct[s] reality' (1995, p. 259). This journey may frequently provoke excitement and anxiety, amongst other affective states. Those who have travelled such a path with success – the EFL teachers in this study, for example – represent not only excellent models for their students, but repositories of knowledge about the feelings and thoughts that have accompanied the process. I suggest that teachers who are able to make explicit these aspects of L2 learning – who can talk about performing L2 and the alternately opening or inhibiting effect of its performance – can do their students a great service in leading them to understand the affective foundations upon which such learning rests.

About the Author

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Appendix

Prompts for interviews: second round, March 2004 in Thailand

1. Value of foreign language learning
   • What do you consider to be the benefits for students?

2. Ways of language learning
   • How do students best learn a foreign language?

3. Language of thought
   • In your English classes, to what extent do you think in Thai?
   (For example when preparing a grammar explanation, responding to students, etc.)

4. English language textbooks
   • What do you think of the ones you are using?
   (valuable/appropriate/accessible?)

5. Performing in English
   Some people have written about how they feel different when they communicate in their second language – they may speak in different ways and about different topics.

   • Can you compare the way you communicate in Thai and the way you communicate in English in the classroom?

   For example:

   • Do you feel like you are 'performing' in English?

   • Do you take on different kinds of roles in English and Thai?

   • Do you speak/behave in different ways in each language?

6. Metaphors for English
   Can you think of any metaphors to describe English – its position in Thailand, or the ways in which it is learned or taught?